

First Presbyterian Church Haddonfield

Lenten Devotional 2021



LENT AND HOLY WEEK CALENDAR

Wednesday, February 17: **Ash Wednesday Service** streamed all day;

Imposition of Ashes – 12-1 p.m. and 5-6 p.m. in Church portico (enter through playground)

Sunday, March 28: **Palm Sunday Service** streamed live – 10 a.m.

Palms distributed in parking lot drive-through – 11 a.m.-12 p.m.

Monday, March 29: Holy Week [Zoom](#) Prayer Service – 6:30-6:45 p.m.

Tuesday, March 30: – Holy Week [Zoom](#) Prayer Service – 6:30-6:45 p.m.

Wednesday, March 31: – Holy Week [Zoom](#) Prayer Service – 6:30-6:45 p.m.

Thursday, April 1: **Maundy Thursday Service** streamed live at 4:00 p.m.

Communion served in parking lot – 5:00-6:00 p.m.

Friday, April 2: **Good Friday Zoom Service** at 12:00 p.m.

Sunday, April 4: **Easter Service** streamed live at 10:00 a.m.

Streamed events are available at www.haddonfieldpres.org and on Facebook and can be viewed after initial streaming; Zoom services will be recorded for later viewing.

For drive-through and parking lot events use entrance on Chestnut Street next to playground.

First Presbyterian Church Haddonfield

Lenten Devotional 2021

FOREWORD FROM THE CHRISTIAN EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Dear Members,

It is with honor and gratitude that the CE Committee, with a great push and encouragement from Pastor Nikki and editing help from Anne Vial, presents this Lenten Devotional Booklet for your use.

As we have all heard from Scripture, in Jesus the Word became flesh. In a pleasant twist of fate, this time, the flesh becomes word. The following devotions have been created by your fellow members and our pastors as a gift and guide through this introspective Lenten period. We hope you find the words to be both solace and inspiration as we pass through another difficult period apart from one another.

Although our doctrine does not encourage internal self-sacrifice during this period but rather external expressions of sacrifice toward others (such as time, talents or treasure), what could be more in the spirit of Lenten sacrifice than a denial of each other's company in an effort to protect one another?

It is our hope that as you read through these devotions created by our community of faith you remember that, as bad as these times are, you are not alone—Jesus and our congregation are with you always.

Hoping to share the peace of Christ in person someday soon,

CE Committee

Rev. Nikki Perrine Passante – Associate Pastor
Gabrielle Heimerling – Director of Youth and Family Ministries
Bonnie Dewey – Session Representative
David Stedman – Session Representative
Tina Edmonston – Deacon Representative
Debra Nussbaum – Member
Lee Federline – Chair

DEVOTIONS

WEDNESDAY, February 17 – Ash Wednesday

Kae Fretz, Elder

Scripture: Joel 2 1,2- 12 to 17

Devotion: Joel asks us to say God's name loudly and with passion, assuming God's reappearance is at hand. We are to cut through the darkness, to live in light.

Prayer: God of all creation, Let us whisper your name in the night and reveal our needs and promises; let us shout your name in the light of day fulfilling our promises with praise and deeds. Amen.

Personal Reflection:



THURSDAY, February 18

Rebeca Silva de Foote, Moderator of Deacons

Scripture: Psalm 25:1-10

Devotion: This Psalm is a plea from someone who is suffering. This person is asking God for guidance and mercy. It also shows us that this person is longing for God not only to deliver them from their worries, but for God to *see* them fully. As we enter Lent, we wait for God to see us through the darkness, and to bestow the mercy that we trust God alone to give.

Prayer: God, Often we forget to put our trust in you. We forget to ask you to show us your ways when we feel lost and worried. When we forget to turn to you, we ask you to please guide us back towards your path and to show us mercy. We give thanks to you for your forgiveness and your unconditional love. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Personal Reflection:

FRIDAY, February 19

Janet Shoemaker, Deacon, Choir Member, Member of Presbyterian Women

Scripture: Psalm 25:1-10

Devotion: David, our psalmist, writes Psalm 25, a prayer of lament. What is it to lament you ask? To lament is to express regret, grief, or sorrow. David lifts his soul to God as he shares with Him that he is troubled. He shows his trust in God as he prays for His guidance, and for deliverance or rescue from a difficult situation.

During the past year, our lives have been greatly changed due to the pandemic. Most of us have been on an emotional rollercoaster, and we're not sure when the ride will be over. We experience concerns, anxieties, fears of the known and unknown. We too can pray to God. He is there to listen, to hear our troubles. As we lift our soul to God, we can trust that he will give us help, direction and/or forgiveness.



Prayer: Dear God, I lift my soul to you today. My world has changed so much in the last year. The paths that I once took are buried with weeds, and I need to develop a new trail. I trust you to help me and my family through this tumultuous time. Please lead me, Lord, as my path is under new construction, and then help me to navigate the path into the future.

Personal Reflection:

SATURDAY, February 20

Rev. Nikki Perrine Passante, Associate Pastor

Scripture: Matthew 9: 2-13

Matthew 9:9: *As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth; and he said to him, "Follow me." And he got up and followed him.*

Devotion: It's really that simple. I could get into how tax collectors were considered traitors and of low account, but Jesus was always found with the rejects, the dysfunctional, and the broken. Jesus never once said, 'worship me,' but at least 13 times

he did say, 'Follow Me.' He didn't demand they change first; he didn't even demand that they believe he was the Son of God. He knew that if they just followed, if they just took a step in His direction, it would change them. Take 1 step toward God and watch God take 10,000 steps to meet you.

Prayer: Lord God, During this season of Lent, teach me what it means to Follow You.
Amen.

Personal Reflection:

SUNDAY, February 21

Margaret Westermaier, Elder

Scripture: Mark 1:9-15

Devotion: Jesus begins his ministry at the Jordan, baptized by John by immersion in the river. And then is immediately acknowledged and commended as the Holy Spirit descends from heaven and the voice of God proclaims him the Beloved Son. But before Jesus can begin to proclaim the good news and call for repentance, he is driven into the wilderness for a time of trial. And in the wilderness he is accompanied by wild beasts, Satan, and the angels. No humans for forty days. We prepare to witness the conclusion of his subsequent ministry by observing 40 days of Lent as a time of personal trial, of self-evaluation, repentance, and discipline. It may help to find inspiration in nature. February and March are often stormy, but they are also part of the transition to Spring and new life, the Resurrection and the Life. The sun is returning. Groundhog Day/Candlemas, Feb. 2, is halfway between winter solstice and vernal equinox, March 21, the first day of Spring. Snowdrops and Hellebore will flower through the snow, and spring bulbs of daffodils, tulips, hyacinth will poke their leaves up even earlier, a promise of the glorious Easter flowers to come. So as we follow our Lenten path through storm, sickness and isolation, let us keep our eyes and hearts open to the promise of Christ's love and the affirmation of his world even in the wilderness.



Prayer: Dear Lord, In the presence of your world and the promise of your love, let us remember that day of baptism and commission. Let us have eyes to see, ears to hear,

and voices to proclaim. Let us use our time in the wilderness of Lent to repent and believe the good news. Amen.

