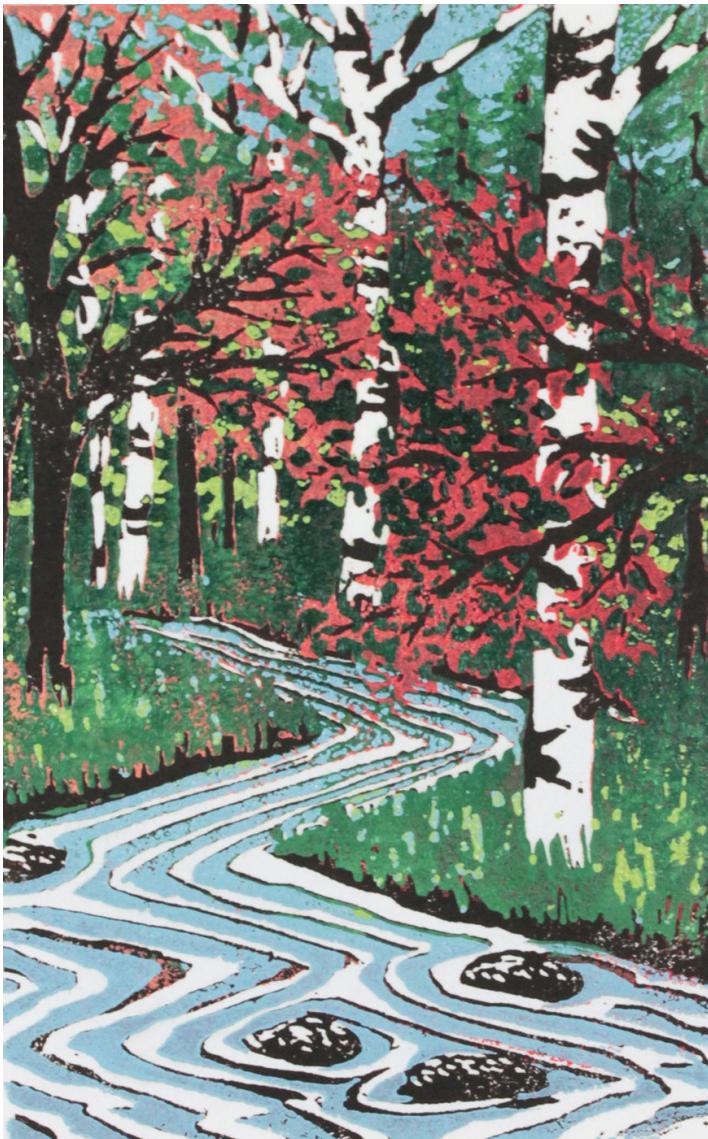


# Springs of Living Water

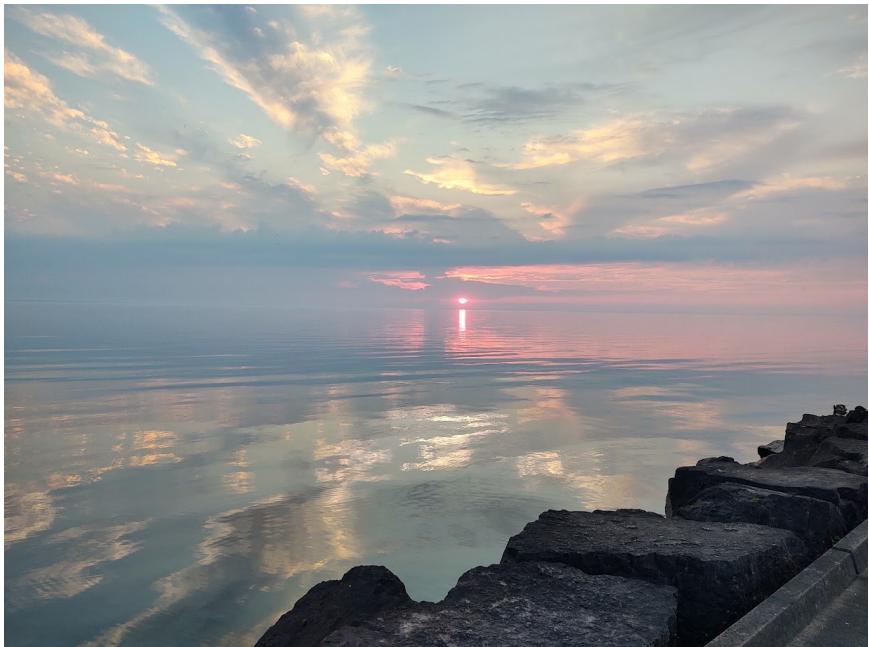


**Lenten Meditations 2026**

Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd

*Ascribe to the Lord, you heavenly beings,  
ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.  
Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name;  
worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness.*

*The voice of the Lord is over the waters;  
the God of glory thunders,  
the Lord thunders over the mighty waters.  
The voice of the Lord is powerful...Psalm 29: 1-4*



*Thanks to all for sharing your light!*

The congregation of Good Shepherd Church  
2026

Front cover art by Diane Castle Babcock

## Lent 2026

### Dear Friends in Christ:

"I invite you in the name of the Church, to the observance of a holy Lent, by self-examination and repentance; by prayer, fasting, and self-denial; and by reading and meditating on God's holy Word." BCP p.265

This beautiful introduction to a holy Lent is from our Ash Wednesday liturgy and we are invited to meditate on God's Word. What a wonderful way to help us meditate, spending time with each of the reflections in this Lenten book. God's word is ever new, relevant, and meaningful every time we read it and offers new insights for our own day. God's Word speaks to all of us in our own setting, time and place. Every year the same passages that seem to be so familiar when read again provide new and fresh inspiration. Our interpretations last year will speak to us in new ways this year.

We have so many members of our parish family that have contributed their reflections and I know that you will be touched and inspired by them all. God's Spirit guides us in new paths of understanding and all of us are enriched and built up as God's Body by these offerings. How beautiful it is when we offer our gifts so that all of us may more fully enter into the deep and holy mystery of our Lord's passion and resurrection. I am deeply grateful to all who made these pages come alive, thank you for your creativity, humor, and thoughtfulness.

Especially I want to thank Patti and Tom Curtin who for many years have produced this guide to Lent. For your time and loving care, know that all of us are very appreciative of your efforts.

May this Lent be a time when we ever more fully understand and know that is only by God's gracious gift that we are given everlasting life. Have a holy and life-giving Lent.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'A' and a plus sign (+).

## February 18 - Ash Wednesday

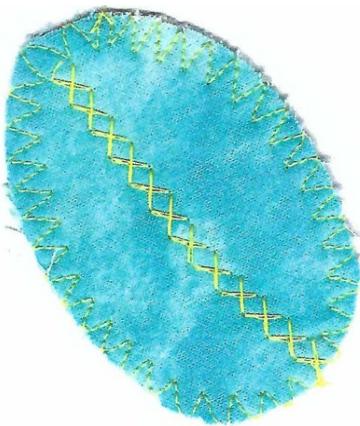
*Psalm 103*

*Isaiah 58:1-12*

*2 Corinthians 5:20-6:10*

*Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21*

As we begin Lent, let us reflect on the significance of this season:



Easter is important to us....  
not for the chocolate and the Easter egg hunt,  
but because Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection  
was the foundation of our faith.

Without the resurrection,  
we would have nothing except mortality.  
Everyday we should remain in constant awareness  
and gratitude, that Jesus' love for us drove him  
to the cross. That is where he paid for our eternal  
salvation. With Christ in us and with us, we  
will never have to walk though life on our own.

*Maggie Markham*

## February 19 - Thursday

*Psalm 25*  
*Exodus 23: 1-9*

*2 Corinthians 6: 16-18*  
*Matthew 25: 1-13*

### Lamps Lit with Faith: Reflecting on the Lay Catechists of China

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus offers the Parable of the Ten Bridesmaids, distinguishing between the foolish who brought no oil, and the wise, who brought flasks of oil with their lamps to wait for the bridegroom.

When we look at the lives of St. Agnes Tsao Kou Ying, St. Agatha Lin Zhao, and St. Lucy Yi Zhenmei, we see three women who did not merely wait for the Lord; they spent their lives filling their flasks with the oil of instruction, service, and sacrificial love. These three women, canonized in the year 2000, were lay catechists in 19th-century China who were martyred for refusing to renounce the Christian faith. Their stories serve as a profound commentary on the biblical call to integrity, justice, and spiritual preparation. Like the wise bridesmaids who were ready when the cry went out at midnight, these women prepared themselves through deep dedication to the faith:

- Agnes Tsao Kou Ying, widowed at a young age and treated poorly by her in-laws for her faith, found shelter with an elderly Christian widow who instructed her. She eventually traveled to Guangxi to catechize women and children.
- Agatha Lin Zhao, the only child of Christian parents, made the difficult sacrifice of breaking a betrothal to dedicate herself to the church as a single laywoman, running a school for girls.
- Lucy Yi Zhenmei, a scholar who supported her family, insisted on working for the church for free to "give something back," assisting in the parish and teaching at a local school.

