

Trinity Church  
Daily

Devotions for Lent



## Epigraph

*Lent invites us to make our hearts ready for remembering Jesus' passion and celebrating Jesus' resurrection. ... As a period of preparation, Lent has historically included the instruction of persons for baptism and profession of faith on Easter Sunday; the calling back of those who have become estranged from the church; and efforts by all Christians to deepen their piety, devotion, and readiness to mark the death and resurrection of their Savior. As such, the primary focus of the season is to explore and deepen a "baptismal spirituality" that centers on our union with Christ rather than to function only as an extended meditation on Christ's suffering and death.*

- Emily Brink and John D. Witvliet, *The Worship Sourcebook*, pages 551-552

# Introduction

What you are now reading was not begun a few weeks ago, but over ten years ago! That's because Trinity's Lenten Devotional began in the autumn of 2012 and what you have before you is our tenth anniversary edition. Do you know the story of how this began? Give me a few minutes to tell you a lovely Trinity story.

In the Lent of 2012, I offered a discussion of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century German theologian and martyr, Dietrich Bonhoeffer's book *Life Together*. Joan Cohen, who, at that time, was the chair of the Adult Ministries Committee and who was, as always, an enthusiastic participant in that Lenten discussion of Bonhoeffer's important book about Christian fellowship. After our Lenten study had ended, Joan and I continued to have conversations about what it meant to be a Christian community and how might we grow more deeply in Christ.

It was during one of those conversations that Joan said something like: "Several other churches make a Lenten devotional every year and I think Trinity should do one." If you knew Joan Cohen, you know that she was a force of nature and her suggestion for a devotional was not the end of our conversation! My response was that it was a good idea and we could look into it for some future time; Joan was thinking that that "future time" was *now*. Before I knew it, Joan had a plan and the Adult Ministries Committee was in full swing for a Lenten Devotional to be prepared for Lent of 2013. A few weeks later Trinity's first Lenten Devotional was born. Joan wrote devotions in almost every Devotional since.

After Joan fell asleep in the Lord on December 20, 2020, her family gave me and Reverend Gruver several of her books. One of the treasures for me from her books is the copy of *Life Together* she used during our Lenten study in 2012. Among the many marked passages there is this paragraph where Bonhoeffer wrote:

. . . scripture meditation leads to prayer. We have already said that the most promising method of prayer is to allow oneself to be guided by the word of the Scriptures, to pray on the basis of a word of scripture. . . . Prayer means nothing else but the readiness and willingness to receive and appropriate the Word, and, what is more, to accept it in one's personal situation, particular tasks, decisions, sins, and temptations According to a word of Scripture we pray for the clarification of our day, for preservation from sin, for growth in sanctification, for faithfulness and strength in our work.

This Devotional is to help us meditate on God's Word, to receive this Word and appropriate it into the living of our day, into our work, into our lives. That was the vision that began this project over a decade ago when a wise elder said it was something we should do and then made it happen.

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While all the weekdays hold a devotion written by one of our church members, each Saturday you will find a portion of a Psalm followed by an ancient Scottish prayer based on that respective psalm. The Scottish Psalter placed the 150 psalms in meter and was the sole hymnbook of Reformation and post-Reformation Scotland. Each metrical psalm was followed by a prayer that summarized the main theme of the psalm. The prayers included in this Devotional are a slightly edited version of prayers from the Scottish Psalter of 1595. On Sundays, we will read the Gospel passages suggested by the Revised Common Lectionary, except Easter Sunday, which is a devotion written by a fellow Trinitarian.

I am grateful for all those who wrote devotions and to Susan Bastnagel and Pam Dougherty who were our editors this year and to Alysia Sieh Badskey who designed and produced this booklet. I am also grateful to the current chair of the Adult Ministries Committee, Jen Dukelow, the vice-chair and Devotional overseer, Beth Gammie, and their team: Jenny Stark, Michelle Strobel, Carolyn Kramer, George Sanders, Eby Banas and Stacy Blackmer. I hope you will understand when I say that I am perhaps most grateful to our departed sister, Elder Joan Cohen, to whom we dedicate this tenth anniversary edition of our Lenten Devotion.

Asking Your Prayers and Promising Mine for You,

Gregory

# Day 1

## ASH WEDNESDAY, MARCH 2, 2022

### **Psalms 34:4-5**

*I sought the Lord and the Lord answered me, and delivered me from all my fears. Look to God, and be radiant; so your faces shall never be ashamed.*

These past few years we have all had many fears in our hearts—fear of COVID, job insecurity, and mental health concerns, fear for the equality of others, for our futures, and for our loved ones. I have had many fears myself. I have embarked on a discernment journey, like none that I have faced before. As I write this reflection, I have just submitted my application for seminary. I have been fearful about whether my intelligence is enough for seminary and fearful whether this is really the path that God is calling me to. I also fear the unknown in this next step in my life. But I always remember my faith. I remember that I can turn to God and my anxieties will be taken away, that in God anything is possible.

During this time of Lent, prayer, and contemplation, may we embrace our worries; may we not deny them, but turn them over to our Sustainer, knowing our Lord is always walking next to us holding us up.

**Prayer:** My Creator, may we turn to you in times of gladness and heartache knowing you are a loving and supportive God. Amen.

# Day 2

**THURSDAY, MARCH 3, 2022**

## **The Gospels and the Five Senses**

### **John 3:29**

*“The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom’s voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete.”*

In our in-depth study of The Gospel of John with Rev. Faulkner, we have looked closely at many aspects of John’s writings. The passage above is a portion of the response of John the Baptist to his disciples about baptism. It has led me to inquire about all of the ways that the Bible draws us in an immersive experience, using all of our senses.

*Hearing...*The quote above led me to one of my favorite stories when Mary (pregnant with Jesus) visits her cousin Elizabeth (also pregnant with the baby who would become John the Baptist).

Luke 1: 41 “When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.”

*Sight...*The disciples of Jesus see Him walk on water; after the resurrection, they see Him ascend into heaven.

*Smell...*Mary, sister of Lazarus, anoints Jesus with perfume.

*Taste...*Jesus feeds the 5,000 and joins the disciples in the last supper.

*Touch...*Jesus heals with touch many times over.

As I continue to study the Bible, I will be looking for these guideposts which I believe draw us into our immersive experience so that we may all relate to God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit in new ways.

**Prayer:** God of Light, please be with me on my journey to learn and grow in Faith. Help me to see your love for us through all that is written. Amen.

**Carolyn Kramer**

# Day 3

**FRIDAY, MARCH 4, 2022**

**Acts 9:17-19**

*So Ananias went and entered the house. He laid his hands on Saul and said, 'Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on your way here, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.' And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and his sight was restored. Then he got up and was baptized, and after taking some food, he regained his strength.*

This year my Epiphany star says "see." The Bible is full of references to sight and blindness, but this passage popped into my mind first. Initially I read it from Saul's perspective, but I was struck by the role of Ananias. I had forgotten there was another disciple in this story. God appeared to Ananias in a vision of his own and told him to lay hands on Saul. Ananias resists at first because of Saul's persecution of Christians. But he obeys God and approaches Saul as a brother. Saul literally has his sight restored, but God also opens the eyes of Ananias to the way that He uses unexpected sources to further His kingdom.

I had been wondering what God wanted me to see this year. Maybe I am supposed to see the world in a dramatically different way like Saul. Or maybe I am supposed to see and support the plans that God has for others, like Ananias. Perhaps the simple action of returning to a familiar story will help me to see meaningful details that God will use to open my eyes anew.