Personal Reflection:

MONDAY, February 22

Bud Miller, Elder, Worship & Music Committee, Choir Member

Scripture: Ephesians 2: 1-10

Devotion: Paul wrote to the believers in Ephesus about their Christian faith by explaining the nature and purpose of the church, which is the body of Christ. He affirmed that believers in Christ have been freed from sin because of Christ's sacrifice on the cross. Through faith in Christ, our sins are forgiven.

We may still feel like sinning and sometimes, we will sin. The difference is that before we became Christians, we were dead in sin and a sinful nature. However, now we are alive with Christ. We became saved Christians because of God's unmerited grace, not as a result of any effort, ability, intelligent choice or act of service on our part. Our salvation is something only God can do.

Because of His love and forgiveness for us, God has prepared us to do good works through acts of service. We should strive to always treat ourselves and others with love and respect. Loving God and showing our love and service to others is a goal to which we all should strive to reach.

Prayer: Loving God, We thank you for your love and for your precious gift of Jesus, who set many examples for us to follow. Help us to treat ourselves and others with love and respect. Guide us in our efforts to do good works as we demonstrate our Christian faith for those whom we meet. Amen.

Personal Reflection:

TUESDAY, February 23

Judy Grantham, Moderator of Presbyterian Women

Scripture: Job 5:8-27

Devotion: Poor Job. He has suffered unbearable hardship and loss through no fault of his own. He has lost everything, and his friends struggle to help by blaming him. There seems to be no peaceful place for him. As we journey through Lent there still seems to be no peaceful place for us in this time of pandemic, unrest, and confusion. But Job knows that God "wounds, but he binds up; he strikes, but his hands heal...He does great things and unsearchable, marvelous things without number." So, it is with confidence that with Job we "would seek God and to God...[we] would commit...[our] cause." Thanks be to God.

Prayer: Gentle Lord, We know you are the God who works great wonders and with your strong arm you redeem your people. Calm our hearts and show us the way to peace and hope. Amen.

Personal Reflection:

WEDNESDAY, February 24

Trish Adkins, Member

Scripture: Matthew 4: 1-11

Devotion: I love this scene of Triple Temptation in Matthew 4. Jesus is fresh off 40 days and 40 nights of fasting in the wilderness. I imagine he's feeling pretty hungry but also like someone who just conquered 40 days and 40 nights of fasting.

I'd feel pretty accomplished and ready for a cheeseburger.

As he emerges, the devil is waiting. And three times we get to hear Jesus tell the Devil to go sit on a tack (remember that children's song?). It is the ultimate example of rebuffing temptation, of standing up for what is right and for saying, "You know what Devil, just enough already. God's got me. And he's even got you."

Jesus does not even participate in the temptation discussion. He does not become hysterical. He does not text 3 of his pals to ask advice. He does not Google: "how to say

No to Satan in a firm, but respectful way." He simply hears and observes the moment, considers the source and that's it, because God's got it, it is as simple as that.

And then, the angels come.

Prayer: Dear God, In these times of constant chaos, please remind us to take every temptation to You. Please help us to listen, let go and say No. We know you've got this and us. Amen.

Personal Reflection:

THURSDAY, February 25

Jill and Tony Mascena, Co-hosts of the Porch Bible Study

Scripture: Psalm 22:23-31.

All who seek the Lord will praise Him. Their hearts will rejoice with everlasting joy (verse 26).



Devotion: There are times in the confusion of the world today that we get caught up in negatives. We don't see the beauty God sends...or anything positive. Then...We look and see an incredible blue sky, or a dandelion blooming in January, or the way a child looks up at us with a smile. If we ask, God shows us there is good in everything.

Meditation:

What was my first negative thought today? What did I do with it...dwell on it? Or look for a positive in it and if I couldn't find one, did I give it to God to show me a positive or did I just keep going back to the negative?

Prayer:

Thank You God...

For teaching us that if You seem far away—guess who moved.

For loving us anyway and showing us that You give us everything we need to be able to serve You with joy.

For helping us let You work through each of us and helping us see the good in others.

Amen

Personal Reflection:

FRIDAY, February 26

Debra Nussbaum, Christian Education Committee

Scripture: Romans 4: 1-12: Abraham Justified by Faith

Devotion: We know that we are accepted, saved and loved by our amazing God because of our faith and not because of our works. But at times we all feel like we should do something to make sure we punch our ticket into heaven.

As Christians, there is no question that we should help the poor, love our neighbors, show kindness to our enemies, reach out to the prisoner, treat all people with dignity and respect. The Gospels tell us in no uncertain terms that whatever we did not do for the least of them, we did not do for our Lord.

We must grow and nurture our faith each day. Read the Scriptures, take quiet time to pray, listen for the soft voice of our mighty Lord. Take a Bible study class in our church, read works by writers like C.S. Lewis who help us better understand the Word, or by Max Lucado, Beth Moore, Jim Wallis, Tony Campolo, Willie James Jennings, Rick Warren and so many other great teachers and/or preachers.

But we should also do good works, not because it will "save" us, but because our faith makes us grateful to the Risen Lord and our desire is to honor and thank Jesus by modeling the graciousness and mercy he showed to all on earth.

Prayer: Gracious Lord and Savior, We are grateful to You for all you have done for us. We believe in You and praise You. Please help us in our journey of faith. Shed light on our path and help us put on the armor of God and be strong in our faith in You. Amen.

Personal Reflection:

SATURDAY, February 27

Lindsay Sommers, Member of APNC

Scripture: Jeremiah 33:10-16

Devotion: Today's passage hits close to home while surrounded by thoughts of the pandemic. My husband and I have often spoken about the parallels between scripture

and the state of our world in 2020 from social justice to politics to the forced isolation we all have become accustomed to. But what we also discussed on the flip side was how much we have been blessed with if only we look beyond our eye line. So whatever your situation, believe today that "the days are coming." Trusting in the Lord will bring about the change, and our worlds will be once again filled with family gatherings, jobs and all manner of in-person social connection. We just need to trust in the Lord's promise.

Prayer: Dear Lord, Guide us to see beyond our current situation. Help us remember that where there is desolate waste, in your Son, we can see your love flourish in these places to once again make them whole for us. Allow us to see the blessings beyond the misfortune until we once again gather together as a community. In your name we pray, Amen.

Personal Reflection:

SUNDAY, February 28

Julia Piotrowski, High School Senior

Scripture: Mark 8:31-38

Devotion: In this passage, Jesus predicts his own death and sufferings. He predicts his sufferings in quite an open and calm manner. We have heard the message and story of Jesus' crucifixion since we were young, making it hard for us to ever fully comprehend how difficult it must have been for his followers to understand. The miracles as one may say he performed made his followers double in size. Hearing from this man of so much greatness that God—his father—would let him undergo such suffering was quite puzzling to these followers. Jesus believed that Peter and his other disciples' concerns only showed their lack of trust in their God and showed their selfish human nature. Jesus tells his disciples to let others—anyone who wants to follow him—"deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me." This shows Jesus has his priorities straight and, though never wanting to be served, he is opening up this treacherous invitation to follow him on this journey and his ways of trusting God. Jesus gives us this



hope for the future but in this text, he calls all to follow him not just for his life but for the rest of their lives.