Agnes, Agatha and Lucy never renounced their belief in Jesus, they trusted that their lamps lit by their faith would continue to shine, even if their physical lives were taken.

Let us look to their example as we trim our own lamps, remaining awake and ready, for we "know neither the day nor the hour". *Julie Syracuse*

## February 20 - Friday

*Psalm 35: 23-28*

*Isaiah 30:11-18*

*Hebrews 2: 10-13*

*Luke 4: 14-21*

“Your praise all the day long.”

— Psalm 35:28b

This praise comes after much suffering and turmoil.

Many in the history, as well as the present day, of this country “of the free”, are suffering. We should be suffering, too, if we are to remotely understand this Psalm’s lament. We should connect to the plight of others even as we toil in our relatively comfortable lives.

Then, we speak praises and hope. God is the liberator, the comforter, the creator of our very existence. Our interactions may not live up to the peace of His Kingdom yet, but starting out from within our individual self, knowing these facts about God, we can then bring ourselves into the world. We can begin to speak out and join in the fights against these great injustices.



Note! Prayer is *of* the world if it is *for* the world. Prayer is not only internal. It *is* outward. We may not all be able to write letters, march in protests, or organize or join a grass-roots movement, but we can all pray and “praise all the day long.”

## February 21 - Saturday

*Psalm 86: 1-11*

*Isaiah 58: 9-14*

*Luke 5:27-32*

The readings from Psalm 86 and Isaiah remind me that God is unfailing in his love for us, and his love is abundant and limitless.



The Psalmist says “For you are great and do wondrous things; you alone are God. . . great is your steadfast love toward me.” Isaiah reminds us that “The Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong, and you shall be like a

watered garden, like a spring of water whose waters never fail. If we trust in God, God will provide what we need.

The reading from Luke made me wonder about some things. In this short passage, Levi the tax collector is called by Jesus, and Levi “got up, left everything, and followed him.” Then Levi hosts a banquet where the guests are tax collectors, and Jesus is in attendance. When the Pharisees criticize Jesus for going to the banquet, Jesus says, “I have come to call not the righteous but sinners to repentance.” I wondered if these guests considered themselves to be sinners. What did Jesus and these guests talk about while they were dining? The Pharisees think they are righteous and can judge other people, but were they perhaps jealous that they weren’t invited? Jesus continually challenged the social norms of his time. In our current world, who would be invited to this banquet with Jesus, and who would be excluded? Which group would you be in?

Just some food for thought.

*Kathy Stokes*

## February 22 - Sunday

*Psalm 32*

*Genesis 2: 15-17*

*Romans 5: 12-19*

*Matthew 4: 1-11*



I want to walk as a child of the light.

I want to follow Jesus.

God set the stars to give light to the world.

The star of my life is Jesus,..

In him there is no darkness at all. The night and the day are both alike.

The Lamb is the light of the city of God.

Shine in my heart, Lord Jesus.

I want to see the brightness of God.

I want to look at Jesus.

Clear sun of rightness, shine on my path,  
and show me the way to the Father.

In him there is no darkness at all. The night and the day are both alike.

The Lamb is the light of the city of God.

Shine in my heart, Lord Jesus.

I'm looking for the coming of Christ.

I want to be with Jesus.

When we have run with patience the race,

We shall know the joy of Jesus.

In him there is no darkness at all, The night and the day are both alike.

The Lamb is the light of the city of God.

Shine in my heart, Lord Jesus.

*1982 Hymnal p. 490*

## February 23 - Monday

*Psalm 119*

*Numbers 23:: 5-18*

*Matthew 20: 20-28*

**Psalm 119** is the Bible's longest chapter. It emphasizes that God's divine instructions are a source of life, wisdom, comfort and joy, contrasting them to the world's way, and serves as a prayer for understanding and obedience:

*You are righteous, O Lord, and upright are your judgments.*

*You have issued your decrees with justice and in perfect faithfulness.*

*My indignation has consumed me, because my enemies forget your words.*

*Your word had been tested to the uttermost, and your servant holds it dear.*

*I am small and of little account, yet I do not forget your commandments.*

*Your justice is an everlasting justice, and your law is the truth.*

*Trouble and distress have come upon me, yet your commandments are my delight.*

*The righteousness of your decrees is everlasting, grant me understanding, that I may live.*

**Matthew 20:25-28** teaches that true greatness in God's kingdom comes through servanthood and sacrifice, not worldly power or authority, opposing the Gentile belief that rulers dominate their people. Jesus is asking his disciples to lead like him—by serving others, even to the point of becoming a "slave", giving their lives as ransom.

Abraham Lincoln is a historical example of the servant leader, that true leadership is defined by service to others, particularly during times of great crisis.

Martin Luther King Jr. acted as a modern, practical example of radical, service-oriented leadership, putting the needs of others ahead of his own safety and status.

Who do you think of as a servant leader?

Pray:

God of Hope, from you comes every blessing and peace; Show us that in the midst of our struggles, you are with us. Give us the abundance of your grace that we may do the work you give us to do and that we may be for the world a sign of your presence; through Jesus Christ, the Way and the Truth. AMEN

*Ellen Tacy*

## February 24 - Tuesday

*Psalm 15*

*Acts 1:15-26*

*John 15: 1, 6-16*

### Acts 1:15-26

The disciples prayerfully decide.

“You, Lord, who know the hearts of all,  
show which one of these two you have  
chosen to take the place in this ministry  
and apostleship ....”

These verses describe the selection of Mathias as the replacement for Judas Iscariot among the twelve apostles, emphasizing the importance of continuity in leadership within the early Christian community. This event happens shortly after the ascension of Jesus and before the day of the Pentecost.

The apostles gathered with 120 followers in the upper room. Peter speaks and highlights the need to replace Judas Iscariot who betrayed Jesus and is now dead. The act of replacement symbolizes the integrity and symbolism of the twelve apostles, which represents the twelve tribes of Israel.

## February 25 - Wednesday

*Psalm 119: 137-144*

*2 Samuel 14:12-17*

*Romans 16:1-6*

*Luke 10: 38-42*

**Luke 10:38-42:** Today's readings serve as a poignant reminder that we are called to fulfill our Christian responsibilities and care for others. One of the wonderful ways to do this is through the ministry at A Meal & More. A new lady arrived at AM&M and inquired, "How does all this work?" I invited her to join one of my tables, and assured her that I would take care of everything. "How much does it cost? I don't have money," she said. I assured her that she was my guest and I would happily serve her; there was nothing she needed to worry about. This gentle lady was well-dressed, anxious, and clearly out of her element. She was hungry and expressed her delight in the delicious food.

A second helping was sheepishly accepted. For dessert, I snatched the last piece of apple pie, and she said it was the best pie she'd ever had. Tears welled up in her eyes. When asked if I could do anything, she confessed that it had been a while since someone had shown her kindness. And then, in a surprising switch of roles, she asked me, "May I help you clean up?" Now, I was the one tearing up. I was humbled that she still had her dignity. She wanted to help and give back in a way that money could never buy.

Luke tells the story of how Jesus and his disciples were visiting Mary and Martha's home. Mary broke with cultural tradition by not serving the guests, wanting only to learn from Jesus. This of course was not appreciated by Martha who was trying to serve everyone without Mary. But Jesus, who also didn't follow tradition, saw Mary's need to learn. The role of served and server.

This lovely lady at AM&M may not have been Jesus, but for that moment, she was unknowingly an angel sent by God to help me learn deeper insights into his teachings. This includes not only to be willing to serve, but by his Grace, learn how to be graciously served with humility and to be willing to ask, "Lord, may I help clean up?"

*John Davidson*

## February 26 - Thursday

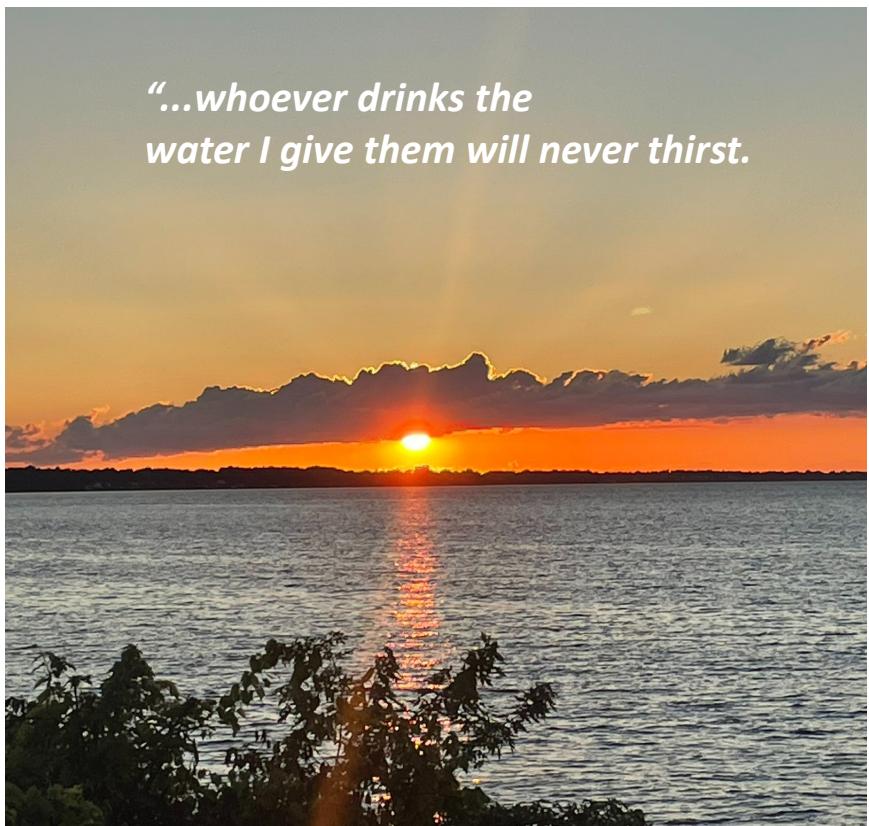
*Psalm 119: 33-40*

*Genesis 24: 12-20*

*Colossians 2: 16-23*

*John 4: 4-26*

*“...whoever drinks the  
water I give them will never thirst.*



*Indeed, the water I give them will  
become in them a spring of water  
welling up to eternal life.”*