**Prayer:** Dear Lord, Open my eyes to what You want me to see today. I place my trust in Your perfect vision. Amen.

**Margaret Gammie**

# Day 4

**SATURDAY, MARCH 5, 2022**

**Psalm 27:1-4**

*The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?  
The LORD is the stronghold of my life;  
of whom shall I be afraid?*

*When evildoers assail me to devour my flesh  
— my adversaries and foes— they shall stumble and fall.*

*Though an army encamp against me, my heart shall not fear;  
though war rise up against me, yet I will be confident.*

*One thing I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after:  
to live in the house of the LORD all the days of my life,  
to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple.*

**Prayer:** FATHER OF LIGHT and fountain of all goodness, be helpful unto us in time of our affliction: and when we are in greatest danger, hide not thy face from us; yea, whatsoever thing fall unto us, strengthen our hearts, that we may have a continual hope of all the good things, which thou hast promised to us, through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

# Day 5

## FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT, MARCH 6, 2022

### Mark 1:9-15

*In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased." And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.*

*Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."*

# Day 6

**MONDAY, MARCH 7, 2022**

## **Yazoo River Lessons in Following Jesus**

### **Matthew 8:19-22**

*Then one of the teachers of religious law said to Him, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go." But Jesus replied, "Foxes have dens to live in and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place even to lay His head." Another of His disciples said, "Lord, first let me return home and bury my father." But Jesus told him, "Follow me now. Let the spiritually dead bury their own dead."*

I was in Vicksburg, Mississippi when I first heard the word Yazoo. No, this is not Yahoo of *Gulliver's Travels* or Yahoo, the company founded by Jerry Yang and David Filo. One of the characters in the *Final Fantasy* series is also called Yazoo but the Yazoo I am referring to is the Yazoo River in Mississippi that was named after the Indian tribe that once lived there.

I was the Neurology Fellow at the University of Kentucky and one of my duties was to take care of the veterans in the VA Hospital in Lexington. In fact, I was paid by the U.S. Army, and they gave me the rank of lieutenant ("so the veterans will respect you"), although I never considered the rank to be valid since I did not serve in the military. The VA Administration sent me to Little Rock, Arkansas for some fact-finding work involving the case of a veteran accusing the VA of abuse; later, I was asked to drive further south to Vicksburg to do a similar thing. I was having a farewell coffee chat with the VA contact person when he asked, "Dr. Banas, are you a Yazoo man?" I told him I didn't know what a Yazoo man was, and he told me to look at the river. It must be a local expression since I could not find any encyclopedia reference to it. (There was no Internet then.) So, I studied the river.

The Yazoo River starts from the upper Mississippi as a confluence of two other rivers and flows downstream for 188 miles almost parallel to the Mississippi River. Along the way, dams and levees were built to make the Yazoo empty into or separate from the Mississippi, but the Yazoo keeps to its intended course. Natural rock formations or the natural zigzagging of rivers do not dissuade the river from its solitary sojourn. It finally joins the Mississippi 188 miles downstream, a few miles south of Vicksburg.

I remembered this segment of my life's journey while I was reading Matthew 8:19-22. The men in the story wanted to follow Jesus. There were, however, personal issues, family ties, and job requirements that they could not overcome. Matthew's story was also in Luke,

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but Luke included a third man who asked Jesus if he could first go home to say goodbye to his family. Matthew and Luke did not say whether the men ultimately followed Jesus or not. It is hard to follow Jesus in the way He wants us to follow Him. I imagine the giant Mississippi calling to the Yazoo: Come, join me. Let your 188-mile journey be lost and absorbed in my 2,340-mile journey to the sea. Forget the levees and dams and rocks and hills and zig-zags. Just join me.

Had I known the meaning of Yazoo, I would have answered that man in Vicksburg: "Yes, I am a Yazoo man." Like the men in Matthew's story, I too, have many reasons why I often cannot follow Jesus the way He wants. Personal issues, time constraints, philosophical struggles, and numerous other reasons often bar me from joining that greater call to serve Him and Him only.

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, I believe in your call. Please help me in my unbelief.

**Eby L. Banas, MD**

# Day 7

**TUESDAY, MARCH 8, 2022**

**Genesis 1:2**

***Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.***

How many times have you watched a turbulent ocean, a babbling brook or even a placid lake and thought about the miraculous power and majesty of water? Water holds such power and majesty, it can only come from God. Like many of you, I am closest to God and the Holy Spirit when I am outdoors. Water brings rejuvenation to our bodies, our souls and our minds. There are over 700 references to water in the Bible, signifying its importance to the early Christians as they too found it a symbol of faith, salvation and provision. Traveling through Israel during the dry months makes one realize how critical it was to them. How deep the roots of the olive trees and life-sustaining fruit trees must be to survive those months of drought.

So too it is important for our Christian roots to be deep and sustaining through the dry periods of our faith. There are times when my faith wavers but it is always brought back to fullness through the practice of prayer and attending worship, knowing that those surrounding me are also seeking a greater understanding of our purpose, and a strengthening of our relationship with the Triune God.

The next time you are near a body of water... pause for a moment if you can and think about the power of the Spirit of God and how it hovers over you at that moment in time. I'm hopeful that you will feel a divine presence.

**Prayer:** I pray that the blessings of the Holy Spirit settle in you in this moment and guide you in your path of growing in Christian commitment as we approach Easter.

**Janet H. Cohen**

# Day 8

**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 9, 2022**

**Matthew 21:22**

*If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.*

Prayer.

Prayer is necessary, comforting, confusing and something I think about a great deal. I am never sure I am doing it the right way or doing it enough. In a previous Bible group, we read a book devoted entirely to prayer. I learned that it is a good thing to begin with thanks. I learned to try praying with my hands open, palms facing upwards. I try to do these things but don't always remember. Sometimes my prayers seem so petty and selfish. I know that I offer quick prayers as things arise in my day, so it becomes an ongoing conversation. I have sent prayers to the Guideposts prayer chain because I think the wonderful people there are probably better at it than I am. I have prayed for some people for years and have seen positive results, but was it my offerings that made a difference? I have prayed for some people for years and not seen any results and sometimes a worsening of the situation. I prayed for my infant grandson this summer and witnessed a miracle happen.

Matthew says we will receive whatever we ask for in prayer. I know the answers to prayers do not always look the way we want them to look or happen when we want them to happen. God works in his time. I don't begin to understand about prayer and probably never will, but I know that I will not stop praying.

**Prayer:** Dear God, I thank you for the many prayers that have been answered. I thank you for working on prayers waiting for an answer. Help me to believe all your promises about prayer. Thank you for hearing my prayers.

# Day 9

**THURSDAY, MARCH 10, 2022**

**Ephesians 4:29**

*Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.*

**James 3:2**

*We all stumble in many ways. Anyone who is never at fault in what they say is perfect, able to keep their whole body in check.*

I first came across these verses in a Sunday School lesson I was teaching about how God wants us to use the gift of language. In a world where people often don't think before they speak, the results have been disturbing; arguments that result in shootings, and politicians deciding to speak out against each other's ideas instead of beginning dialogs to find common ground.

Throughout history, words have been known to inspire people, like those of Martin Luther King, Franklin Roosevelt and JFK, or stir up hatred like Adolph Hitler. James notes that on one hand we use the same tongue to praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness.

As we go through our daily toil, we need to remember to think before we speak, as it is clearly better to raise up our friends, neighbors, and family members, than to create divisions that may never heal.

**Prayer:** May the Holy Spirit descend upon the masses of this world to remind them of Jesus' new commandment to Peter prior to Jesus' crucifixion: Love One Another!

# Day 10

**FRIDAY, MARCH 11, 2022**

## **2 Timothy 4:7**

*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.*

While this is a verse often heard in eulogies when people praise the life led by the departed person, it is also a verse that reminds the living to lead a righteous life up until the time we are called to be with the Lord.

In this tumultuous time, when we are faced with conflicts on an everyday basis, following Jesus is the only way to help us fight the good fight. Reflecting on what Jesus would do under confusing situations helps us stay the course of a good Christian life.

Life throws numerous challenges our way, and if we take every one of them with the Lord, we are certain to find the light at the end of the tunnel. Every time we fall, we will certainly be able to get back up to finish the race of the life we are in, if only we have faith in our Lord.

The 'Dash' poem by Linda Ellis, talks about the dash between the birth date and death date of the person. The little dash represents the actual time of the person's life on earth, and how we live and love and spend the dash is what matters ultimately. For all of us living now, there is still time to make sure our 'dash' matters and represents the good fight. Remember, there's still time for course correction if we need to, as our Lord Jesus Christ is always there to guide and lead us in the good fight.