Prayer: Dear Lord, Help us live like your son, let us blindly follow your teaching having full trust in you always. Let our faith for you only grow as time passes so that we shall serve you and spread your word daily. Our needs will be met if we keep our faith strong and trust you in the hardest of times. Amen.

Personal Reflection:

MONDAY, March 1

Sara Watson, Elder

Scripture: Genesis 21:1-8

Devotion: In this passage we are reminded of promises kept. These promises were made to Abraham and Sarah, and they have been waiting. Abraham was very faithful. God kept his promise to Sarah, and her long wait for a child had finally come to an end. She conceived in her barren state and advanced age and bore Abraham a son when he was a hundred years old. She did this according to the set time of which God had spoken. Abraham gave his son the name of Isaac, "He Laughs," and circumcised him on the eighth day fulfilling his promise to God. Sarah sees that laughter, "Isaac," is the fulfillment of God's promise and that her life is now filled with much joy and blessings. God continued to keep his promises by having Isaac thrive under nursing and survive childhood illness until weaning from Sarah. Abraham had much to celebrate on feast day.

Prayer: Dear Lord, You were most kind and good to Sarah and Abraham. You fulfilled your promises to them, and Abraham fulfilled his promises to you. Let us always have joy and blessings in our lives as Sarah and Abraham did with the birth of Isaac. May we remember that you always keep your word and your promises no matter how long the wait. We must always stay faithful and keep our promises. Amen.

Personal Reflection:

TUESDAY, March 2

Carol H. Carty, Member

Scripture: Hebrews 11: 1-3, 13-19

Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for. By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what is visible (vs. 1-3 NIV).

Devotion: These scripture passages have given me an insight into Biblical actions of faith. As early Christians' faith was tested in many different situations, so is our faith tested today. We are reminded that faith is God's gift to us and to trust Him with confidence as we grow in our spiritual journey.

Prayer: Lord, Thank you for always being with us as we strengthen our faith and trust in you. Amen

Personal Reflection:

WEDNESDAY, March 3

Rebecca Bryan, Elder, Justice and Advocacy Committee Chair

Scripture: John 12:36: *While you have the light, believe in the light, so that you may become children of the light.*

Devotion: It's six days before Passover when Jesus says this beautiful, haunting line, spoken to his followers who struggle with doubt. As people of faith, we too are called to be open to this light, which is ever present; to believe in it, to embody it, and to share it. Being the light for others, or indeed, trusting the light for ourselves during this uncertain time feels almost like an act of defiance! It challenges me to accept life during a pandemic/racial reckoning/political chasmic divide exactly as it is, to know that I am never alone, and to feel hope as a child of the light.

Prayer: Pray this line of scripture 3 times with your breath:

Inhale: While you have the light

Exhale: Believe in the light

Inhale: So that you may become

Exhale: Children of the light

Personal Reflection:

THURSDAY, March 4

Tina Edmonston, Deacon, Sunday School teacher

Scripture: 1 Peter 2:4-10

Devotion: Peter probably wrote this letter to the early Christians while he was imprisoned in Rome. He uses the image of stones that are the building blocks that build a spiritual house of God. Jesus Christ is the cornerstone—the first stone that is put down to build the foundation of a building and that determines where and how it is to be built. This image of Christ as the cornerstone was familiar to the early Christians as it was part of the prophecies of Isaiah. Interestingly, that stone was initially rejected by the builders (Psalm 118:22). In fact, that stone was in the way of some—a stumbling block (Isaiah 8, 8:14). Maybe they did not recognize how perfect that stone was for its important function? Maybe the shape or size was not what they expected? Maybe the material did not seem special enough? Maybe they didn't expect a Messiah that was born in a stable in Bethlehem but was born in a palace? But God had selected Jesus as the cornerstone for his church that would last thousands of years. And yet he remains a stumbling block.

Peter reminds the early Christians and us that God has invited us to be his people and accepts us mercifully rather than rejecting us. We have been invited to become building blocks in this special building that is the living church and has Jesus as the cornerstone. Taken individually, a critical builder will probably find many flaws in us and might not find us worthy of being part of that special building that is the living church. But through his miraculous mercy, God finds a spot for all of us to be part of his living church.

Prayer: Dear God, Thank you for the invitation to be part of the building that is the living church. Thank you for giving us your son Jesus as a cornerstone and foundation for our lives. Give us the courage to share with the world that you are calling us out of the darkness into your wonderful light. Amen

Personal Reflection:

FRIDAY, March 5

Anne Vial, Office Staff

Scripture: Psalm 19:1-4:

*The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.
Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge.*

*There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard;
yet their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.*

Devotion: What has no speech, no words, and yet is heard throughout the world? It sounds like a riddle, as does, I find, much of the puzzle that is scripture. The last shall be first? Fitting a camel through the eye of a needle? Sheep and goats? Why can't wisdom come in easier packaging? As a word person, though, I revel in the metaphors the Bible offers. That the glories of the universe should speak for themselves makes sense. And if in the beginning was the word, and if God spoke the world into being, then language is a pretty big thing. In the time of Twitter and cable news, it is easy to lose sight of the power of language—to explain or confuse, to hurt or to heal. Let us speak carefully and, even more, listen intently so we hear God's universe speak, and Jesus' message of love resound.

Prayer: Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer. Amen.

Personal Reflection:

SATURDAY, March 6

Debra Nussbaum, Member of APNC

Scripture: Mark 9:2-8, The Transfiguration

Devotion: Commentaries I have read emphasize that the Transfiguration is the glorification of Jesus as He leaves His human body, and of His ministry where He walked on earth with us as it comes to an end. Some commentators say it is where human nature meets God and heaven meets earth. This is the point where God again verifies who Jesus is. The *Quest Study Bible* commentary says, "The message was clear; Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God." I have always found The Transfiguration difficult to understand because it is so out of the human daily experience. But in my walk with God, I have accepted that God's timeline is not our timeline, and God's universe is often beyond our human understanding. That no longer shakes my faith. I don't have to

understand everything about medicine or gravity or even love to totally embrace it and believe in it. The more I read the passages on The Transfiguration, the more I grasp its beautiful meaning.

I also think there is a lesson about change for us. We don't have to accept being the same person we were at 20, 30, 50, 70 or beyond. We too can change and go through our own dramatic transformations as we see more clearly what God has in store for us.

Prayer: Dear Lord, Help me understand those things that sometimes are hard to fit into my limited concepts of life. Thank you for challenging us at times with your word and giving us the space to grapple with its meaning. Amen.

Personal Reflection:

SUNDAY, March 7

Marisa McGovern, Director of First Presbyterian Preschool

Scripture: Psalm 19



Devotion: Psalm 19 reminds us that the magnificent beauty of God's creation is right there before us each day. The sun rises each day, crosses over the sky and sets at the opposite end of the horizon, proclaiming the glory of God Himself. During this pandemic, we have all spent more time indoors, afraid to venture out and risk exposure. Electronics occupy too much of our attention, and while they are useful in connecting with work, family, and school,

they are no substitute for the real world outside our walls. Our best days are those when we get outside, take a hike, or a bike ride. The natural treasures around us help clear our minds; we are restored and are reminded that God's creative power is a blessing to us all.