*Tom Curtin*

## February 27 - Friday

*Psalm 23*

*Ecclesiastes 4: 13-5:7*

*2 Corinthians 4: 16-18*

*Mark 9: 2-8*

### **Psalm 23**

*The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.*

### **Ecclesiastes 4:13 - 5:7**

*<sup>4</sup> When you make a vow to God, do not delay to fulfill it.... <sup>5</sup> It is better not to make a vow than to make one and not fulfill it.*

### **2 Corinthians 4:16-18**

*<sup>18</sup> So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.*

### **Mark 9:2-8 – The Transfiguration of Jesus**

*"His clothes became dazzling white,... And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus."*

I can only imagine what it must have been like to be Peter, James or John at this pivotal event. We are told they were so frightened.  
(no kidding!)

*"Then a cloud appeared and covered them, and a voice came from the cloud: "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!"*

Suddenly the 'smoke clears' and it's only Jesus standing there with them. It's impossible to understand the transfiguration fully, but to close your eyes and imagine being like Peter, James or John, there with your friend and teacher, Jesus. Then the vision, the 'heavenly' light, the transformation and voice of God, it had to be beyond comprehension.



Sometimes, a sunrise, a sunset, or the sun streaming through the clouds after a rain, fills me with such inner joy.

I can't really explain why, but it feels like "heavenly light".

*Gwen Brennick*

## February 28 - Saturday

*Psalm 10: 15-19*

*Proverbs 9: 7-12*

*1 Timothy 4: 6-16*

*Luke 4: 14-21*

Today's reflection focuses on Paul's first letter to his protégé, Timothy, a young pastor leading a church in Ephesus. This message is especially relevant during Lent, a time of spiritual renewal, repentance and self-discipline to prepare for celebrating the Resurrection.

*"...train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both present life and the life to come"*

*"...be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress."*

For us both, exercise and health have always been a priority. We both workout 5-6 times a week, and have a room that holds all the equipment we need, free weights, rowing machine, bike, elliptical and Pilates reformer. Workouts not only help us physically, but we know it has helped us mentally. We have learned from experience that if we neglect our physical health, our mental health suffers.

Similarly, Paul reminds us that although physical training is all well and good, we should be sure to train our minds, hearts and souls. We do that through faith, prayer, and all that is rooted in love—love for God and our neighbors. Paul reminds us we are given in service to God and others. This is a simple formula for spiritual fitness, but can often be much more difficult than riding 60 minutes on an exercise bike! However, through faith and commitment, spiritual fitness forms and grows.

Heavenly Father, thank you for your gift of physical and mental health. Please keep us mindful of our need to focus our attention to our spiritual health as well. In this time of Lent, we acknowledge our faults, failures and weaknesses and ask you to forgive us and help us to improve our spiritual health each and every day.

Peace,

*Nan and Roch Whitman*

## March 1 - Sunday

*Psalm 121*

*Genesis 12: 1-4*

*Romans 4: 1-5, 13-17*

*John 3: 1-17*

Our readings for today are about faith.

In Psalm 121 we see that the Lord is in charge. He is my protector. He is my keeper. He is with me day and night.

Genesis 12: 1-4a shows how Abram trusted God when He told him to leave his established home to go to a land God would show him in order to make a great nation. Abram's age did not matter in this task, only his faith in the Lord mattered. God would bless Abram in this endeavor to create a great nation.

Romans 4:1-5, 13-17 reminds us that God's rewards are not in the form of payment for work—wages—but for increased faithfulness which is counted as righteousness. It is through our faith and God's grace that we are made righteous.

In John 3: 1-17, Jesus challenges Nicodemus by asking if he does not believe what is seen how can he believe what is heavenly? Nicodemus tries to frame everything by sight, and not by faith.

He challenges Jesus about the idea of baptism by water and Spirit because he cannot imagine it.

We must remember that Jesus came to save the world and that includes you and me. Our belief in God is the cornerstone of our faith.

*Larry Therkildsen*

## March 2 - Monday

*Psalm 103: 13-18*

*Philippians 4: 10-13*

*Leviticus 10: 1-3*

*Luke 14: 1-14*



*...the Lord's unfailing love...is as great as the height  
of the heavens above the Earth.*

Psalm 103

The psalmist wrote, "(God)" does not punish us for all our sins, he does not deal harshly with us, as we deserve.

In this Psalm we hear how towards those who fear him, is as great as the height of the heavens above the Earth.

David praised God for his great love and kindness.

David is inspiring us as he did himself to meditate on these verses and praise him as the Prophet Isaiah did.

"I, yes I alone, will blot out your sins for my own sake and will never think of them again. " ( Isaiah 43:25)

Amen

## March 3- Tuesday

*Psalm 129*

*Romans 12: 11-17*

*Isaiah 6 1-8*

*Luke 9: 1-6*

In Isaiah, we read a description of angels: "Above him stood the seraphim; each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet and with two he flew. And one called to another and said:

*"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts.  
The whole earth is full of His glory."*

This song of the angels today is appropriate for one of the two brothers recognized on March 3. John and Charles Wesley were Anglicans but separated from the Anglican tradition to found the Methodist Church. Reading the words to the angels' song reminded me of Charles. In his lifetime, he wrote over 6,500 lyrics. 20 of his sacred poems appear in our hymnal. The fourth verse of *Jesus Christ is Risen Today* that we sing as our first hymn on Easter was written by C. Wesley.

*"Sing we to our God above, Alleluia!  
Praise eternal as his love, Alleluia!  
Praise Him, all ye heavenly host, Alleluia!  
Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Alleluia!"*

"Lent" derives from the Old English word *lencten*. *Lencten* refers to the lengthening of days or "springtime". During Lent it seems appropriate to meditate on the second verse of Hymn #300 in our hymnal.

*"Thankful for our every blessing,*

*Let us sing Christ the Spring*

*Never, never ceasing.*

*Source of all our gifts and graces,*

*Christ we own: Christ alone*

*Calls for all our praises."*

May our lives be filled with singing God's praises during this Holy Lent.

*Karyn Robbins*

## March 4 - Wednesday

*Psalm 31: 9-16*

*Jeremiah 18: 1-11, 18-20*

*Matthew 20: 17-28*

I had trouble writing my meditation this year. It would be easy to make this about current events. I find this happens every week with the church readings too. How does the church lectionary meet what is going on so well? It's uncanny, until I realize that these kinds of things have been going on forever. We're just heading towards a correction again.

My two takeaways...

Matthew—contrasts the selfishness and pride of the world with God's directive to be humble and serve others. We don't need to be great or the "king" of our realm. We need to stop focusing on personal gain and help our fellow man to rise.

Jeremiah - the metaphor of the potter and the clay; God's ability to mold, see mistakes, break them down and reshape them in to the proper "pot."



As an artist, I recognize the process. When I start a painting, I take an idea and draw it out. I make corrections based on my own knowledge and vision. Once I start painting there are always more corrections. I talk with my fellow artists and they offer helpful advice. I listen and try to incorporate their suggestions because, in the end, they will make it a better painting.

God's actions are responsive to our behavior. By listening and heeding we can prevent the brokenness that we hope to avoid.

God Bless.

*Chris Norris*

## March 5 - Thursday

*Psalm 1*

*Jeremiah 17: 5-10*

*Luke 16: 19-31*

Today's readings focus upon being in right relationship with God.

Psalm 1 addresses how we are to live our lives in accordance with God's laws. It reminds us that God knows what is in our hearts, minds and souls and that God provides happiness. It reminds us that we find joy and happiness when we reject evil and do not follow the example of sinners. The Psalm invites us to study and learn scripture.

Jeremiah reminds us to remain focused upon God's laws, and that we are to walk-the-walk, and talk-the-talk in order that we might display how we live as we put our trust in God. Jeremiah reminds us that the Lord searches and tests the hearts of men. He reminds us that we are blessed people when we put our trust in God.