**Prayer:** Dear Lord, please help me fight the good fight and be able to finish the race gracefully, keeping the Christian faith all throughout my life. Amen.

# Day III

**SATURDAY, MARCH 12, 2022**

**Psalm 51:1-2, 6, 9-12**

*Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love;  
according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.  
Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,  
and cleanse me from my sin.*

*You desire truth in the inward being;  
therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.  
Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.*

*Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
and put a new and right spirit within me.*

*Do not cast me away from your presence,  
and do not take your holy spirit from me.  
Restore to me the joy of your salvation,  
and sustain in me a willing spirit.*

**Prayer:** FATHER OF ALL MERCIES, who delightest not in the death of a sinner, have compassion upon us, and wash us from all our sins that we have committed against thy holy Majesty since the time we first came into this world. Create in us a clean heart, and strengthen us continually with the power of thy Holy Spirit, that we, being truly consecrated to thy service, may set forth thy praises, through Jesus Christ, our Saviour. AMEN.

# Day 12

## SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT, MARCH 13, 2022

### Mark 8:31-38

*Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."*

*He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."*

# Day 13

**MONDAY, MARCH 14, 2022**

**Luke 18:17**

*Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.*

A few years ago, when we were leaving Disney, I asked my grandson about his trip. He told me all about his experience with much enthusiasm. He had only one regret. He said, "I saw Donald, Mickey, Goofy and a lot of other characters but I did not see Jesus." Amused, I asked why he thought he would see Jesus at Disney. He responded, "Isn't this the Magic Kingdom of Heaven?" How precious to be so innocent to combine the two places!

What a truly unique and wonderful way to think about our heavenly home being so much like a much-anticipated trip to Disney. To be so childlike in our faith.

Why, as adults, do we overcomplicate faith? We allow worry and fear into our lives. We only need to believe the Word, believe in Jesus as our Savior, have a pure heart, and simply pray.

**Prayer:** Dear Lord, Remind us that not everything needs to be so complicated as we make it. Help us to rediscover our innocence and lean on you as our Father.

**Trudie Levins**

# Day 14

**TUESDAY, MARCH 15, 2022**

**John 15:13**

*Greater love has no one than this; to lay down one's life for one's friends.*

It was going to be a wonderful afternoon! Our granddaughter has been a member of the Philadelphia Girls Choir for a number of years and the concerts have always been, naturally, in Philadelphia. But that afternoon, in December of last year, the concert was going to be at St Rose of Lima Catholic Church in Haddon Heights. We knew that it was going to be an exceptional performance and indeed it was. As I sat in the pew, I realized that it had been four years since I last set foot in a Catholic church, when I went for the viewing of a friend's Father. I sat in the pew prior to the concert and looked up at the crucifix above the altar, and it took my eyes and thoughts and held them throughout the entire performance. As the afternoon progressed, my thoughts turned to the difference between the Presbyterian 'empty cross' and the crucifix with which I grew up as a Catholic. The crucifix puts Jesus' suffering front and center, while our 'empty cross' represents victory over death.

Throughout my time as a Presbyterian, I have gotten very accustomed to and content at the sight of the empty cross and all that it represents. But in recent years, particularly at the Maundy Thursday service, I have felt great sorrow at the suffering of Jesus for the sake of all of us. That December afternoon seemed to bring both crosses into focus for me. As much as I love the sight of our empty cross and all it implies, I must also revisit the crucifix, for without it, there could be no empty cross. Jesus suffered and died for us, his friends, and there is no greater love.....

**Prayer:** Heavenly Father, please help me to always remember the suffering of your son Jesus as he died for my sins.

**Bob Thorpe**

# Day 15

**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 16, 2022**

**Acts 16: 14-15**

*One who heard us was Lydia, a seller of purple ... who was a worshipper of God. The Lord opened her heart to give heed to what was said by Paul. She was baptized with her household.*

Years ago, the Elders were all men. Near the end of World War II, the rules were changed and women could also serve! The Session at Calvary Presbyterian Church elected two highly respected women and the word got out that they would be serving the Summer Communion! The church was filled as the Session walked two by two to their usual seats in the front rows – with Mrs. Pound and Mrs. Warner the last two to enter.

When it was time to serve Communion, Mrs. Pound and Mrs. Warner walked forward and removed the white cloth that covered the elements, folded it, and returned to their seats. After the designated Elders had served Communion, the “new Elders”, Mrs. Pound and Mrs. Warner again walked to the table, recovered the plates, and returned to their seats. The rest of the service continued as usual.

Communion had been served to the congregation and the Cross was still standing!

**Prayer:** Our Father: As we cling to our old habits, we pray that we may always be open to new ways. We pray for your forgiveness and that You will be merciful to us. Amen.

# Day 16

**THURSDAY, MARCH 17, 2022**

**Romans 8:28 (NIV)**

*And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*

This verse was one with a list of prayer prompts that I received for the month of November. After reading the verse, the prayer prompt was “I can now see the good in...” I didn't have any idea where to start. I realized that to write my prayer I would have to remember things that made me uncomfortable, things that made me sad and/or angry. Nothing I particularly wanted to think about, much less write about, especially because the circumstances were my own doing, or rather my undoing.

Eventually, I thought back to my early teens when I gave my life to God. I felt so moved, so compelled, so convicted. I had everything planned out for my future - my husband and family, my college, my career. I was so sure of myself. Then life happened and I reacted to everything changing, usually poorly. I couldn't figure out why I was alone or to where all my plans had disappeared. I questioned myself completely and thoroughly, thinking that I was a bad person, that I was unlovable, that I didn't deserve anything from life.

I finally realized that what I thought was “bad,” was God using my decisions to help make the life I have now. Without all of my questionable choices, I wouldn't have my son, my husband, my daughters. I wouldn't have the love and support at home that I depend upon. I certainly wouldn't have gotten the job I have or the wonderfully supportive church family that I have come to rely on.

God was in charge all along, even when I didn't consciously know it. All I have, all that I am, was in God's plan.

**Prayer:** Heavenly Father, thank you for being with me even when I didn't feel I was worthy of anyone's love, especially yours. Help me to remember that all I am and all I do is a part of your divine plan and it is good.

# Day 17

**FRIDAY, MARCH 18, 2022**

## **Hebrews 4:12**

*Indeed, the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*

Due to the ever-changing world of over-the-air broadcast TV (where us cable cutters get their TV) the Son Life channel appeared a couple of months ago and I've found myself watching some of the call-in and Bible discussion shows. One of which is "Frances and Friends," moderated by Frances Swaggart, wife of Jimmy Swaggart. While I have some doubts about the Pentecostal movement these shows are interesting and informative.

The other day someone wrote in saying that a co-worker had advised them to start reading the Bible by reading through the book of Proverbs, one chapter a day for one month, as there are 31 chapters in Proverbs. I took notice because a few years ago I had suggested the same thing to one of my co-workers. Several years before that I had taken up that habit of reading the Bible every morning to fill the void in my life after my Shih Tzu had passed. I used to wake up early to walk him, feed him breakfast, play, nap, second walk before going to work. I was still waking up early, so I started by reading Proverbs over and over, then I read the New Testament a couple of times, then the Old Testament. Since then, I've read it through at least once a year. I've tried to read it chronologically, along with Halley's Bible Handbook, with the internet handy, and a Bible app on my phone with about a hundred translations.

I think back to a couple of decades ago when, being basically a Theist, I read the Bible cover to cover just to be able to argue about it across a pool table with my Atheist friends. That didn't really go very well so I read it again, also starting with Proverbs and praying for wisdom each time. That went a little bit better. The third time I just decided to believe everything no matter what and by that time my friends had stopped arguing with me. Somehow the Lord must have used them to get me to read my Bible!