Prayer: Dear Lord, In the mist of life's difficulties and trying times let us seek out ways to open our hearts, find peace and be glad in your majesty and might. Amen.

Personal Reflection:

MONDAY, March 8

Rachel Davis, Elder

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 3:10-23

Devotion: Everywhere we look we see promises of happiness. Whether it's a trendy diet or exercise program, acceptance in a certain social group, or moving to your dream house in the perfect neighborhood, American culture teaches us to look outside of ourselves to find self-worth and happiness. However, Paul reminds us that by building a life based on worldly values, we deceive ourselves into false security. Often we get a gut feeling that helps us recognize the deceit by telling us we are going off-track. That gut feeling is God's Spirit that dwells in us, and it guides us on the path to true contentment. Through our relationship with Christ we can improve our skills at listening to our gut and discerning God's will for us.

Prayer: God of truth and grace, Help me to remember that Your Spirit dwells in me. Forgive me for ignoring your will for me and seeking happiness outside of my relationship with You. Thank you for providing a clear path to your kingdom through your Son Jesus Christ, the one true foundation. Amen.

Personal Reflection:

TUESDAY, March 9

Robert Timms

Scripture: Psalm 84

Devotion: This psalm...intended to be sung at worship, remember...is attributed to the "Sons of Korah." They ministered musically in the Old Testament house of God.

Most of the text celebrates being in God's house. Affected by the coronavirus, we haven't experienced that in recent months. As humans, we are built for companionship. As believers, fellowship. So we miss Sunday services.

My favorite verse in the Psalm is v. 11: "the Lord God is a sun and shield; he bestows favor and honor. No good thing does the Lord withhold from those who walk uprightly" (NRSV).

Especially in seasons of short, chilly days, we appreciate the sun. We get light and warmth. Yet science tells us that our sun also emits enough radioactive energy that it

could kill us. God, in creation, put distance between us and the sun, and physical elements in space mitigate the deadly risk of the energy.

Our God gives us light, spiritually, in the Bible. It is focused by the Holy Spirit. The blood of Jesus is our shield, protecting us from the wrath rightly due us as sinful people. We may stand upright before God as a result of Jesus' work. So now, the text promises, God withholds nothing "good" from us. Don't have something? Perhaps it is not as good as you believe. Trust his perfect wisdom.

Prayer: God, Thank you for the wisdom and power expressed in creation. Thank you for your providence to all, but especially to us, your children. You give us light, and warmth, and love. Help us in this season to reflect on our failings, but also on redemption in Christ, sealed at Easter's resurrection, with victory over sin and death. We love you more than words can express. Amen.

Personal Reflection:

WEDNESDAY, March 10

Rev. Nikki Perrine Passante

Scripture: Mark 11:15-19

Devotion: Jesus cleansing the temple takes place in all four accounts of the gospels. In Matthew, Mark, and Luke, it takes place close to the end of Jesus' ministry. In some sense, it seals the deal on his impending conviction and crucifixion.

But in John, the temple cleansing happens in the very beginning of Jesus' story – it is a very public inauguration of his ministry! In fact, the gospel writer goes into amazing detail, finding it exceptionally important to note that Jesus took his time to fashion together a whip out of cords.

The next time we ask, "What Would Jesus Do?" it's good to remember that freaking out and flipping over tables are both viable options.

Prayer: Lord, reveal to me where I am called to prophetic, passionate action on behalf of your people. Amen.

Personal Reflection:

THURSDAY, March 11

Rebecca Mannion, Office Staff

Scripture: Ephesians 1: 3-6

Devotion: We are blessed with the unconditional love of Christ. Even before our creation, God bestowed his blessings upon us and welcomed our spirits into his heavenly realms. When we were brought into existence, he created us as beings who would reflect his light and love into the world. He saw us as vehicles for good, and even when we fell victim to our own flaws and sin, he loved us so dearly that He sacrificed his own son, Jesus, to redeem and save us. Praise be to God. Let us rejoice in His glory for He is a loving Father who watches over us and continuously blesses us with eternal grace, forgiveness, and love.

Prayer: Dear God, Give us the courage and strength to live a life of light—a life that honors you and reflects your holy image. We praise you and are forever grateful we live in your favor. Amen

Personal Reflection:

FRIDAY, March 12

Kelly Stout, Deacon

Scripture: Psalm 107:1-3 and 17-22

Devotion: This past year has been filled with such sadness and hardship. It may be very difficult to consider what goodness there has been in such a time as this. What has been most good during this difficult season is God, Himself. Goodness is the very nature of God. His Love endures forever. We see God's love not only in this difficult season, but also during the time of Lent. The Son of God came to Earth to be one of us, to save us, and to reconcile us back to His Loving Father. God helps us to see His faithfulness to each of us in a variety of ways during this time. We also see God's faithfulness at the cross. The loving Son of God did whatever He had to do to reconcile us back to God, even if that meant dying a horribly painful death. May this particular season of Lent remind us of God's continued, sustained faithfulness throughout all time.

Prayer: Dear God, We thank You for Your amazing faithfulness during this time of strife. Thank you for also displaying your faithfulness on the cross. Your Love knows no limits and is not bound by anything. We are blessed by, and thankful for Your Love, Lord that endures forever. Amen.

Personal Reflection:

SATURDAY, March 13

Margot Dark, Elder

Scripture: John 3:1-13

Devotion: This passage describes the nighttime visit between the Pharisee Nicodemus and Jesus. Nicodemus tells Jesus that because of Jesus' teaching he believed Jesus had come from God. Jesus says to Nicodemus, "very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above." Nicodemus tries to wrap his head around this concept, and Jesus goes on to say that what is born of flesh is flesh and what is born of spirit is spirit. Jesus uses the analogy of the wind blowing and not knowing where it comes from or where it is going. Nicodemus is confused, and Jesus questions how a teacher of Israel does not understand. Jesus wonders if he cannot understand earthly things how he can understand heavenly things.

Prayer: Dear Lord, please help us understand that although we cannot see you, we know you are with us. Although we cannot always understand, help us understand. Thank you for sending your Son to us to teach us and leave lessons behind. Thank you for forgiving our sins. Help us lead better lives. Help us understand and follow your lessons. Amen.

Personal Reflection:

SUNDAY, March 14

Sally O'Brien, Member

Scripture: Ephesians 2:1-10

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast" (vs 8 and 9).

Devotion: Salvation is a gift of God's love for us. We receive it through our faith in Christ, through grace only. There is no way we can earn it for ourselves. What a blessing! For me, the response is to try to live a life that includes being aware of needs around me and doing what I can to help—not to earn “brownie points” but because I am so grateful. Lent is a time for introspection and repentance. I think it is also a time for reaching out with God's love.

Prayer: Lord, I am grateful for the love and grace that you have given to me. Help me to show this love to others. Let them see You through me. Amen.

Personal Reflection:

MONDAY, March 15

Rev. Dr. Doug Gerdts, Transitional Senior Pastor

Scripture: Psalm 107:1-16

Devotion: This is a song of thanksgiving for God's deliverance from some of the struggles and painful situations we face. It's written just like a hymn and if read in its entirety, it's easy to pick out an introduction, ending, and four stanzas. The verses for today only address the intro and two of the four.