Luke's gospel reading today exemplifies how God rewards the less fortunate and holds people accountable for their life's choices. We hear about a beggar man covered in sores appeals for assistance from a rich man and is repeatedly rebuked. Both die, the beggar goes to heaven, and the rich man does not. The rich man begs for privilege communication directed to warn his loved ones. This request is rejected, as God has repeatedly spoken through prophets to guide people to the path of righteousness.

This is a hard story to hear, but an important one. Scripture guides us on the thoughts, words, deeds and actions that provide us with guidelines for us to live. Our faith community provides ongoing guidance to journey together along the pathway to God. This Lent, how are you improving your personal relationship with God? Did you know that we have many opportunities to walk with others on this faith journey right here at Good Shepherd? This Lent, how are you being the best person that God has created you to be? You are invited to ponder these questions, be still, listen to how God's spirit is guiding you as you journey forth this Lenten season.

*Dr. Mary Randall*

## March 6 - Friday

*Psalm 105: 16-22*

*Genesis 37: 3-4, 12-28*

*Matthew 21:33-44*

I love the story of Joseph, full of ups and downs as well as plenty of human drama. Sold into slavery by his jealous brothers; his coat of many colors cast aside; his beloved father believing he was dead, things seemed pretty bad for Joseph. He was a man of changing fortunes however. Taken to Egypt and bought by a servant of Pharoah, Joseph used his spiritual gifts and was recognized as a man of character and Godly wisdom.

Pharoah put him in charge of his household, until such time as his wife noticed that Joseph was very handsome and she began to flirt.

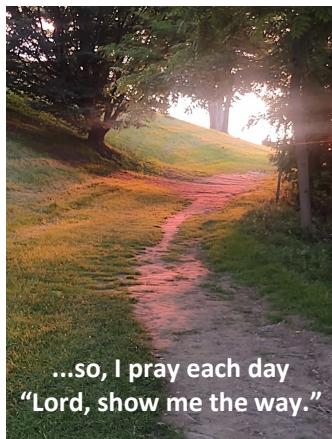
He refuses to “lie with her”, however. She became angry and framed him for the crime of taking the King’s wife and once again, Joseph found himself in a dire predicament. The King threw him into jail, which must have seemed like a hopeless situation for sure.

Once again, however Joseph used the gifts that God had given him: compassion and kindness towards the prison guards; and the ability to interpret dreams eventually became his ticket out of jail and back into Pharoah’s good graces. He was once again put in charge of the household.

The story goes on, of course, and Joseph became integral in saving many people, including the brothers who betrayed him, from a great famine.

The lessons of this story, I believe, are many: times of testing and hardship will come to all of us. If we stay strong, use the spiritual gifts that God has given us; show compassion, kindness and mercy in the midst of our difficulties, and forgive those who have harmed us, we will be guided and strengthened to do far more than we could have imagined on our own...

*Patti Curtin*



*...so, I pray each day  
“Lord, show me the way.”*

## March 7 - Saturday

*Psalm 124*

*Hebrews 10: 32-39*

*Daniel 6: 10-16*

*Matthew 24: 9-14*

What a wild ride it's been, this thing called life. Ups and downs, ins and outs. Yin and yang. Sometimes things seem hopeless. Here are a few "life adages" I've learned along the way. Sayings I heard from others, some I grew up with, some I say most every day.

Maybe you'll recognize a few; maybe one will inspire.

*It's a new day. The sun is shining; the birds are singing.*

Said to get my boys going each morning. They'd change it to the birds are pooping.

*You get more bees with honey than with vinegar.*

My wife reminds me of this one when I'm trying to say, Be nice.

*If you can't say somethin' nice, don't say nothin' at all.*

A favorite of my parents', cool it with disparaging comments.

*I can't believe I ate the whole thing. And The night's not long enough, Irene.*

Random TV spot copy from my youth, adding nothing of value to this list.

*God grant me the strength to change the things I can, the grace to accept the things I can't, and the wisdom to know the difference.*

My little bit of serenity, when looking for peace and a sense of direction.

*Peace be with you.*

My variations include: Peace. Or, May the force be with you.

Or the Schwartz. Responses include: And also with you. Or Back at ya'.

*God is Love.*

To me, God = the power of Love. The power of Truth.

And the power of Principle.

*Where there's a will, there's a way.*

From today's readings. Remain steadfast, endure, and have faith.

*All's well that ends well.*

See above. In the end, Love, Truth and Principle will prevail.

Just hang in there.

*John Norris*

## March 8 - Sunday

*Psalm 95*

*Romans 5: 1-11*

*Exodus 17: 1-7*

*John 4: 5-42*



The reading from the Gospel of John describes the time when Jesus met the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well. This story is interesting because there were no witnesses to this conversation. It is a time when Jesus does not have crowds around him, or even one of his disciples. In this one-on-one exchange, Jesus proves to this nameless woman that he is the Messiah, and she proclaims this news to her town. Jesus stayed there for two days, and "many more believed because of his word."

I think this story shows that Jesus enters our lives in expected ways. If we try to see Jesus in the face of everyone we meet, we can open our minds and hearts to share the Good News in the world.

*Kathy Stokes*

## March 9 - Monday

*Psalm 119: 97-104*

*Wisdom 7:24-8:1*

*Ephesians 2: 17-22*

*John 14: 23-26*

At first read, Psalm 119:97-104 struck me as the writings of a self-congratulatory psalmist extolling on how his exceptional devotion to God's law made him wiser than his enemies, with more understanding than all teachers and elders; boasting further on how his unwavering commitment empowers him to avoid every evil and to hate every false way. All the superlatives kind of blew me back.

Fortunately, I learned tradition associates this psalm with David. With that in mind, I can instead imagine these verses as a stunningly joyful, and thankful dramatization of King David attributing his accomplishments to a life of continually re-centering himself through meditation on God's law revealed in the Torah. Read this way, the passage becomes less about superhuman virtue and more about the transformative power of returning again and again to the voice of God in Scripture—an invitation extended to all of us.

The reading from Wisdom was new to me, and perhaps unfamiliar to you too. It's a lovely excerpt from the Apocrypha, so you won't find it in our canonical scriptures. It reminds us that when we discover wisdom, or see wisdom in others, we can recognize her as a divine reflection of God. No doctrine required.

In Ephesians 2:17-22 Paul describes how our relationship with the Triune God is deeply relational and communal. Christ Himself "preaches peace" and reconciles us to God. He removes barriers between God and humanity and between people. Through the Spirit, we gain "access to the Father" and are being built together into a dwelling place for God. The Spirit makes unity possible and continually forms us into one people.

Before the Father, we are no longer strangers. We become members of God's household-equal citizens and family. To belong to God is to belong to each other, being built into one temple where God chooses to live. Likewise in John 14:23-26 the Father and the Son make their home with those who love Christ, and the Spirit teaches, reminds, and sustains us as we strive to follow Christ.

*Kris German*

## March 10 - Tuesday

*Psalm 140*

*James 2: 14-17*

*Judges 9: 50-55*

*Luke 11: 5-10*

Whenever I do these meditations, I am always amazed the way the readings sort of weave together (well in this case it's 3 out of 4)—we're setting Judges aside but happy to team analyze that one with someone at coffee hour.

What the other 3 readings tell us that it is the goodness of God that is the answer to our problems (Psalm 146), how to ask for God's help (Luke) and while we're at it, how to be part of the solution (James). I found this group of readings to be somewhat symmetrical with a touch of irony, but as I reflected they became profoundly personal.

In the Psalm, we learn to place our trust in God, and God will provide (food to the hungry, sight to the blind, upholds the cause of the oppressed etc.) In Luke, we learn through a parable the importance of PERSISTENCE in prayer (seek and ye shall find, ask and it shall be given, knock and the door will be opened).

The symmetry and the irony can be found in James. James is telling us that faith by itself is not enough to follow Jesus. We need to GET BUSY...it is through good works that we are saved . ("Faith without action is dead"). I like to paraphrase it this way ..Christianity is NOT a spectator sport. The ironic part is that Psalm 146 says not to place our trust in humans..but rather God. BUT if we follow James, it will be us, following Jesus' teaching to care for the least of us..that could actually be the answer to someone's prayers.

Think about this. Psalm 146 says " The Lord gives food to the hungry." Very often, rather than manna from Heaven....the "miracle" that provides food to the needy could be one of us helping out at Meal and More or providing warm clothes to a homeless shelter or any number of other ways you can do good for others.

I know it can sometimes feel overwhelming with all of the needs out there. I've seen this personally through my new friends at Operation Caring Hearts, a grassroots effort to help the homeless in Rochester. Sometimes they can feel beyond overwhelmed with the scope of need--like they are trying to boil the ocean, but every little act of kindness is a small miracle to those they help.

I heard this great quote once:

*Today you may not be able to change the world, but you can, by doing good for others, make a world of change in someone else's life.*

For this Lenten season, we should all follow James' counsel and perhaps we can be the answer to someone's prayers. God bless!

*Mike Rosato*

## March 11 - Wednesday

*Psalm 78: 1-6*

*Deuteronomy 4: 1-2, 5-9*

*Matthew 5: 17-19*

It is a powerful feeling when "random" selections align so perfectly with the weight on your heart. It often feels less like a coincidence and more like a gentle nudge—a confirmation that your concerns are seen.