Now I can't imagine spending a day without reading The Word. I find new inspiration every time! Some of the most profound passages are some of the hardest to read—those confusing passages that seem so cruel or unfair. I may spend weeks going over a few verses and looking for meaning, reading other translations, searching for commentaries and trying to figure out how it relates to things in my own life and experience.

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Sometimes it doesn't, other times I may have a dream that sorts it all out, but at least now I'm reading with the realization that the entirety of the Bible is there for our enlightenment and for our Blessing.

**Prayer:** Gracious God, thank you for the gift of your Word. Help me to read it with an open heart. Help me to study with a open mind. In Christ's name. Amen.

**Anonymous**

# Day 18

**SATURDAY, MARCH 19, 2022**

**Psalm 62:1-8**

*For God alone my soul waits in silence;  
from him comes my salvation.  
He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress;  
I shall never be shaken.*

*How long will you assail a person, will you batter your victim,  
all of you, as you would a leaning wall, a tottering fence?*

*Their only plan is to bring down a person of prominence.  
They take pleasure in falsehood; they bless with their mouths,  
but inwardly they curse.*

*For God alone my soul waits in silence,  
for my hope is from him.  
He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress;  
I shall not be shaken.*

*On God rests my deliverance and my honor;  
my mighty rock, my refuge is in God.  
Trust in him at all times, O people;  
pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us.*

**Prayer:** ETERNAL GOD, who art the only glory and hope of thy children, assist us ever in time of our troubles, and deliver us from the troops of all our enemies. Show unto them that all is but vanity, and that what they account their great riches and treasure is nothing, seeing there is no health for any but those that trust thy goodness and mercy, which thou hast declared and made manifest to us in thy dear Son, Jesus Christ. AMEN.

# Day 19

## THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT, MARCH 20, 2022

### John 2:13-22

*The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. He told those who were selling the doves, "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!" His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me." The Jews then said to him, "What sign can you show us for doing this?" Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews then said, "This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and you will raise it up in three days?" But he was speaking of the temple of his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.*

# Day 20

**MONDAY, MARCH 21, 2022**

## **Witnesses to a Miracle**

### **Luke 5: 17-20**

*On one of those days, as he was teaching, there were Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting by, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem; and the power of the Lord was with him to heal. And behold, men were bringing on a bed a man who was paralyzed, and they sought to bring him in and lay him before Jesus; but finding no way to bring him in, because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down with his bed through the tiles into the midst before Jesus. And when he saw their faith he said, "Man, your sins are forgiven you."*

An intriguing image in my children's Bible made an indelible mark on me as a child. It was a picture of a man on a pallet lowered from a roof to Jesus for healing. People in colorful robes are crowded around Jesus and the ill man. Jesus kneels and with his raised hand, blesses the man. Up above, there are two faces peering through the hole in the roof, friends who found a way to help the paralyzed man. Those two men in the picture are not receiving Jesus' blessing for themselves but Jesus does recognize their faithfulness. They are selfless and their focus is on getting their friend healed.

What a joy it must have been for these friends to witness this miracle! Imagine the next scenes: The men reunited outside of the home, jumping up and down and praising God! Perhaps then they ran home to share this good news, yelling and dancing the whole way. Will others believe what has happened? Their personal stories will be used to spread the Good News to their families and community. They become disciples of Jesus.



**Prayer:** Dear God, We want to be seen and recognized by you as faithful. Help us to have that faith so that we can witness your miracles every day. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

**Beth Gammie**

# Day 21

**TUESDAY, MARCH 22, 2022**

**By Chance or by God?**

**Psalms 139:2**

*You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar.*

When my son was an infant, my wife and I were getting ready to visit my parents. The trip to their house was about a three-hour drive from my rural Maryland home. We thought how nice it would be if we had some disposable diapers to use for the trip. Since we had little money, we had to continue to use the cloth diapers that we were already using. On our way out to the main road we stopped at our mailbox. In the daily mail was a sample box of three disposable diapers! What were the chances of that occurring?

How many times in our lives has something seemingly random happened just at the right time? Are we lucky or what? I tend to think that it is not luck, but it is the hand of God. I am not saying that if we want a close parking space that God will find us one. I am saying that God is an active participant in our lives. The twists and turns of our daily lives are all part of God's plan for us. Our needs are known by God and, if we trust Him, we will receive what we need at the time that is right for us.

God holds us in the palm of His hand.

**Prayer:** God, thank you for not letting us down. Help us to trust in you as you lead us through life.

# Day 22

**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 23, 2022**

## **1 Corinthians 12:4-11**

*There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.*

*Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.*

It is marvelous to see how the different kinds of gifts are distributed at Trinity, and how they are used for the Kingdom of God.

Some embrace the gift of music and give years of dedicated service to enhance our worship. Some share their gifts of knowledge and wisdom teaching through the education department or in positions of church leadership. Others use their gifts of building to care for our buildings or to build new buildings through missions. Others, also in the mission field, care for the feeding, clothing, and spiritual needs of others. Some work in the health care field and many people use the power of prayer for others. Another valuable gift is the encouragement of others. A newly utilized gift is that of livestreaming the worship service so we can still all partake in it during the pandemic. Many are able to use several of these gifts, all through the same spirit.

These are just a few of the many gifts that are distributed and used here. We can be thankful for all of them and for how they enrich us all.

**Prayer:** Thank you Lord for the many gifts that you have bestowed on your people. Thank you for the Spirit to move your people to put them to your use. We pray for an open heart to discern our own gifts and to hear your call to service. Amen.

**Doug Gammie**

# Day 23

**THURSDAY, MARCH 24, 2022**

**Matthew 28:20**

*... And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.*

This is the great promise from our Lord Jesus Christ. As the disciples were assembled on the mountain in Galilee and Jesus delivered his final instructions to them, he gave them the promise that they would never be alone. The promise does not contain conditions or a time limit; it is eternal. As he instructed them to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit, the promise is extended to all of us who are baptized as well.

**Prayer:** Lord, make your promise strong in my mind and heart as I strive to follow you to the end of my days and join with you in the Life Eternal. Amen.

# Day 24

**FRIDAY, MARCH 25, 2022**

**Romans 12:6-8 (NIV)**

*We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.*

What I have loved about the people of Trinity over the years are the many ways people serve the church and the community around us, both locally and globally – from families making sandwiches for Mission Thursdays, to facilitating Homeless Hospitality, to making donations for disaster relief around the world, and everything in between.

In worship each week, we are shown how Jesus led his disciples to know him and, through him, to know God. Whether in deed, or in parables, Jesus leads us all to know the greatness of God on earth and in Heaven. The disciples carried on his work and today the people continue to serve God around the world. The fact that hundreds of years later, the people continue to lead and serve with the gifts that God has bestowed upon them, brings everything full circle. God endows us with gifts so that we may gift others.

**Prayer:** Lord, may you help me to discern my gifts, so that I may use them to serve you and others around me. Whether that service is small or great, know that I thank you for the ability to use your gift to me in the best possible way that pleases you. Amen.

**Jen Dukelow**

# Day 25

**SATURDAY, MARCH 26, 2022**

**Psalm 148:1-4**

Praise the LORD!

Praise the LORD from the heavens;  
praise him in the heights!

Praise him, all his angels;  
praise him, all his host!

Praise him, sun and moon;  
praise him, all you shining stars!

Praise him, you highest heavens,  
and you waters above the heavens!

**Prayer:** *Great and marvellous is thy majesty, O MIGHTY GOD, Maker and Conserver of all things and mightily doth it shine in all thy creatures, both in heaven and earth and in the sea. Grant that, as these all acknowledge thee, so we may also make acknowledgment of the same, that with one accord and uniform consent we may with thy holy angels praise the magnificence of thy glorious name; so that all may rejoice in the health and exalting of thy people, whom thou hast relieved from death through the blood of Jesus Christ. AMEN.*

# Day 26

## FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT, MARCH 27, 2022

### John 3:14-21

*And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. "Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God."*

# Day 27

**MONDAY, MARCH 28, 2022**

**Jeremiah 29: 11-13**

*For surely I know the plans that I have for you, says the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. You will seek me and find me; when you seek me with all your heart.*

It's not easy to truly trust someone; we've all experienced that difficulty. It is made even harder when that someone is someone you can't truly see and interact with physically ... God. Not only do we need to trust Him with the innermost feelings in our heart, but we need to trust that He hears us and will listen. That's a lot to ask of us, given the cynical world that we currently live in. But God is clearly with us; He will give us all that He is, watching over us, if we have trust in Him. Wow! That's all that can be said there.