The first stanza opens with the phrase: "Some wandered in desert places..." The Bible never fails to amaze me with its immediate relevance to contemporary events. Since March of 2020, a year now, we've been wandering without direction, without knowledge of our destination, and without any indication of duration. Surely, our "souls have fainted within" and people of much, or even little, faith have "cried to the Lord in their trouble." We are frightened and uncertain; our lives have been "put on hold" and yet we've discovered that life does go on—just differently. We have the remarkable capacity to adapt—a capacity instilled in us by our Creator—and now may be a time that capacity is being tested and stretched—yet it is available and reliable. For that, we can join the psalmist: "Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to humankind!"

The second stanza is similar only instead of wandering, those who sit "in darkness and gloom, prisoners in misery" are lifted up. Who among us does not know those emotions!? We have all known days when life seemed to be closing in: days of sadness, grief, illness, loneliness, and despair. Yet, for the vast majority, we move through them—often with help from a variety of sources—yet we eventually emerge perhaps not unscathed.

What is so vividly depicted in these verses is the reminder that God promises us life—in all of its fullness and abundance—and God also promises to walk with us as we journey through that life knowing that we are going to face challenges and tribulations. God also provides fellow travelers on our journey some of whom are with us for years and years, others only for a season; yet we know, although not always aware, that we never travel alone.

Friends, if there was anything to take from this psalm, it is the repeated mantra at the close of each stanza: "Let them [us] thank the Lord for his steadfast love, for his wonderful works to humankind."

Prayer: Gracious and holy God, each of us comes to you in prayer from unique and specific places and stages of life. We might be in the pit of grief and loss, we might be soaring through the lofty currents of success and renown, we might be muddling through just trying to get by; yet you, O God, meet us exactly where we are and where we need you to be. Remind us, over and over, that this is life in all of its abundance and while it may be difficult at times, you never let us travel it alone for you are always with us and you provide fellow travelers for our journey. In all of it, we thank you for your steadfast love, for the wonderful gifts, talents, and insights you have provided humanity. We pray, above all else, that we might employ them solely to your glory and honor. Amen.

Personal Reflection:

TUESDAY, March 16

Thomas Piotrowski, 9th grader- Confirmation Class

Scripture: Psalm 107

Devotion: In Psalm 107, it shows that God takes people from everywhere and brings them together as one. They listened to God and he led them in the right path to places they can survive. He gives them what they need because he knows they care for him. The people know God will always love them.

Prayer: I pray that God can bring peace back to our country. Amen.

Personal Reflection:

WEDNESDAY, March 17

Rebecca Bryan, Chancel Choir Member

Scripture: John 8:15: *You judge by human standards, I judge no one.*



Devotion: My favorite mission trip that I chaperoned was the very first one with Rev. Jeremy Sanderson—to Pine Ridge, SD, where we worked with members of the Oglala Lakota tribe. I remember a conversation with one gentleman there that taught me to pause before judging someone. He said when you want to get to know somebody, you walk alongside

them—for a year. At the end of that year, you have the privilege of naming them as a friend. Any sooner, and it was unfair to think that you knew them well.

Contrast that to our current culture. Whether we are aware of it or not, we objectify people with labels before we even converse—if we ever converse; we turn judgment inward by holding ourselves to impossible standards. Let this line of scripture be an invitation to pause, to look at one another, and ourselves, through God's eyes: with compassion, with unconditional love, even with joy! Let's honor the sacred presence made incarnate in everyone (and everything).

Prayer: Gracious God, we can't get our heads around how much you love us. If we added up all the love we receive from our family, our partners, and our friends, we still wouldn't come close to your love for each one of us. Help us please to remember that the next time we catch ourselves judging someone...help us to pause long enough to see them as your creation, and to respond accordingly. Amen.

Personal Reflection:

THURSDAY, March 18

Peter Leibensperger, Minister of Music

Scripture: Psalm 107: 1-16

Devotion: Have you experienced "darkness" or "utter darkness" in your life? Have you experienced a taste of "the shadow of death" as the *English Standard Version*

translates verses 10 and 14? Perhaps you have suffered the loss of a beloved job, house, or close friend or family member. Maybe you experienced a failure that was important to you. Or perhaps you slipped into a period of spiritual darkness without even knowing, until you were so lost that you, too, cried out to God?

When I think of “utter darkness,” my mind turns to one memory in particular. On the night that my father died, my family gathered at my mother’s house to be with one another. Around 8:30 p.m., as the sun was going down, eight of us were sitting in the family room. There was nothing to say, so we said nothing. And as the sun set, none of us even had the energy or the desire to reach over and turn on a lamp. We sat in utter darkness, in utter silence for three hours, until, one by one, we got up and went to bed. If you have also experienced a deep loss like this—which many of us have or eventually will—you know that the shadow of death does not simply abate with the sunrise. The “utter darkness” of loss can sometimes permeate your soul, and the “shadow of death” can feel like it engulfs you for months or even years on end.

But this psalm shows us a way out. In verse 11, we read of people who are in “utter darkness” because “they rebelled against God’s commands. This, of course, does not mean that every tragedy we suffer is meant as a punishment from God, but it does remind us that God is sovereign over our grief. God sees and knows our suffering, and even though God sometimes allows suffering to happen for His purposes, we are assured throughout that God’s “love endures forever.” This means that even in the darkness, even in the silence, even when we do not feel loved, God is there waiting to hear us call out. And when God delivers us, we respond with heartfelt praise.

Prayer: I believe in the Sun even when it’s not shining. I believe in Love even when I don’t feel it. I believe in God even when God is silent. Amen.

Personal Reflection:

FRIDAY, March 19

Gabrielle Heimerling, Director of Youth and Family Ministries

Scripture: Psalm 51:1-12

Devotion: We have all, at one point, felt broken and perhaps beyond the forgiveness of God; desperate for reassurance that we are not beyond salvation or forgiveness. This

psalm is heavy with the weight of such despair. But even in our darkest moments and lowest points, even when we think we do not deserve it, we are granted grace, mercy, and forgiveness. We are always able to right our path, to be forgiven, to try again, even when we think we have run out of chances. God will never abandon us.

Prayer: Dear God, Thank you for your unlimited grace and love. Thank you for accepting my imperfections as ways to let your light shine through me to light my way back to you. Amen.

Personal Reflection:

SATURDAY, March 20

Rachel Davis, Elder

Scripture: Psalm 51:1-12

Devotion: If you are anything like me, you are your own worst critic, replaying mistakes and regrets like a painful playlist on repeat. It is important to remember that as humans we are born imperfect and therefore will make mistakes. However, there is hope for us still. When we examine our negative self-talk through the eyes of God, we can notice that our harsh words are not based on truth. Psalm 51: 6-12 reminds us to replace hurtful lies with God's truth, wisdom, joy, and gladness. By replacing our inner voice with the voice of God we will find healing and hope.

Prayer: Creator God, Help me to remember that I am your precious child who is made in your image. Teach me to speak to myself as a parent speaks to a child—with gentleness, patience, encouragement, and forgiveness. Fill my innermost "secret heart" with your loving light. Amen.