First off, the readings tell the message that God has provided us with a guide to life; how to lead your life with love and in a way that is pleasing to God. All three readings relate to this message. This includes reference to the Commandments. The readings speak to the underlying directive...Tell your children and grandchildren. This reflection captures the beautiful, yet often agonizing, tension of parenthood: the desire to pass on a spiritual "inheritance" that, by its very nature, must be freely accepted by the heir. From Deuteronomy to the Psalms, He instructed our ancestors to teach His laws to their children so that the next generation might learn them and in turn should tell their children.

**The Commandment is on the "Telling":** In Deuteronomy and the Psalms, the instruction is to teach and testify. We've done this. We've planted the seeds and shared the stories.

**The Agency of the Next Generation:** The "inheritance" of Christ is unique because it cannot be forced; it must be claimed. While that creates anxiety for a parent, it also makes their eventual "yes" (should they find their way back to it) truly their own, rather than just a habit.

Many parents today grapple with the "empty pew" beside them. It's important to remember that:

**Seeds have long winters:** Sometimes the "seen and heard" (Deut 4) doesn't bear fruit until a person hits their own "wilderness" moment later in life.

**Living the Message:** Your continued prayer and the way you live your life "pleasing to God" serves as a living Gospel. Sometimes the most effective "teaching" for adult children is seeing the peace and resilience faith gives their parents.

We have fulfilled the "teaching" mentioned in Matthew. Now, as we move through Lent, perhaps the meditation shifts from "How do we get them to listen?" to "How do we trust God with the seeds we've already planted?"

*Kris Murray*

## March 12 - Thursday

*Psalm 66: 1-8*

*Colossians 1:28-2:3*

*Genesis 18: 1-15*

*Mark 10: 42-45*

To serve one another... and be united in love.

The readings for this day seem to illustrate to me the differences between the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) and the teachings of Jesus in Paul's letters and the Gospels. Ancient Jews were taught that glory, majesty, praise, worship, and service to the Lord must be the focus of their lives. Jesus' New Covenant tells us to focus on love of each other, love of God, and service to each other as being the embodiment of Christ.

I often struggle when reading Paul's letters, and occasionally in the Gospel lessons. When I unpack all of this, the lessons usually end up in the same place and delivering the same message. Love. Is it possible that we have overcomplicated the message? Is it possible that all the rules and dogma of the current religions have clouded our view of what's really important and confused us with complicated messages that may reflect more the views and opinions of religious leaders, and less on the very simple and basic message that Jesus delivered over and over again in the Gospels?

The Gospels make it clear. There were only two commandments given by Jesus that he tells us summarize the essence of all the past Laws and Prophets.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind.

Love your neighbor as yourself.

Mic drop!

Do the reason and meaning of our lives have to be any more complicated than that?

Lord, give me the strength and wisdom to be the person those around me need. Help me to love unconditionally. Help me to serve others with compassion and understanding.

*Chris Nuccitelli*

## March 13 - Friday

*Psalm 86:11-17*

*Deuteronomy 6:20-25*

*Acts 8:26-33*

These three passages from the Bible clearly encourage us as Christians to ask questions and receive explanations of the teachings of Jesus and his believers :

*Deuteronomy 6:20-25*

*Days prior to entering the Holy Land as their new home, the children asked for instructions given to the elders and were told to fear the Lord and keep his Commandments to achieve peace.*

*Psalm 86:11-17*

*David asks "Teach me your way, O Lord" then gives thanks and praise to the Lord and asks for help and strength against his enemies.*

*Acts 8:26-33*

*An Ethiopian court official was sitting in his chariot reading the scriptures of the prophet Isaiah, struggling to interpret them. The Lord through an angel sent Philip to give meaning to Isaiah's words.*



We need to continue to read and seek understanding of the words of the Bible, to be thankful for the presence of God in our lives, and humbly ask Him to guide us in our faith journey in these turbulent times.

Photo by Mary White

*Cheri Mascitti*

## March 14 - Saturday

*Psalm 51: 15-20*

*Hosea 6: 1-6*

*Luke 18: 9-14*

Todays' readings remind me of a song by Tim McGraw, called "Humble and Kind".

The lyrics tell us that all through our lives we should be just that, humble and kind. We are taught to be kind from our earliest years (no fighting, no biting) and throughout our teen years we learn that getting along with

others means treating others the way we want to be treated.

As adults we experience the positive aspects of being humble and kind. We try not to judge others, and we understand the difference between a bit of pride and boastfulness. Humility helps us be more generous and grateful.

Being humble and kind are basic ingredients of a civil society and provide for a better relationship with ourselves, with others and most importantly with God. God knows that being kind and acting with humility will make us happier and that is what he wants for us; to be happy.



*Sue Casey*

## March 15 - Sunday

*Psalm 23*

*Ephesians 5: 8-13*

*1 Samuel 15: 1-13*

*John 9: 1-41*



*Abba,*

*Thank you for helping me catch my breath. Thank you for the moments of rest and inner peace you give me on my journey. Thank you for sending me on my way, wherever you need me to go, and staying by my side. (Psalm 23)*

*Eternal Light in Every Day,*

*Look into my heart and see who I truly am. May your Spirit enter me like a rush of wind. Blow away unforgiveness, grief, jealousy, and anger. Heal me from my mistakes. Empower me with your Light & Truth for the rest of my life. (Samuel)*

*Lord & Saviour,*

*Help me discern what will most please You and fill my soul. Please nudge me in the right direction. Help me make good choices. Help me make the most of every chance I get to do Your will. Keep my body strong and healthy so I can energetically serve You. (Ephesians)*

*Loving Father,*

*Please bring everything I need to be, do, and say into the clear light of day. (John)*

*Amen.*

*Debra Nelson*

## March 16 - Monday

*Psalm 30: 1-6, 11-13*

*Isaiah 65: 17-25*

*John 4: 43-54*

As I read today's Gospel, I remember a scene from The Chosen depicting this passage. Many of you know what I'm talking about; if you have not watched the series, do it. It will make the scriptures come alive for you.

The passage refers to the father as a "royal official." In The Chosen, he is called Gaius. He is a Roman Centurion who is Matthew's body guard. Matthew is a tax collector and hated by the Jewish people. Gaius is left dumbfounded when Matthew abruptly leaves his lucrative job to become a follower of a homeless travelling preacher.

Through several seasons Gaius follows Matthew's journey from a distance. He has interactions with Peter as well. He becomes curious, then sympathetic to Jesus and his disciples. During this time Gaius is promoted, giving him more power and material wealth.

Not he, the Roman physicians nor Roman gods he worships, can cure his son who suffers from a fatal chronic illness. It is then that Gaius approaches Jesus and kneels before him (think about that!) and begs Jesus to cure his son. Jesus tells him that his son is already cured without Jesus even seeing him. Gaius trusted God.

I would assert that there are two miracles in this story. The healing of the son is the obvious one. The other is the conversion of the Roman official to be a disciple of Jesus. How did this happen? Not by Matthew telling him what he should believe or what he should do. Gaius watched Matthew's behavior and saw the change in his character. He learned about Jesus by watching Him and the transformation of the people who followed Him. Actions speak louder than words.

## March 17 - Tuesday

*Psalm 97*

*1 Thessalonians 2: 1-8*

*Ezekiel 36: 33-38*

*Matthew 28: 16-20*

Today's Gospel is known as the Great Commission, the time when Jesus commissions the apostles "**to go and make disciples of all nations**". St. Paul and St. Patrick are examples of what it means to be commissioned by Christ.

St. Paul made three journeys between 49 and 59 AD before being imprisoned in Rome and executed for his faith. He established churches in Philippi, Thessalonica, Corinth, Ephesus, Galatia, and Rome.

St Patrick responded to the Great Commission centuries later as he was called in a dream to return to Ireland as a missionary, where he worked to convert the Irish people to Christianity.

In St Patrick's time, the people of Ireland were occupied by pagan worship and superstition. Patrick incorporated Irish culture into Christian teachings. We can do the same today by showing people how to integrate Christ and the Church into their lives by being an example of what it means to be a disciple of Christ.

In Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians, he gives us some insight and advice on how we are to go about building Christ's Church. We are approved by God to be instructed with His Gospel, we should not take this responsibility lightly. We are to do this work in a caring manner, never with impure motives or by trickery. And always in a way to please God, not people.

Paul also tells us not to expect to be treated well or praised for telling the Gospel, after all Paul was beaten and thrown in prison for his efforts in building the Church, on his first journey he was beaten and left for dead.

***"Just as a nursing mother cares for her children, so we cared for you. Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well". 1 Thessalonians 2:8-9***

We must do God's work with love. It is because of the love of one another that we share the Gospel of Christ.

*Ed Kushall*

## March 18 - Wednesday

*Psalm 29*

*Ecclesiasticus 47: 2-10*

*Hebrews 13: 14-21*

*Mark 9: 38-41*

Lent to me, is a good time to do a routine introspective examination of the places where I need to focus a little more growth. Maybe I need to work on being more patient, more forgiving, less hardheaded / more open minded, more accepting, less controlling, etc.