**Prayer:** Dear Lord, help us to trust in You, and to let go our innermost barrier to Your love for us. We know that this vulnerability is difficult for us to allow. But we also know that you will provide the best way for us, and that Your love is everlasting and without judgment.

**Cosmo Digneo**

# Day 28

**TUESDAY, MARCH 29, 2022**

## **Perception, Faith, and Good Works**

### **James 2:26**

*Just as the body is dead without breath, so also faith is dead without good works.*

“If a tree falls in the forest and there is no one to hear it fall, does it make a sound?” George Berkeley, archbishop of Cloyne in the Anglican Church of Ireland, must have been smiling inside when he asked this seemingly childish question in 1720. It provoked innumerable discussions about the relationship between perception and reality. There would still be sound, some argued, because the falling tree would cause vibrations in the air producing the sound; the vibrations would still be there even if no one was around. There would be no sound, others said, because for sound to be heard it must be perceived. Or as Berkeley emphatically stated: *TO BE IS TO BE PERCEIVED*.

I recalled Berkeley's ideas while I was meditating on James 2:14-26. James was rather insistent that Faith without works is dead. Yet we know that “by faith we are saved not because of ourselves lest any man should boast.” We are, as Presbyterians, in agreement that works, no matter how good, cannot save us. The theologian Peter Abelard castigated the Christian community for not doing enough good works. “There are,” he said, “pagans who are more Christian than Christians.”

Faith and good works are in this relationship that is often difficult to untangle. Faith is primary. We do good works because we are saved and not because our good work saved us. But suppose you have faith but no good works, are you still saved? James said that that kind of faith is dead. And for faith to be counted for our salvation, does it have to be expressed in works or, as Berkeley said, does it have to be perceived? Faith cannot be perceived by our physical senses. We cannot see, hear, smell, taste, or touch faith. It must be paired with good works to be seen, felt, smelled, tasted, and touched. This is, I believe, what James meant when he said that faith without works is dead. Can faith exist without works? Sure, it can, but it is a dead faith.

As to whether a falling tree makes a sound if no one around, Berkeley answered in two ways. His first answer was: If there was absolutely no one around to hear the tree fall, there would be no sound. In fact, if no one perceives the tree, there would be no tree at all. His second answer was: There would still be sound even if no one was around because it will be heard by God. To Berkeley, God is the Great Perceiver.

*(continued on next page...)*

So, can one still have faith even if one has no good works? Let me answer this the Berkeley way: NO, to us who are made of flesh because our human power of perception is not strong enough to pierce the veil that covers man's heart and mind...but YES because God, the Great Perceiver perceives, knows, and understands every iota of our being.

**Prayer:** Dear God who perceives us for what we are, blend our faith with our good works for your greater glory.

# Day 29

**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 30, 2022**

## **1 Corinthians 12:20-27**

*As it is, there are many parts, but one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.*

This is part of Paul's first letter to the Church at Corinth, detailing the relationships between the various members of the local church to each other. Using the body parts of a person, Paul teaches how each part is important to the whole.

When we came to Trinity in the late 1970s, both Holly and I embraced this concept. We both served as Deacons, and I served on Session. Holly joined Ruth Circle and I joined the choir. I taught 3<sup>rd</sup> grade for a year and led sermon outline discussions when they were required of 7<sup>th</sup> graders. We joined the leadership group of the Couples Club in our early years and enjoyed great fellowship with the group. With Jim and Ginny Newman, I helped lead numerous Youth Group summer work trips as photographer, chief cook (once for 51 people), and general gopher/expeditor. Later, we created the Family Work trips when it was decided to limit the number of adults on the youth trip. I was asked to design the hanging system in the Sanctuary for the six Christmas banners created by the women of the church, and later the large banners at the altar for Christmas and Easter. (List incomplete.)

I did not write this to brag, but to illustrate there are **many ways to serve Trinity** as part of our community of faith. Not all of these are long-term commitments.

**Prayer:** *Lord, reveal unto me the opportunities to serve you and the members of your church at Trinity. Amen.*

**Ed Sanborn**

# Day 30

## THURSDAY, MARCH 31, 2022

**Peter 4:10-11 RSV**

*As each has received a gift, employ it for one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who utters oracles of God; whoever renders service, as one who renders it by the strength which God supplies; in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*

Since 2020, Trinity has implemented and maintained the message of "staying connected." I've been so amazed of how the people of Trinity came together in many new ways to embrace this message. The growth of our online presence that allowed our congregation to stay engaged and led to new people discovering Trinity has been an unexpected blessing. We've learned to stay connected through a computer screen, YouTube videos and outdoor worship. Thanks be to God that people stepped out of their comfort zones to tap into gifts of creativity, technology, and the desire to keep the word of God flowing through the doors and screens of Trinity.

Within Trinity, our homes, our jobs, and our schools, we've all discovered new ways, new gifts to enable us to experience our ever-changing world. The idea of staying connected has new meaning for all of us. Even if we couldn't be together in person, just seeing friendly faces on our phones and computers has been comforting. Those of us who had never heard of Zoom prior to 2020 have learned to use this medium to keep all the functions of Trinity going through all the groups of this church.

**Prayer:** Lord, Thank you for all the many gifts we have received. Help us to be aware and present with these gifts, that we share with those around us so that your glory can be magnified. Amen.

Jen Dukelow

# Day 31

**FRIDAY, APRIL 1, 2022**

## **Isaiah 40:8**

*The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the Word of our God endures forever.*

(An aside to begin: this passage is used in Brahms' *Ein Deutsches Requiem* as the dramatic transition from a funeral dirge to a joyous homecoming celebration. I had the opportunity to sing it in college, and our conductor humorously referred to it as "the Big But.")

As long as I can remember, I've had an interest in science, especially astronomy. One of my earliest memories is of a class trip to a planetarium, where we saw a fantastic show about the history of our solar system. I can recall that it ended with a forecast into the future, in which the Sun eventually goes into catastrophic failure and grows to the point where it swallows the Earth before fading away into a dwarf star. (It tried to end on a more optimistic note, with the Beatles' *Here Comes the Sun* set to a beautiful sunrise. At the time it was calming, but looking back with a more mature perspective, it was probably a poor choice on their part!) This had a profound effect on little 6- or 7-year-old Kurt, and I'm sure my teachers didn't appreciate hearing every day "Why aren't we *doing* anything?? We only have 1,999,999,999 years left!"

Coming to terms with one's own mortality is one of the most personal relationships one can have with God: to realize that our existence as we know it is limited. But the passage above has always been one to which I come back. A former pastor at the church in which I grew up always used it at the closure of the Scripture readings before his sermons, and he always recited it with a sense of conviction that gave me comfort. Even after we are bodily gone, there is a part of us that brings us closer to God and will long endure. God will establish his greater Kingdom using those parts of us that endure and our works as building blocks, based on the foundation of the Word that sets the orbs of Heaven and Earth on their axes. If we focus on this and make the most of our time here, all will be well.