Personal Reflection:

SUNDAY, March 21

Ed Balderstone, Deacon

Scripture: John 3:16

Devotion: John 3:16 is my favorite verse. I reflect on the days of my youth attending Bensalem Presbyterian Church, founded in October 1705. John A. Van Sant, an octogenarian, was the very essence of a follower of God Almighty and His son, Jesus Christ. His presence, whether in the Church or elsewhere, with a sun-tanned countenance, his patience, guidance, and understanding live on in my memory, on the walls of both the Bensalem Historical Society and my apartment.

Prayer (This prayer came from Canterbury Cathedral in England): Almighty God, From whom all thoughts of truth and peace proceed: kindle, we pray, in the hearts of all men the true love of peace; and guide with your pure and peaceable wisdom those who take counsel for the nations of the earth; that in tranquility your kingdom may go forward, 'til the earth is filled with the knowledge of your love; through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

Personal Reflection:

MONDAY, March 22

Caroline Yount, Elder, Mission Committee Chair

Scripture: Isaiah 43:8-13

Devotion: This verse begins with a challenge from God to those with working eyes who refuse to see and functional ears who will not hear, choosing instead to worship an idol, be it a physical object or a person, and forsake God. God invites these unbelievers to bring witnesses to support their dubious claims but then quickly turns His attention to His own faithful—the exiled people of Israel—calling them "my witnesses" and "my servant whom I have chosen" in order to assure His community that He alone is God and their only savior. While the initial recipients of Isaiah's message suffered through captivity in Babylon in around 600 BCE and sorely needed the hopeful and encouraging prophecies, those reading the verses today can still take comfort in this direct reminder of God's grace, power and love. Even if our daily challenges are more mundane than those of God's early people, the complexities of modern life can lead us away from God and onto less spiritually fulfilling paths.

Prayer: Dear God, Help us to remember as we go about our daily lives that we should serve as witnesses to your glory and love. Lead us to seek truth, practice forgiveness and trust in you. Amen.

Personal Reflection:

TUESDAY, March 23

Robert Timms

Scripture: Isaiah 44: 1-8: *I will pour my spirit upon your descendants, and my blessing on your offspring. (Isaiah 44:3 - NRSV)*

Devotion: The passage speaks to Israel and makes great promises.

Isaiah 44:1 declares Israel to be God's servant and chosen.

Verse 3 speaks of water on dry ground, streams flowing across a thirsty land. Do you think this applies only to parched earth and literal water? I would suggest that God, who promises to be our provider, quenches every thirst we can have. Perhaps you want to say that these promises apply only to physical Israel, but many believe Christians, thanks to Jesus, inherit these promises, too.

Verse 6 sounds Messianic. It calls the Lord the king of Israel, and "his Redeemer" the Lord of hosts. We would say that this is none other than Jesus, whose great act of redemption we are about to celebrate. "I am the first and the last" sounds like something we've seen in Revelation. Not just letters of an alphabet, but full sufficiency. He is the first. He is the last. And also everything in between.

Hear the exhortation of verse 8: "Do not fear or be afraid." Why? Because this God who pledges love and providence can be taken at his word. "Is there any god besides me? There is no other rock, I know not one."

The gospels declare Jesus to be our rock. The finer points of Greek, I am told, make clear that this is a large shelf upon which a great building could be securely based. That's the one we are called to trust, and He loves you so much that He endured the suffering and shame of the cross. Three days later, He rose from the grave, defeating death and hell and enabling you to do the same.

Do you believe this? Then you are His child and will spend a joyous eternity in His house.
Prayer: God, How can we thank you enough for the truth you declare—that you meet our every need, declare us who believe to be your children, and promise that we will enjoy eternity with you. We can hardly imagine all which that means, but we take you at your word. In this season, we celebrate Christ's willing sacrificial death, his burial, and the resurrection which seals these promises to us. Help us, every day, to remember this, and to live thankfully in your service. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Personal Reflection:

WEDNESDAY, March 24

Bonnie Dewey, Elder, Christian Education Committee

Scripture: Psalm 119:9-16

Devotion: This Psalm, though addressing young people, is a wonderful resource for all of us. The question posed is "How can a young person live a clean life?" (*The Message*); or "How can young people keep their way pure?" (*NRSV*).

According to Psalm 119, the answer for God's people is so wonderfully simple: We listen to the Word of our God, we heed the commandments, we treasure God's Word in our hearts, and we reflect back on the Word whenever we strive to live a purer life. By keeping God's teachings within easy reach (in our hearts), we are blessed with the gift of being able to refer to these precepts as we make decisions, day in and day out.

Why should we wish to live purer, cleaner lives? Well, earthly life is hard, and the current pandemic is not making life here on planet earth any easier. But even now, we always have God's Word available to us as a guide. If we have the courage to treasure God's wisdom—always accessible in our hearts—and to truly contemplate the wealth of the Lord's Word, then according to the Psalm, such principles will be more valuable to us than any riches. There is one way for us to know if the Psalmist is correct...give it a try!

Prayer: Dear Lord, Every day, in every way, we are faced with decisions about how we will conduct ourselves. Will I travel through each day in a Godly way, or will I cave to baser inclinations? Sometimes we all find it so easy to slide down the path of more dishonorable leanings. But I am fully equipped to live a beautiful life that will enrich everyone who crosses my path! I have it in my power to take a moment to reflect on God's teachings

before I act in ways that would not glorify God, and which would also do nothing to advance our earthly world. Please help me to take the opportunity to be the better person that I know the Lord had in mind when she created me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Personal Reflection:

THURSDAY, March 25

Nancy Ruth Wainwright, Children's Choir Director

Scripture: Psalms 119: 1-2, 19-29

Devotion: What a welcome, upbeat reading for Lent! Psalm 119 is "A Song of Victory" in the NRSV Bible. These familiar words, "O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his steadfast love endures forever!" (vs.1 and 29) and "This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it," communicate the gratitude, praise, and hope in each day. God is here.

Our young singers in Cherub and Carol Choirs have sung "This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it" using various tunes and arrangements over the years. Different notes, but the same message. Powerful words to start, endure, and even finish, any day.

A mother of now adult children told me recently they used this choir song to wake their children every morning. One of her offspring recently sang it to her on the phone. Words to live by, direct from the Psalms, imprinted on the heart, made even more memorable as a song, passed from one generation to the next.

Prayer: Dear God, Thank you for your steadfast love each and every day. On our best days, our ho-hum days, and even on our worst days, let us rejoice and be glad! Amen.

Personal Reflection:

FRIDAY, March 26

Rev. Nikki Perrine Passante

Scripture: Philippians 2:12-18

Philippians 2:14-15: *Do all things without murmuring and arguing, so that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, in which you shine like stars in the world.*



Devotion: In which You Shine Like Stars in the World! I have never read that before! It reminds me of an excerpt from a Jan Richardson poem, words that bring us back to the beginning of our Lenten journey together on Ash Wednesday:

*All those days
you felt like dust,
like dirt,
as if all you had to do
was turn your face
toward the wind
and be scattered
to the four corners*

*or swept away
by the smallest breath
as insubstantial -*

*Did you not know
what the Holy One
can do with dust?*

*So let us be marked
not for sorrow.
And let us be marked
not for shame.*

*Let us be marked
not for false humility
or for thinking
we are less
than we are*

*but for claiming
what God can do
within the dust,
within the dirt,
within the stuff
of which the world
is made,
and the stars that blaze
in our bones,
and the galaxies that spiral
inside the smudge
we bear.*

Take Heart! Easter is Coming.