In Mark 9:38–41, Jesus attempts to gently open the constricted minds of his disciples who are shunning others.

John tells Jesus that they tried to stop someone who was casting out demons in Jesus' name because that person isn't "part of the group". Jesus corrects him, teaching that genuine good done in His name shouldn't be opposed. Anyone who is not actively working against His purpose is, in a real sense, aligned with them.

It reminds me that God's work is not limited to the people we expect, the people we know, or the people who look like us. Grace is not our private possession to be withheld or doled out how we choose. The Spirit moves where it wills, often beyond our categories and comfort zones.

What I do know is, I'm just glad to be "part of the group".



## March 19 - Thursday

*Psalm 89: 1-29*

*2 Samuel 7: 4, 8-1*

*Romans 4: 13-18*

*Luke 2: 41-52*

**Psalm 89 1-29**

God's foundation of rule is righteousness, justice, love, and truth. As God's ambassadors we should exhibit the same traits when we deal with people. David is promised to have God's power to accomplish God's will.

**2 Samuel 7:4,8:16**

God turned down David's request. It doesn't mean he rejected David, God was planning something even greater building the temple.

**Romans 4:13-18**

God's promise to Abraham was that he would be the Father to many nations. This promise was fulfilled by Jesus Christ. Abraham did this not through good deeds but by his faith and love for God.

**Luke 2:41-52**

Jesus and his parents went to the temple for Passover and Jesus stayed behind while his parents left not knowing he wasn't with them. The Rabbis were theologian scholars who were astonished by Jesus teachings, understanding and answers. When his parents got back to the temple where he was preaching they asked why he wasn't with his parents he said he was doing his Father in heaven's work.

These verses remind me how important it is to have God in every aspect of my life. That he shouldn't be put on a shelf and brought down when I need him, like when things aren't going right. It could be God redirecting me. I need to keep him constantly in my thoughts, taking time out to just sit and listen.

To know that God loves me. He sees me in the past, present, and the future. To know that I am not a disappointment, I AM A BELOVED CHILD OF GOD!!

*Annie Bishop*

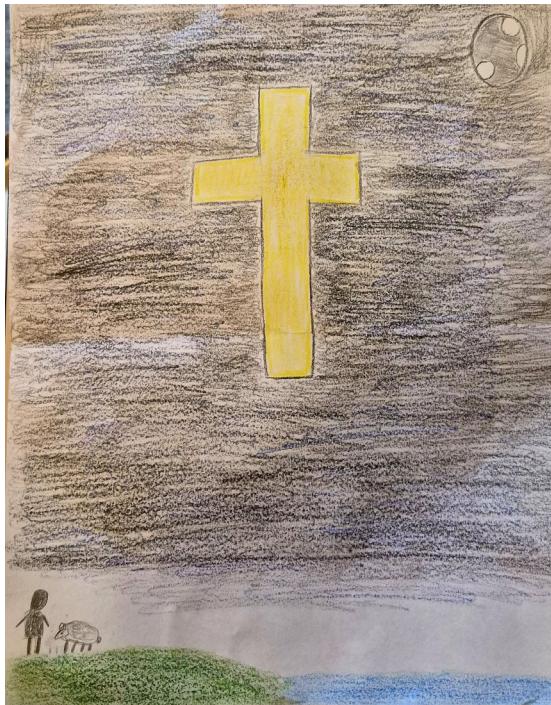
## March 20 - Friday

*Psalm 23*

*Job 38:1*

*2 Corinthians 6:1-10*

*Luke 5: 12-16*



### **Psalm 23**

*He makes me lie down in green pastures,  
He leads me beside quiet waters,  
He restores my soul....*

Artwork by *Mailani Brennick*

## March 21 - Saturday

*Psalm 22: 27-31*

*Deut. 26: 16-19*

*Philippians 4: 4-9*

*Luke 19: 1-9*

There's that scene from the movie where Forrest Gump quotes his Mama's words :

"Life is like a box of chocolates, you never know what you're gonna get....".

In the past , that's what these Lenten readings seemed to be for me, (the "you never know what you're gonna get" part...) except, not this year's readings.

This year they were clear, concise, **and admittedly, correct.**

In all four readings there are general themes and promises of emergent hope that will come as a result of following what appears to be a simple request. Follow God's word.

It may also be that at this time in my life, (the entry level stages of elderly!) looking back I spent a lot of time worshiping false idols, putting faith in cultural myths, and protecting my pride. The results of those efforts are fleeting and rather empty.

Today it seems God's writing is on the wall, that is, to get it right, or to at least get it better, because there's truly not a lot of time left.

To quote some gems:

**Philippians:** "Whatever you have learned, received, heard from me, or seen in me, put into practice. And the God of Peace will be with you."

**Deuteronomy:** "The Lord commands you this day to follow these decrees and laws, and carefully; observe them with all your heart and with all your soul."

It's almost like God's telling me: "Don't even try to tell me you don't know what I'm talking about." Have a faith-full Lent,

*Jack Brennick*

## March 22 - Sunday

*Psalm 130*

*Romans 8: 6-11*

*Ezekial 37: 1-14*

*John 11: 1-45*

When I think about today's readings, I find a phrase keeps coming to mind: "brass tacks," an Americanism, thought first used in 19<sup>th</sup> century Texas. It means putting aside trivial matters and focusing on serious business. Physical death, the fate of all living organisms, is about as serious as you can get in this life. Indeed, as Benjamin Franklin has observed, besides taxes, death is life's only other certainty.

This season of Lent began with Ash Wednesday, when we were marked with ashes and told that God made us from dust, and to dust our bodies shall return. It should come as no surprise then that Lent is an appropriate time to consider our body's forthcoming cessation. Some of the Bible's best-known passages concerning this topic have been gathered today for us to reflect on them. The gist of them: death may be inevitable, but it's **not THE END**. There is HOPE – through God and through belief in the words of His Son, Jesus.

In Ezekiel, the dried bones of those who once lived will live again through God's breath of life – a feat beyond any human accomplishment. It happens again with Lazarus in John's account as Jesus' words instill new life into a four-day dead man. As Jesus tells Martha "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this? She said to him, 'Yes, Lord, I believe....'"

Romans tells us, in 8:6-11: "To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. . . . If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you."

As I wrote in the beginning of this reflection, it's time to get down to brass tacks because "to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace." At the risk of seemingly trivializing all this, you could think of it this way: we all have a "Get Out of Jail Free" card to use – if we know how to employ it. Accept. Believe. Live in the Spirit with Christ.

*Richard Reid*

## March 23 - Monday

*Psalm 33:6-11*

*Acts 17: 22-31*

*Ecclesiastes 2: 1-11*

*Mark 2: 18-22*

Sit Quietly. Review and reflect on your week for a few moments. . .

-What are you grateful for in past week?

-When did you feel or see the Presence of God this past week?

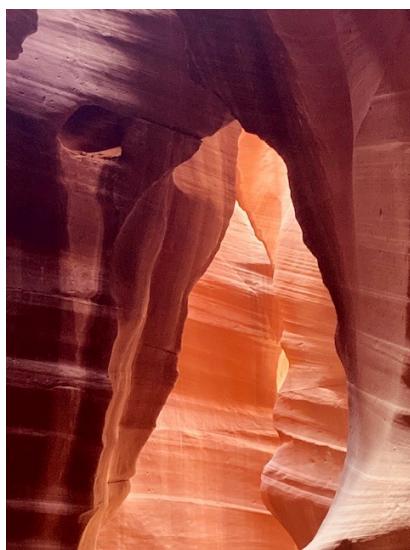
In Nature, in others?

-When did you feel distant to God? Angry, anxious, worried

-When did you share your love with others this week?

-How did you care for the Earth this week?

Amen



*Pam Trompeter*

## March 24 - Tuesday

*Psalm 31: 15-24*

*Revelations 7: 13-17*

*1 Kings 21: 1-19*

*John 12: 20-26*

As I sit at my window on this very cold and freezing morning I think of my time in Israel. The weather was good, but there were periods of rain, which I am sure was appreciated in this dry desert area of the world. Israel was at peace at that time.

These last several years of turmoil in that part of the world have given me many heartaches for this beautiful country. Being there and realizing that we were walking where Jesus walked. We were reminded of his life and times as we visited these many holy places.

Let us pray today for the people of Israel: that God will bring them peace again to their beautiful country. Let us also pray today and everyday for peace throughout the world. As we pray together, we know that God is listening to each of us. Our prayers do make a difference in our lives and in the world around us.

I thank God for all his blessings in my life!



*Photo by Gwen Brennick*

*Betty Nohle*

## March 25 - Wednesday

*Psalm 45*

*Hebrews 10: 4-10*

*Isaiah 7: 10-14*

*Luke 1: 26-38*

It is Wednesday, March 25th and Lent is quickly coming to an end. Palm Sunday and the start of Holy week is just days away.

I was surprised by today's readings. Wait – Easter is coming – not Christmas. I realized I needed to do some investigation as to why Luke is talking about the angel Gabriel visiting Mary and Isaiah is pronouncing that a virgin will give birth to Immanuel. After a lifetime as an Episcopalian, I never connected that the Annunciation (that's today by the way) was celebrated during Lent. March 25 is nine months before Christmas after all.