**Prayer:** Dearest Lord, although we may not be blessed with immortality, help us to follow your immortal Word, and gain eternal life through the things we accomplish with the gifts we have here on Earth and following the example of your son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

**Kurt Goetz**

# Day 32

**SATURDAY, APRIL 2, 2022**

## **Psalm 111**

*Praise the LORD!*

*I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart,  
in the company of the upright, in the congregation.*

*Great are the works of the LORD,  
studied by all who delight in them.  
Full of honor and majesty is his work,  
and his righteousness endures forever.*

*He has gained renown by his wonderful deeds;  
the LORD is gracious and merciful.  
He provides food for those who fear him;  
he is ever mindful of his covenant.*

*He has shown his people the power of his works,  
in giving them the heritage of the nations.  
The works of his hands are faithful and just;  
all his precepts are trustworthy.*

*They are established forever and ever,  
to be performed with faithfulness and uprightness.  
He sent redemption to his people;  
he has commanded his covenant forever.*

*Holy and awesome is his name.  
The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom;  
all those who practice it have a good understanding.  
His praise endures forever.*

**Prayer:** MOST PITIFUL AND LOVING FATHER, who ceasest not, by all means and ways, to draw us to love, fear, and obey thee, and to keep thy holy statutes and commandments, behold not, O our gracious God, our vanity and unthankfulness, but have regard unto thy promises and look unto the covenant which thou hast made with us who walk in thy fear. And suffer us never to be spoiled of the inestimable fruit of the redemption, purchased by the dear Son, Jesus Christ, our Redeemer and only Saviour. AMEN.

# Day 33

## FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT, APRIL 3, 2022

### **John 12:20-33**

*Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.*

*"Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him." Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.*

# Day 34

**MONDAY, APRIL 4, 2022**

**GOD is our Rock**

**Psalms 18:1-2**

*I love you Lord; you are my strength. The Lord is my rock, my fortress, my savior; my God is my rock in whom I find protection. God is my shield, the power that saves me, and my place of safety.*

These days It is easy to get caught up in fear and uncertainty. David wrote this when he was fighting his enemies.

Sometimes we have to go back to basics. We need to live according to God's commandments and know that God has our back. I look out and see all the wonderful things God has provided for us—the things that we need and knowledge that is needed to fight our enemies. Our enemies can be physical things to overcome or mental obstacles.

We need to rely on God and the people around us. We are not islands unto ourselves.

**Prayer:** God help us to remember that you are our strength in times of trouble; let us give you praise for all the wonderful things you provide for us, both physically and mentally, to know you are with us.

**Linda Craven**

# Day 35

**TUESDAY, APRIL 5, 2022**

## **The Church's One Foundation**

### **1 Corinthians 2:11**

For what human being knows what is truly human except the human spirit that is within? So also no one comprehends what is truly God's except the Spirit of God.

*The Church's One Foundation* is a hymn that has always inspired me in several ways. The first verse contains the basic elements of faith for me: the only foundation for all Christianity is Jesus Christ our Lord. There is no need for a papal edict or a scholarly tome; the life and teachings of Jesus are sufficient for our faith. The divisions created by man in the various denominations are of no real consequence. *From heaven he came and sought her* (the church) and *with his own blood he bought her and for her life he died*. Verse three tells of the struggles of faith and the ultimate goal: *And the great Church victorious Shall be the Church at rest*. Verse four tells of those whose faith journey is complete:

*Lord give us grace that we,  
like them, the meek and lowly,  
on high may dwell with Thee.*

This is the only hymn I learned to play with both hands and whether I am playing the piano or singing, I get emotional thinking of my parents and grandparents who led me in my faith journey.

**Prayer:** Lord, make the faith of my ancestors strong within me as I journey through life with you. Amen.

# Day 36

**WEDNESDAY, APRIL 6, 2022**

## **Hebrews 6:10-12**

*For God is not so unjust as to overlook your work and the love which you showed for his sake in serving the saints, as you still do. And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness in realizing the full assurance of hope until the end, so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. (RSV)*

*God doesn't miss anything. He knows perfectly well all the love you've shown him by helping needy Christians, and that you keep at it. And now I want each of you to extend that same intensity toward a full-bodied hope, and keep at it till the finish. Be like those who stay the course with committed faith and then get everything promised to them. (Eugene Peterson, *The Message*)*

Imagine my surprise when I did a key-word search of my favorite Bible translations for occurrences of *hopeful*, my 2022 "star word," and found nothing. Usually I can build a little cache of verses around the year's word that helps me consider it from every angle, both familiar and challenging. The Bible certainly offers lots of "hope," but why aren't the people hopeful? We know they find themselves in circumstances where they should be "feeling or inspired by optimism about a future event." And I know that we all need to be hopeful about the coming year to help us keep going in the face of change and challenge and COVID.

So I searched for "full of hope" and found another piece of Hebrews (close to my favorite Hebrews 12: 1-3) that offers the "full assurance of hope." And Eugene Peterson's translation gives us "full-bodied hope." That is what I need in order to run with perseverance the race (at this point a marathon) set before us.

And that's what I'm going to take from this verse for the coming year. (I'll unpack over time its messages about faith through grace.) Rather than losing faith and perspective, rather than losing ground or stagnating in my walk with Christ, I'll remind myself to be hopeful. God remembers us and sees our labors, encouraging us, in the full assurance of hope, to give our all to those things He gives us to do. This hope encourages me in to endure and to persevere.

**Prayer:** Gracious and loving God, your steadfastness is from generation to generation. We are hopeful for our future because we know we are your people. Be with us as we work to stay the course laid out before us. We pray all this in the name of your son, Jesus Christ, who came to fulfill your promise. Amen.

**Margery Sly**

# Day 37

**THURSDAY, APRIL 7, 2022**

## **Crossing the Rubicon**

Luke 9: 62 But Jesus told him, "Anyone who puts a hand to the plow and then looks back is not fit for the kingdom of God."

"We are crossing," the tourist guide nonchalantly uttered in her semi-enthusiastic, semi-professional tourist-guide voice. I don't know how many people in our bus were paying attention to the tourist guide since some were sleeping or reading or just looking at the scenery that was gradually fading in the twilight. I heard a couple talking about the gravesite of Dante Alighieri that happened to be in Ravenna. Dante wrote the last part of his book, *The Divine Comedy*, while in Ravenna. We were in the middle of our 1-week tour from Rome to Venice and back to Rome. We have just left the town of Ravenna on our way to Bologna before going to Florence. The Rubicon is east of Ravenna.

Trying to locate and trace the Rubicon is like peeling the page of history. It was an important river at the time of Julius Caesar because it marked the boundary between Gaul (a territory conquered by the Romans) and Italia proper. There was at that time a developing civil war between Pompey and Caesar and the Roman senate forbid Caesar from crossing the Rubicon.

Caesar must have pondered long but eventually crossed the river. "I have crossed the Rubicon. The die is cast." Caesar conquered Rome and change Rome from a republic to an empire. After Caesar died, the Roman emperor Octavian annexed Gaul to Italy in 42 BC and Rubicon lost its importance as a border. The river shifted courses through the centuries and in the Middle Ages farmers in the area drained water to irrigate their farms from a river in the same area they called the Fiumicino. Mussolini declared the Fiumicino as the Rubicon in 1933. Since then, historians conflicted on what is the real Rubicon: The Uso river, the Pisciatello river, the Fiucimino or even as a branch of the bigger Arno River.

I remembered our Italian tour when I read this part of Luke's Gospel. Jesus was talking to several people who declared their intention to follow Him but each had a reason to delay their following Jesus. They don't want to cross the Rubicon. I remember Abraham who without hesitation accepted God's command to sacrifice his son. He had crossed the Rubicon. I remember the two disciples who immediately left their fishermen's nets and two others who left their boats to follow Jesus.

*(continued on next page...)*

Crossing the Rubicon has become embedded in our American parlance. It is like the "point of no return". I must confess that I have put my hand to the plow but I have looked back and I am in many ways not fit for the kingdom. I found comfort in the Greek philosopher Heraclitus who once said: "No man can cross the same river twice". Things are always in a state of flux. You cross the river now and when you cross the river again even only a few seconds later, it is no longer the same river and it is no longer the same you. I rationalize by saying that the me who looked back is not the same me who put his hand to the plow. I find peace and solace however in the belief that once one is saved he remains always saved. This is a rather complex concept and as they say in politics , it is beyond my pay grade, and I will leave this to those who are more theologically astute.

**Prayer:** I have put my hand on the plow but I confess that there are times when I looked back. Lord, please turn my lingering backward looks into lingering forward looks for the glory of your kingdom. Amen.