Prayer: Lord God, Teach Me to Shine. It is who you have made me to be. Amen.

Personal Reflection:

SATURDAY, March 27

Debra Nussbaum, Co-host of Porch Bible Study

Scripture: Psalm 118

Devotion: This psalm is like a love letter written to our awesome, powerful and loving God. This piece of writing is full of gratefulness, but it is also telling us that the Lord has blessed us, we should rejoice, and His light is forever shining upon us. There is so much reassurance in these words. The most famous line is "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord." Those who came to Jerusalem for Passover heard these words as a welcome. And they were shouted to Jesus when he went into Jerusalem. When we feel adrift, we can be comforted by the first phrases in this beautiful writing: "Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; His love endures forever."

Prayer: Lord, We need to thank you each and every day for the gift of life and for your grace and unwavering love. When we feel alone, we need to remember that you are there. Thank you, God, for loving us, blessing us and always walking with us in the good days and difficult days. In Jesus' name. Amen

Personal Reflection:

SUNDAY, March 28 – PALM SUNDAY

Gerry Rice, Elder

Scripture: Mark 11: 1-11



Devotion: Parades. I think it's more fun to be in a parade than to watch one. That said, I'll always treasure the memory of the 4th of July parade when my son was two. The Haddonfield Fire Department had recently purchased a new Hook and Ladder, and we sat on the curb with everyone else, our feet in the street, and excitedly waited. As it came into view, Nick became still, his eyes huge. Never

had he seen anything as big, as shiny or as beautiful. Tears streamed down my cheeks as I saw this glorious firetruck, decorated with flowers for its inaugural ride down Kings Highway, through the eyes of my son. Imagine what the people laying down their cloaks and spreading palms on the road must have experienced that day as their Lord rode past them on his way into Jerusalem. Maybe this is why I cry every Palm Sunday as the children parade through our sanctuary shouting "Hosanna! Blessed is He who Comes in the Name of the Lord!"

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Thank you for the gift of overwhelming joy. Amen.

Personal Reflection:

MONDAY, March 29 – MONDAY OF HOLY WEEK

Paul Urian, Elder, Human Resources Committee

Scripture: Psalm 36: 5-11

Devotion: What strikes me in these verses is God's magnanimous love for all. It is both generous and forgiving. It is unbounded, lifting up to the highest mountains the greatest depths. And then I look at how I live my life. Do I put boundaries around my love and who I show it to? Do I place limits on the depths I will go to show my love or to forgive someone who has hurt me? The answer is yes, I do place such limits on my love. I yearn to be big-hearted like the Lord.

Prayer: Jesus, May your example of love instruct us in how we are to live together, uplifting the oppressed, calling for justice, and seeing each life as precious and worth defending. Unite us in bonds of love, helping us work through our struggles and confusion to accomplish your purposes on Earth. Amen.

Personal Reflection:

TUESDAY, March 30 – TUESDAY OF HOLY WEEK

Rebecca Bryan, Elder

Scripture: John 12:27 (Jesus speaks of his death): *"Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—'God, save me from this hour'? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour."*

Devotion: Fr. Richard Rohr says that God comes to us...as our life! And I think this scripture allows for how that plays out. Who among us hasn't faced something dreadful? Maybe that we thought we didn't have the fortitude to endure? This scripture shows us that Jesus, the very "blueprint" for a Christian life, dreaded what was coming and yearned for another way. I imagine he took a deep breath with a long exhale, before he accepted his life exactly as it was, rather than the way he wished it could be. He trusted God enough to walk the path before him. We waste so much energy re-hashing the past and worrying about the future; it is an act of faith to accept our lives as they are, and to then seek the gift of wisdom that comes from lived experience.

Prayer: Gracious God, Quiet our busy minds, dispel any denial or resentment, dispel our anxiety about our uncertain future. Help us to rest in the certainty of you. Remind us again of how you show up as our very lives, so we can let go and let You. Amen.

Personal Reflection:

WEDNESDAY, March 31 – WEDNESDAY OF HOLY WEEK

Jim Wasik, Member, Choir Member

Scripture: Hebrews 12:1-3

Devotion: This always reminds me of the New York and Boston Marathons. Truly a great cloud. We run our faith journey sometimes in a cloud of witnesses, other times seeming to be alone, and, though we may tire or stumble, we persevere strengthened by the knowledge that, when our race is run, we will receive the Incorruptible Crown from Jesus.



Prayer: Lord, we know you are with us every step of the way, leading us on to those final steps when we will see you in glory and receive our crown and become part of the great cloud of witnesses gathered before the Throne of God. Amen.

Personal Reflection:

THURSDAY, April 1 – MAUNDY THURSDAY

Cheryl Tarditi, Elder

Scripture: John 13: 1-17, 31-35

Devotion: Happy April Fool's Day! In today's scripture, were the disciples wondering if Jesus was playing a prank on them by washing their feet? No—he was teaching them how to take care of one another through his example of taking care of them.

This pandemic has taught us many things, but the best thing is how people have stepped up to care for their neighbors, people they know or not. From food collections to mask making, to coat and blanket collections, it has been an outpouring of love in communities near and far.

My family has participated in many collection drives. (I am not talented enough for mask making!) I have also been a part of a mom's group who helped one another navigate through the initial days of virtual school. It was a crash course in online meet-ups and helping understand online assignments—it was a group effort, for sure.

As Jesus taught us, if you care for one another you will be blessed. And I am truly blessed with a group of moms who were there laughing (and crying!) together as we not only stayed connected during a strange time in our lives but also helped each other and the kids with school.

We are all in positions of servant leadership as brothers and sisters in Christ. We may be called to support each other in ways that don't fit our plans, but it may not be our plan to understand, and bring Glory to God.

Prayer: Dear Lord, Help us to continue to help those in need, physically and spiritually. In a world that is divisive, show us how to love one another as you have loved us. Give us the strength to continue to care for our neighbors as you taught us to do. Amen.

Personal Reflection:

FRIDAY, April 2 - GOOD FRIDAY

Anne Vial, Chancel Choir Member

Scripture: John 18:1-19:42

Devotion: We've arrived at the ugliest part of Jesus' story. There is a darkness to the whole of Lent. We began with ashes that remind us of our mortality, our humanness. Throughout the season, we couldn't escape how many ways there are to mess up. Just last night we heard again the poignant and heartbreaking story of the last gathering of Jesus and his best friends, who still can't grasp the situation. Today, even Peter the Rock fails in crucial moments. And today we stand with the mob. All around us is the brutal and terrifying violence of the crowd. Human beings, especially in groups, have a seemingly endless capacity for cruelty. I am one of the mob. Maybe I stand shyly to the side, but where is my attempt to hold back the ugliness? To yell "Stop!" before it is too late? Sunday is coming. We know that. But for today, sitting in the darkness is a good reminder that we are not immune from our humanity just because we hang a cross around our necks. I must ask if my certainties, my passions, my self-righteousness, my complacencies feed injustice or prevent it. Like Peter I will fail. Today, I think about that.