As I pondered today's readings, I realized that bringing us back to Jesus's birth makes sense so very close to Easter. Jesus' birth sets us on the path to Easter. It was ordained to be this way from the very start. If not for Isaiah's prophesy of Christ's coming and Mary's acceptance to be the Mother of our Lord, we would not have begun the journey that ultimately ends in Jesus' sacrifice. Without Jesus we have nothing.

Hebrews says "*we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all*". Prepare for Holy Week by pondering Mary's role in all of this.

Psalm 40 says "*Blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, ... Many, Lord my God, are the wonders you have done, the things you planned for us. None can compare with you*". Mary trusted the Lord so completely that she willingly followed the Lord's command without knowing where it would lead. We often do not know where our life's path is leading us. However, be certain of this: We are Blessed because we trust in the Lord and we are Beloved children of God.

May God grant you blessings and peace during this Holy Week.

*Brenda Munch*

## March 26 - Thursday

*Psalm 133*

*1 Timothy 6:6-10*

*Isaiah 66: 1-4*

*John 3: 25-30*

This Lent, I decided not to give up candy television or stop eating pizza. That's all good but not for me.

Instead I plan to think about a couple of things that have been on my mind. One is the holy Eucharist and the other is prayer.

I can hardly explain the Eucharist. I do know that the walk from my church pew to the church railing will bring me to my savior. I learned that the love in this world will never compare to the moment of receiving communion. This is the moment when Jesus comes down from heaven, offering his spirit into my spirit. I want to receive often, the holy Eucharist is everything to me.

When I was younger, there were days of some happiness, but mostly days of dark sadness. One day something happened that changed everything for me. I was having a long absence from church and not really caring to go to church. My good friend Annie, who regularly went to church urged me to attend an evening service at her church. I said no, no, no. This went on for weeks and Annie kept after me.

Finally, I accepted, expecting the sky to fall because I knew it had been a long, long time since I embraced any feelings for church. At this particular service after receiving communion, I felt tears running down my face. I didn't give it a whole lot of thought the first time it happened. The next week I went back to church and again received communion. The same thing happened — tears running down my face right after communion. I just knew then that Jesus wanted to get my attention.

That is when I began praying for answers I am sure the Holy Spirit gave me the right words to get me started from that moment until this very day. I am a praying warrior it doesn't matter for who what where or why I pray now my life is a happy one. I believe that Christ is present in the Eucharist. I believe Christ wants us to pray for self others the world.

*Sue Van Cura*

## March 27 - Friday

*Psalm 122*

*Ephesians 4: 1-6*

*Isaiah 56: 6-8*

*Matthew 9: 35-38*

*“Nothing that is worth doing can be achieved in our lifetime; therefore we must be saved by hope. Nothing which is true or beautiful or good makes complete sense in any immediate context of history; therefore we must be saved by faith. Nothing we do, however virtuous, can be accomplished alone; therefore we are saved by love. No virtuous act is quite as virtuous from the standpoint of our friend or foe as it is from our standpoint. Therefore we must be saved by the final form of love, which is forgiveness.”*      *-Reinhold Niebuhr*

In today's text from Ephesians, the Apostle Paul calls us to live a life worthy of our calling – a life of humility, gentleness, and patience, “bearing with one another in love” [NIV].

“Bearing” sounds a lot like tolerance, but we think it is much more than that. Simone Weil wrote about paying “attention” to the other, which seems simple enough at first, but she expands the notion to be a gift of love. This is not just about listening, waiting for our chance to make our carefully honed point when the interlocutor takes a breath. Attention is a clearing of the decks, literally creating a void into which the other can step in and feel attended to and loved.

And who is this “other” that deserves our attention? Everyone. In this reading, Paul emphasizes the unity of what we now call Christendom: “one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all” [NIV]. Paul was, of course, the apostle who first brought Christ to the gentiles, a first step to the church that now spans the globe. The new covenant that he describes in Galatians established a church that does not require that we follow the Mosaic Law, but only asks that we love God with our whole heart and mind, and love our neighbors as ourselves. And our neighbors are, of course, everyone. Just as God thought each of us worthy of grace through Christ, we should consider each of us, especially those who are currently suffering, worthy of our attention and love.

## March 28 - Saturday

*Psalm 127*

*1 Timothy 6: 11-16*

*Kings 5: 1-12*

*Matthew 18: 12-53*

This year, I decided to try something a little different for my meditation. Instead of finding inspiration in the readings, I decided to try to find inspiration from the person who has this day as his Feast day.

**James Solomon Russell** was born into slavery on December 20, 1857. After the Civil War ended, Russell had attended a Black children's school, and went on to college. Russell knew the importance of an education and began teaching children when college was not in session, and required students to recite the Apostle's Creed daily as part of his elementary school curriculum.

A local matron gave Russell a Book of Common Prayer, and Russell decided to become an Episcopalian. He attended Theological Seminary, and became a deacon on March 9, 1882. He did missionary work in Lawrenceville, Virginia being the first to hold services for Blacks at a generally all white St. Andrew's. In December 1882, he married Virginia Michigan Morgan of Petersburg, and they went on to have eight children. He became a priest in 1887.

He founded a school which became St Paul's College. Enrollment and the curriculum expanded. Russell advocated Black person's education and land ownership and helped organize the St Paul's Farmer's Conference in July 1905, despite the Jim Crow laws. St Paul's also established a department to train teachers, and was accredited by the State Board of Education in 1926.

In June 1917, he was offered positions of suffragan bishop in Arkansas and North Carolina and declined them both, citing the importance of his work at St Paul's. St. Paul's became one of the most prestigious Black colleges in America. He retired from his position as Principal and Chaplain in 1929.

Russell's missionary work in southern Virginia, and Kentucky, helped to establish the Diocese of Southwestern Virginia.

*Brenda Pierce*

## March 29 - Palm Sunday

*Psalm 118: 1-2, 19-29*

*Isaiah 50: 4-9*

*Philippians 2: 5-11*

*Matthew 21: 1-11*



I have always loved The Liturgy of the Palms. The prophesy unfolds as Matthew tells of Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem. The donkey and colt are freely given as the anticipation builds over Jesus' arrival. Palms wave and garments cover his path into the city. Jesus is given a kingly welcome befitting the Gospel of Matthew. The fulfillment of so much prophecy must have been overwhelming for those who truly believed in Jesus' full identity.

As I wait outside or in the narthex there is a sense of awe as the Psalm is read and the palms are blessed. We hear the familiar story of Jesus entering Jerusalem with joy and adoration. "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest."

I feel the momentum of the moment as Jesus asks for an upper room to have the Passover meals. What must it have been to sit with Jesus and talk about what was to come. I imagine that I am present. And then, He takes the bread, blesses it and breaks it. He holds it out and invites me to eat along with the others. Next, He takes the cup and blesses it. He offers the cup to all. He reminds us that, as often as we eat the bread and drink the wine, we do show His death until He comes.

By the end of Palm Sunday, I am reminded of what will come in the days that follow. How devastating are the events of Holy Week. Yet throughout the year, I return to the events of Palm Sunday and am reminded of Jesus' words each time I partake of the Eucharist.

*Sharon Therkildsen*

## March 30 - Monday

*Psalm 36: 5-11*

*Hebrews 9: 11-15*

*Isaiah 42: 1-9*

*John 12: 1-11*

Thoughts about Mary:

A few years ago, the daily Lenten bracket-style game hosted by Forward Movement , “Lent Madness”, coyly pitted Martha against Mary right off the bat, which invoked considerable consternation amongst Good Shepherd players (to say the least!). I had always considered myself Team Martha, but indeed ultimately Mary won that coveted Golden Halo. Reflecting back, it seems I had imagined Little Red Hen Martha as somehow superior to Mary, who just sat there.

And that's the thing with Mary: every time we encounter her, she's just sitting there at Christ's feet. But it was so very much more, wasn't it. The first time, she was raptly engaged, listening to Jesus as He taught. The second time, she was deeply grieving the loss of her dear brother Lazarus. She lay there at Christ's feet, sharing her utter anguish with abject humility. The third time at Christ's feet (John's reading today): she is listening of course, but simultaneously and silently anointing his feet, prophetically preparing for His death only a few days later.

Our good old Martha was a do-er. As Episcopalian, we strive to express “radical hospitality”.

Mary was a listen-er (indeed, she could be considered the disciple whose lessons to us are silent). I read somewhere about “contagious holiness”. That's our Mary.



*Laura Rosato*

## March 31 - Tuesday

*Psalm 71: 1-14*

*1 Corinthians 1: 18-31*

*Isaiah 49: 1-7*

*John 12: 20-36*

### Thoughts on Joseph

When our son, Doug, passed, I started looking for music to be played at his memorial service. I was looking for a song to honor the relationship between my husband and Doug. Rick had adopted Doug when he was five years old. They always had shared a love of the Yankees, but differed on football teams, Doug the Steelers and Rick first the Cleveland Browns till they moved, then changed to Buffalo. They joined Indian Guides together and then all the family memories. I remember how touched Rick was when Doug told him he could never have asked for a better father.