**Eby L. Banas, MD**

# Day 38

**FRIDAY, APRIL 8, 2022**

**1 Peter: 1:24**

*All human life on earth is like grass, and human glory is like a flower in the field. The grass dries up and its flower falls off. But the Lord's word endures forever.*

People are compared here to grass and flowers that wither away. We are mortal but God's Word is eternal and never fails. Public opinion changes and is unreliable, but God's Word is constant. Only in God's eternal Word will we find lasting solutions to our problems and needs. The Word of God stands forever.

Peter is telling people that everything in this life—possessions, accomplishments, everything—will eventually fade and disappear; only God's Word and will are forever. We are to focus on God's Word which will never fail, and our eternal life with Jesus.

Both the law and the coming of our Lord Jesus are always part of God's eternal plan. We are to love each other as brothers and sisters and help to meet the needs of others.

**Prayer:** Almighty God, we need the guidance of your Holy Spirit, to keep our hearts and minds, on our savior Jesus Christ. The world in which we live always needed you and still does, more so now than ever. In Jesus name, I pray amen.

# Day 39

**SATURDAY, APRIL 9, 2022**

## **Psalm 112**

*Praise the LORD!*

*Happy are those who fear the LORD,  
who greatly delight in his commandments.*

*Their descendants will be mighty in the land;  
the generation of the upright will be blessed.  
Wealth and riches are in their houses,  
and their righteousness endures forever.*

*They rise in the darkness as a light for the upright;  
they are gracious, merciful, and righteous.  
It is well with those who deal generously and lend,  
who conduct their affairs with justice.*

*For the righteous will never be moved;  
they will be remembered forever.  
They are not afraid of evil tidings;  
their hearts are firm, secure in the LORD.*

*Their hearts are steady, they will not be afraid;  
in the end they will look in triumph on their foes.  
They have distributed freely, they have given to the poor;  
their righteousness endures forever; their horn is exalted in honor.*

*The wicked see it and are angry;  
they gnash their teeth and melt away;  
the desire of the wicked comes to nothing.*

**Prayer:** MOST LOVING FATHER, without whose blessing we are altogether poor and miserable creatures, imprint thy holy Word on all our hearts, in such sort that our whole pleasure and delight may be to serve thee in all fear and reverence. Grant that we may be so merciful towards our poor neighbours that we may also have a sure feeling of thy mercy and goodness, when thou shalt come to judge the world by him whom thou hast ordained to be our Lord and Sovereign, Jesus Christ. AMEN.

# Day 40

## **PALM/PASSION SUNDAY, APRIL 10, 2022**

### **Mark 11:1-11**

*When they were approaching Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples and said to them, "Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden; untie it and bring it. If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' just say this, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here immediately.'" They went away and found a colt tied near a door, outside in the street. As they were untying it, some of the bystanders said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" They told them what Jesus had said; and they allowed them to take it. Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it; and he sat on it. Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields. Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting,*

*"Hosanna!*

*Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!  
Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David!  
Hosanna in the highest heaven!"*

*Then he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple; and when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.*

### **Mark 15:1-39**

*As soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council. They bound Jesus, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate. Pilate asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" He answered him, "You say so." Then the chief priests accused him of many things. Pilate asked him again, "Have you no answer? See how many charges they bring against you." But Jesus made no further reply, so that Pilate was amazed.*

*Now at the festival he used to release a prisoner for them, anyone for whom they asked. Now a man called Barabbas was in prison with the rebels who had committed murder during the insurrection. So the crowd came and began to ask Pilate to do for them according to his custom. Then he answered them, "Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?" For he realized that it was out of jealousy that the chief priests had handed him over. But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release Barabbas for them instead.*

*Pilate spoke to them again, "Then what do you wish me to do with the man you call the King of the Jews?"*

*They shouted back, "Crucify him!" Pilate asked them, "Why, what evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Crucify him!" So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.*

*Then the soldiers led him into the courtyard of the palace (that is, the governor's headquarters); and they called together the whole cohort. And they clothed him in a purple cloak; and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on him. And they began saluting him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" They struck his head with a reed, spat upon him, and knelt down in homage to him. After mocking him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.*

*They compelled a passer-by, who was coming in from the country, to carry his cross; it was Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus. Then they brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means the place of a skull). And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh; but he did not take it. And they crucified him, and divided his clothes among them, casting lots to decide what each should take.*

*It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him. The inscription of the charge against him read, "The King of the Jews." And with him they crucified two bandits, one on his right and one on his left. Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying, "Aha! You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself, and come down from the cross!" In the same way the chief priests, along with the scribes, were also mocking him among themselves and saying, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down from the cross now, so that we may see and believe." Those who were crucified with him also taunted him.*

*When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, "Listen, he is calling for Elijah." And someone ran, filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink, saying, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down." Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. Now when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was God's Son!"*

# Day 41

**MONDAY, APRIL 11, 2022**

**The Old Rugged Cross** (aka: On A Hill Far Away) from *The Methodist Hymnal*

## **John 1:29**

The next day he saw Jesus coming towards him and declared, 'Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!'

Seated on a log, on a Sunday morning at my first summer camp away from home, I was introduced to a deeper appreciation of faith surrounded by the natural beauty created by God. White birches colored the view of the Pocono mountains lake. We sang the hymn with enthusiasm and, centered in the view down to the lake, was an "old rugged cross" made of small white birch logs. The image of a similar cross where the Lamb of God was crucified so long ago, made a distinct impression on this young lad in the wilderness. *For the dear Lamb of God left his glory above...to pardon and sanctify me.*

Because Jesus Christ died so long ago, our sins are forgiven if we believe in him.

*So I'll cherish the old rugged cross,  
till my trophies at last I lay down,  
I will cling to the old rugged cross  
and exchange it someday for a crown.*

The crown is eternal life with Lord Jesus.

**Prayer:** Lord, deepen my faith as I journey through the world your hands have made for my appreciation. Amen.

**Ed Sanborn**

# Day 42

**TUESDAY, APRIL 12, 2022**

## **Philippians 4:6-7**

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

*When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,  
When sorrows like sea billows roll;  
Whatever my lot, Thou has taught me to say,  
It is well, it is well, with my soul.*  
(*It Is Well With My Soul*, written by Horatio Spafford)

This song has spoken to me deeply for a long time. After Googling it and listening to different choirs sing it, I found a YouTube version by The Tabernacle Choir at Temple Square, the Hugh Bonneville Christmas Concert Narration. The background of this hymn is shared with the audience during the singing of the song.

Learning of the tragedies that befell Horatio Spafford and how he felt after losing his son, his fortune, and his four daughters, changed me. I began to think of my own tragedies. I remembered my reactions and feelings, my impulses and actions. I felt tender amazement (if that is such a thing) towards him, understanding how he felt such love towards those whom he had lost.

The feelings of comfort and hope that he felt, that caused him to write this hymn, gave me pause. It took time for me to understand that while the circumstances may be difficult, may be discouraging, and may feel downright impossible, God is always there to give comfort and hope.

I imagine Horatio Spafford thinking of his children and being able to see God's glory in his life. I believe that he was feeling God's love for him and was almost able to see the good that was to come to him in the future. When I feel overwhelmed by my circumstances, I bring this song to mind. I am reminded that, no matter what, God is there for me and that all is well with my soul.

**Prayer:** Dear Lord of my soul, please continue to show me ways to remember that you are always there to comfort me and give me hope. When I am overwhelmed with circumstances in life, I can feel your love for me and know that "It is well, it is well, with my soul." Amen.

**Michele Strobel**

# Day 43

**WEDNESDAY, APRIL 13, 2022**

**Romans 1: 11**

*I long to see you that I may impart to you the same spiritual gifts to strengthen you, that is, that we may be encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine.*

On October 3, 1791, in the second year of George Washington's first term as President of the United States, a group of people met at the home of Javel Franklin to hear Rev. Jabez Culver preach a sermon. Mr. Culver led six of them in the organization of the "Church of Christ in Wysox." These six were listed with eight others as the first church in Bradford County, Pennsylvania. As the church grew, they elected ruling elders, officers of the Presbyterian church. Many of the men were veterans of the Revolutionary War.

By 1828, the men of all denominations in the area organized themselves to build the Wysox Brick Meeting House. The church was built with red bricks made at a nearby farm! Built as protection from the Indians, the congregation sat facing the pulpit that had a door on each side. The windows had large shutters that closed from the inside. There was a large boulder in the front yard about four feet high that my brothers liked to climb. Years later a bronze plaque was added that read: "This is to commemorate the women and children captured by the Indians." Baptisms were frequently in the Schuylkill River.

When we moved to Wysox, one minister was serving three churches, leading services at Wysox at 11 am, Wyalusing at 1 pm, and Rome at 7 pm. Each Spring, the three churches would combine for a concert. Wysox did not have a choir, but my father and I were invited to sing with them.

Mr. Detty offered a Communicant's Class at the Wysox Church (next to the school) so those of us who were interested took our lunch and ate during our "class" one day a week.

After living in Wysox for two years, my father was transferred to Indiana, PA, a college town, and we joined Calvary Presbyterian Church – one of the largest in town! A big change from Wysox! I understand Wysox is still there – hopefully with a larger congregation!

**Prayer:** Our Father, help us to remember that while churches may be large or small, You are the One we turn to! Protect us and guide us as we remember we are your children. Through Christ we pray, Amen.

**Opal Stockwell**

# Day 44

## MAUNDY THURSDAY, APRIL 14, 2022

### **Psalms 119:105**

*"Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light for my path."*

What has been the greatest carry over in your life from the early days of the Covid pandemic onset when most of us were staying home? Are you still baking bread, cleaning closets, or organizing the family photos?

Rather than the physical activities that most were trying, my attention was drawn to my memory since I had suffered a brain bleed from my metastatic cancer. When I heard the name of one of the counties of New Jersey, I was reminded that, in my youth, my mother had taught my brother and me the names of the counties in alphabetical order. So I practiced. An interesting exercise, but not much carryover.

Watching the weather on TV, I saw the map of the US in outline and wondered about the names of the states. My husband and I printed out blank maps of the US and tried our hands at filling in the names of the states. I'm not sure about the carryover from that activity since I haven't tried it recently, but I do remember having trouble with the non-coastal states in the middle of the country.

Again, watching the weather, I saw that the new tropical depressions were being given names from the Greek alphabet. So, I was called back to my sorority days in college, and I reviewed the Greek alphabet. But, again, I haven't really needed that information in carryover.

The greatest carryover started one morning as I was reading my morning devotions. I recalled my younger days in Sunday school and the Bible drills that we often had. Determined to return to a better working knowledge of the structure of the Bible, I decided that instead of reading the scripture on my Kindle or phone and calling up the book and verse, I would try to rely on memory.

How wonderful it has been to work with my physical Bible and find the actual book and verse each morning. That has been the greatest carryover of all, and the most inspirational, as I work with the actual text and structure of the Bible rather than doing a quick internet search.

**Prayer:** Dear Lord, thank you for your word and the inspiration and direction that it gives me. Help me to discern your direction for my life.

**Linda Thorpe**

# Day 45

## GOOD FRIDAY, APRIL 15, 2021

### **Psalms 66:18-19**

*If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened; but God has surely listened and has heard my prayer.*

It was July 19 and only two days removed from Linda's and my 50th anniversary. I woke that day at 8:45 am, which by our normal waking times then, was early. I knew, however, that there was no way that I could fall back to sleep, so I got out of bed and went into another bedroom to be in a quiet place to read morning devotions and pray.

That sounds so easy, but for me it is difficult. I have never, ever come close to being a "prayer warrior," a term people used to describe Linda's great uncle and others. I find praying difficult and have spoken with Pastor Greg about it; I have tried different strategies to help, but still find it difficult.

That day, my prayers were those of thanks for being able to experience our 50<sup>th</sup> with our immediate family at dinner on Saturday, and then having our family with us in church on Sunday. What a glorious weekend. As I moved past my initial prayers, my mind started to wander to things other than praying. I got disgusted and wished that there might be some way I could really feel the presence of God with me. Almost instantaneously, I heard Linda cough and then get out of bed. I immediately knew that it was not pure circumstance! It was an answer to my wish and prayers. For every morning when I hear Linda up, I know she, and we, have been granted another day together. To have heard her awaken, I knew that I needed nothing else to assure me that yes, indeed, God is with me, as poor as my prayers and praying are!

**Prayer:** Oh God, help me to pray, but also assure me that my desire to meet you in prayer is already the beginning of my praying. Amen.

**Bob Thorpe**

# Day 46

## HOLY SATURDAY, APRIL 16, 2021

### Psalm 150

*Praise the LORD!*

*Praise God in his sanctuary;*

*praise him in his mighty firmament!*

*Praise him for his mighty deeds;*

*praise him according to his surpassing greatness!*

*Praise him with trumpet sound;*

*praise him with lute and harp!*

*Praise him with tambourine and dance;*

*praise him with strings and pipe!*

*Praise him with clanging cymbals;*

*praise him with loud clashing cymbals!*

*Let everything that breathes praise the LORD!*

*Praise the LORD!*

**Prayer:** Most worthy art thou, O GOOD AND GRACIOUS GOD, of all praises, even for thine own sake, surpassing all things in holiness. By thee alone are we made holy and sanctified. We praise thee for our glorious redemption, purchased for us in thy dearly beloved Son, Christ Jesus, as our duty continually bids us. Give us thy Holy Spirit to govern us. And grant that all things which breathe with life may praise thee as the true life of all creatures, through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, who reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, one God, for ever and ever. AMEN.

# Day 47

## RESURRECTION SUNDAY, APRIL 17, 2021

### In the Garden (Easter Sunday)

#### John 20:11-16

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher).

This hymn from my youth Methodist choir days has very personal meaning to me. On the Youth Work Trips at Trinity, we would often have a campfire night with fellowship and singing with the host group. Ginny Newman and I were both members of the choir and former members of the Methodist church. We would sing the old hymns together from memory and this was a favorite.

*I come to the garden alone,  
while the dew is still on the roses;  
and the voice I hear, falling on my ear;  
The Son of God discloses.*

*And he walks with me, and he talks with  
me, and he tells me I am his own,  
and the joy we share as we tarry there,  
none other has ever known.*



This is one of my great memories of faith and intense fellowship sharing with youth half our age. *Where two or more of you are gathered in my name, there I am with you* – never was this phrase more strongly felt. I liken the setting in the hymn to our Prayer Vigil nights where we spend quiet time mediating alone with God.

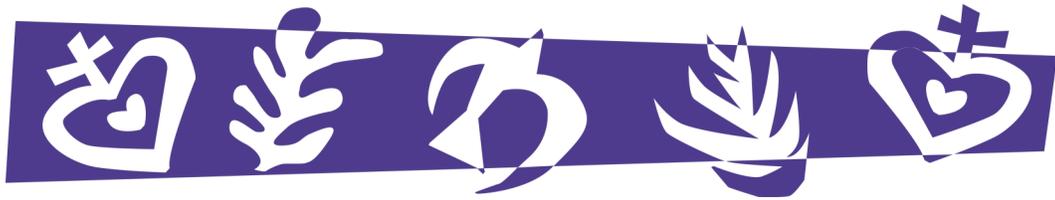
**Prayer:** Dear Lord, strengthen the bond of fellowship between me and your fellow servants as we worship together. Amen.

**Ed Sanborn**

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I try to make it a practice to be still.

This goes beyond the psychology of mindful meditation. It specifically involves me shutting out the noise and to-do lists.

It means quietly focusing on God with me . . .  
It involves praying to God and listening to him.

God is inescapable.

I just have to be still, and he promises to  
“hem me in, behind and before,  
and lay his hand upon me”  
*(Psalm 139:5).*

**- Joan O'Brien Cohen (1934-2020)**

*Trinity Lenten Devotional, 2017*