I did find a song that could have been written from the point of view of Joseph and the newly born Jesus . It is about Joseph's hope and dreams for baby Jesus, but also Jesus' relationship with God. Joseph affirms the relationship with God and acknowledges the plans He has for Jesus.

I know so little about Joseph. I do know that Joseph acknowledged Jesus as God's son. I can believe that Joseph was a good man in that God chose him to be Jesus' earthly father. He must have been a just and caring man. He stayed through the turmoil of the announcement of Mary's pregnancy and married her even with all the laws of their time. I believe he followed God's plans for the Holy family. He took them to Egypt so they would be safe. Joseph must have provided a home and for the needs of the family. I believe Joseph saw to the religious upbringing of Jesus. How did Joseph feel about all the prophecies that had been made about the Messiah? I wonder about their relationship as they worked side-by-side in the work shop, and the many good times together at family meals, gatherings and father-son times. There are few references to Joseph. I trust that God knew Joseph and that he would be the man to raise His son on earth.

The song, if you get a chance to listen is "Joseph's Lullaby" by Mercy Me. It made me think and wonder more about who Joseph was and what his feelings were being chosen by God for this very important commitment. He was a very important person in the Holy Family with a great role to play for God and Jesus. As Father Lance says, "we are all children of God."

*Cathy Switzer*

## April 1 - Wednesday

*Psalm 70*

*Hebrews 12: 1-3*

*Isaiah 50: 4-9*

*John 13: 21-32*

To me, Lent often feels darker, more self-contemplative, fearful and almost sad at times, especially closer to Holy Week, when at the end the light is finally seen with awe and joy. This poem speaks to the individual and the fear and hiding of our own light.

### **Our Deepest Fear**

By Marianne Williamson

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate.

Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.

It is our light, not our darkness, that frightens us.

We ask ourselves

Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous?

Actually, who are you NOT to be?

You are a child of God.

Your playing small  
does not serve the world.

There's nothing enlightened about shrinking  
so others won't feel insecure around you.

We are all meant to shine  
as children do.

We were born to make manifest  
the glory of God that is within us.



*Photo by Gwen Brennick*

*Beth Wrisley*

## April 2 - Maundy Thursday

*Psalm 116:1*

*1 Corinthians 11: 23-26*

*Exodus 12: 1-14*

*John 13: 1-17*

### Maundy Thursday: A Spirituality of Service and Sacrifice

Today's readings focus upon the spirituality of service and sacrifice. Psalm 1 reading guides us to happiness by rejecting the advice of evil and not following the example of sinners. Instead, to find joy in obeying God's laws. Exodus reading recounts the Passover feast preparations, how to gather people, share in the Seder meal, and prepare to leave. It then instructs us to annually celebrate this day. 1 Corinthians reminds us of the power and wisdom of God.

On Maundy Thursday, we read John's account of Jesus washing his disciple's feet and the giving of a new commandment. John states that if we follow Jesus' example, we will be inspired to continual service with humility and have happiness in our hearts. Jesus teaches us the power of love in action. Then, as Jesus knew that his time had come, he relays the "New Commandment" paraphrased *As I have loved you, so must you love one another. If you have love for one another then everyone will know you are my disciples.* Jesus demonstrated actions of love as the Son of God: the thinking, the words, and the actions of how to love and serve one another.

This is a big challenge. This can be difficult to live out in our day-to-day life. Yet, this is the very thing that the Messiah has charged us to do.

As we enter the culmination of Lent in the time leading to Easter Sunday, let me leave you with this question to ponder. If today you were to go on trial for being a disciple of Jesus of Nazareth, would there be enough evidence to convict you? Spend some time in thought and prayerful reflection given the lens of today's readings: how to love others as Jesus loves us. How are you personally, walking the journey with Jesus to reflect the Spirituality of Service and Sacrifice ?

*Dr. Mary Randall*

## April 3 - Good Friday

*Psalm 22*

*Isaiah 52: 13-19*

*Hebrews 10: 16-25*

*John 18: 1-19; 42*

*Our forefathers put their trust in you;  
they trusted, and you delivered them.— Psalms 22:4*

The start of Psalm 22 is what Jesus screams from the cross in Mark and Matthew. In John, he says “it is finished.”

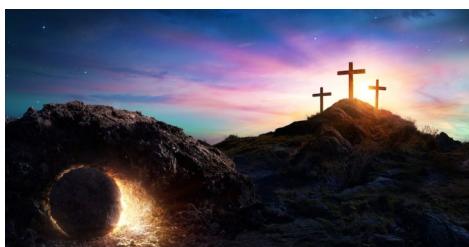
The Psalms have been a difficult book for me. I read them for many years as men whining at travails they brought upon themselves. But I have continued to study them, and am not finished doing so. In seminary, I learned the Psalms are what Jesus prayed. I knew he had been Jewish but the reality of his actions with something I too could read was a revelation.

Recently, in chapter two, Identify with the Plight of People, of Empowered to Repair by Brenda Salter McNeil, I was further schooled in the Psalms. Amongst many new learnings, one stood out: she said the Psalms show a “belief in a God who hears.” The switch clicked! I was missing something essential: these are not whining but releases. These were children seeking the ear and support of a good parent.

With these understandings, the words from Jesus on the cross are him conversing with the Father. “It is finished” is the ending of the path Jesus walked per his Father’s wishes. Jesus understood he was to do great but scary things as shown in his praying in Gethsemane, which all four gospels reference. But, he also wished it taken away from him. Jesus in his human reality was as troubled and scared as we are of God’s plans. in Jesus’ love of God, he was accepting of his reality. I don’t believe God wanted Jesus to die, I feel Jesus died because humans didn’t understand yet (it should have been the last act of violence); God knew it would happen if we did not understand. But in Jesus’ death, God showed us what God can do. God can resurrect!

God can deliver!

Even as we cry out and accept our reality, we “put our trust in you,” God, and we will be delivered, as you, dear God, have done time and time again.



*Denise Junker*

## April 4 - Holy Saturday

*Psalm 31: 1-4, 15-16*

*Job 14: 1-14*

*1 Peter 4: 1-8*

*Matthew 27: 57-66*

1 Peter 4: 1-2 Good Stewards of God's Grace

*Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same intention (for whoever has suffered in the flesh has finished with sin), so as to live for the rest of your earthly life no longer by human desires but by the will of God.*

Here we are at Holy Saturday. Good Friday is in the rear-view window and Easter is approaching quickly.

Brenda and I have now lived in the Lansing, MI, area through four winters. This current winter is by far the coldest. Since Christmas 2025 until now (Feb 1, 2026) there have been no days where the temperature has gone above freezing. The lowest temperature (without wind chill) has been -18 F. At these very low temperatures, even if you are wearing very warm clothing, any exposed skin feels like you've been burned after only a few minutes exposure.

As I write this, the outside temperature is 23 F with very little wind and it's sunny. I really had a sensation walking the dog today (of course wrapped up in a dog jacket) that spring would be coming soon. This temperature of 23 F felt warm because of the multiple previous weeks experiencing cold, arctic temperatures.

During my walk, in which I physically felt these first hints of spring, it felt like God was speaking to me through nature. I truly understood how the transition from Good Friday to Easter was a lot like the transition from the coldness of winter to the renewal of life in the spring.



*Winter in Michigan*

My prayer is that we always remember that Jesus sacrificed his life for us on the cross such that each of us has been given our own opportunity for a renewal, so as to live our lives "...no longer by human desires but by the will of God...".

*Bill Munch*

## April 5 - Easter

*Psalm 114*

*Jeremiah 31: 1-6*

*Colossians 3: 1-4*

*Matthew 28: 1-10*

Today, we receive the life-changing hope Jesus's resurrection brings.

In **Acts 10:34–43**, Peter reminds us that Easter is not just an event in history, but a message meant for every heart. No one is beyond God's reach, and no life is too broken to be restored.

Indeed, it is through our brokenness that we are drawn deeper into our faith, closer to God and closer to those we love, and have opportunities to reach out to others.

Paul, in his letter to the Corinthians, reveals the terrible pain he suffered and his prayers for relief:

*Three times I prayed for this pain to be removed from me. After the third time He said unto me, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” Most gladly therefore will I rather thrive in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*

*2 Corinthians 12:8–9*

We are not broken because we are bad; we are broken because we love and are loved deeply. And it is a relief for me. I can put down the clipboard & red pen, stop comparing, stop judging others, stop asking why me?

Sea glass can be found on beaches everywhere in the world. At some point, a glass object broke, made its' way into the ocean or a lake, got tossed around sand & rock & storms & temperatures until it made its way to the shore. Through its turbulent journey the sharp edges are smooth, uniquely beautiful. It may have started out as a vase, but once broken it became a treasure. ***Brokenness is not a flaw; it is a dawning.*** Lord, please help me to see the light that You shine on my path today.



*We are not broken because we are bad;  
we are broken because we love and are loved.*

*Mary White*



*“I am the resurrection and the life.  
The one who believes in me will live,  
even though they die...”*

John 11: 25