Prayer: Dear God, with the promise of Sunday's Easter message within reach, let me never forget what came before. Help me see clearly the worst of the failings Jesus came to redeem and therefore the enormity of that redemption. Amen.

Personal Reflection:

SATURDAY, April 3

Rachel Davis, Elder

Scripture: 1 Peter 4:1-8

Devotion: Have you ever gotten so deep in a deception, a bottle, or some other harmful behavior that you barely recognize yourself? There's a point along the dark byway when you find yourself at a crossroads; you can continue your unhealthy behavior and prolong your suffering, or you can turn to walk with Jesus on the road of self-love and compassion. Some may not understand your choice to turn down the path of Christ. However, living by the will of God leads us to a new life of forgiveness and love.

Prayer: Compassionate Creator, Thank you for your Son Jesus who faithfully obeyed your will into suffering followed by glorious resurrection. Remind me that by choosing the path of love, I, too, will find new life with You. Amen.

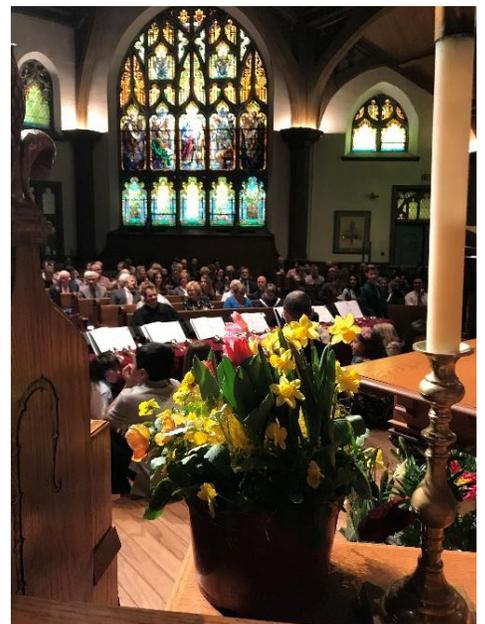
Personal Reflection:

SUNDAY, April 4 – EASTER!

Rebecca Bryan, Member Moore Bells

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 15: 10-11 (*The Message*) "But because God was so gracious, so very generous, here I am. And I'm not about to let his grace go to waste. Haven't I worked hard trying to do more than any of the others? Even then, my work didn't amount to all that much. It was God giving me the work to do, God giving me the energy to do it. So, whether you heard it from me or from those others, it's all the same: We spoke God's truth and you entrusted your lives."

Devotion: In my mind on Easter morning, I am processing into the Sanctuary with the choir, singing a glorious rendition of, "Jesus Christ is risen today! Aaaaale-eluuujah." And I'm sorry, but Easter just isn't Easter without brilliant handbells! Yet here we are, celebrating a second Easter together in Spirit, apart in body, thanks to a pandemic that few imagined would last this long. Where is God's grace in this? This past year, we went from taking "normal" life for granted to grieving its sudden



loss, as well as grieving loved ones whom we've lost. Living in a community—and country—known for their stability, we have lived with uncertainty. *But because God was so gracious, so very generous, here I am. And I'm not about to let his grace go to waste.*

God's grace this year has provided an unexpected education in letting go: letting go of busy schedules, letting go of eating out, of casual shopping; we realize that we don't need as much as we thought we did.

God's grace this year has called us to turn inward for strength, to that still, quiet center present in each one of us...below the mind's commentary, below the anxiety, below the uncertainty.

God's grace this year has gently(?) reminded us that despite all our worldly goods, we are not in control. But when we choose to open our eyes, we can appreciate how much we've been given, and how much beauty is around us.

And on this Easter Day, God's grace once again reminds us of the divine rhythm of all things. "Jesus' first incarnate life, his passing over into death, and his resurrection into the ongoing Christ life is the archetypal model for the entire pattern of creation. He is the microcosm for the whole cosmos, or the map of the whole journey, in case you need or want one" (Richard Rohr, *The Universal Christ*, p. 171). Can we see this pattern in the pandemic and in the unrest occurring our country? Perhaps what we are experiencing are the birth pains of something new, a resurrection we can't begin to comprehend.

Prayer: Ah, holy Jesus, Help us to keep our eyes on you, the very embodiment of hope. Help us to put the past away, to follow the lantern you shine just ahead of us, and to walk in your footsteps with quiet joy. You have showed us the way: the way to treat one another, the way to be faithful through the darkest of times, and the way of truth. We praise you and we lean on you, with the sure knowledge that resurrection is coming. Amen.

Personal Reflection:

LECTIONARY READINGS FOR LENT, HOLY WEEK AND EASTER 2021*

Wednesday, February 17, 2021: Ash Wednesday
Joel 2:1-2, 12-17 or Isaiah 58:1-12;
Psalm 51:1-17;
2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10;
Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

Thursday, February 18, 2021:
Psalm 25:1-10;
Daniel 9:1-14;
1 John 1:3-10

Friday, February 19, 2021:
Psalm 25:1-10;
Daniel 9:15-25a;
2 Timothy 4:1-5

Saturday, February 20, 2021:
Psalm 25:1-10;
Psalm 32;
Matthew 9:2-13

Sunday, February 21, 2021: First Sunday in Lent:
Genesis 9:8-17;
Psalm 25:1-10;
1 Peter 3:18-22;
Mark 1:9-15

Monday, February 22, 2021:
Psalm 77;
Job 4:1-21;
Ephesians 2:1-10

Tuesday, February 23, 2021:
Psalm 77;
Job 5:8-27;
1 Peter 3:8-18a

Wednesday, February 24, 2021:
Psalm 77;
Proverbs 30:1-9;
Matthew 4:1-11

Thursday, February 25, 2021:
Psalm 22:23-31;
Genesis 15:1-6, 12-18;
Romans 3:21-31

Friday, February 26, 2021:
Psalm 22:23-31;
Genesis 16:1-6;
Romans 4:1-12

Saturday, February 27, 2021:
Psalm 22:23-31;
Genesis 16:7-15;
Mark 8:27-30

Sunday, February 28, 2021: Second Sunday in Lent:
Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16
Psalm 22:23-31
Romans 4:13-25
Mark 8:31-38

Monday, March 1, 2021:
Psalm 105:1-11, 37-45;
Genesis 21:1-7;
Hebrews 1:8-12

Tuesday, March 2, 2021:
Psalm 105:1-11, 37-45;
Genesis 22:1-19;
Hebrews 11:1-3, 13-19

Wednesday, March 3, 2021:
Psalm 105:1-11, 37-45;
Jeremiah 30:12-22;
John 12:36-43

Thursday, March 4, 2021:
Psalm 19;
Exodus 19:1-9a;
1 Peter 2:4-10

Friday, March 5, 2021:
Psalm 19;
Exodus 19:9b-15;
Acts 7:30-40

Saturday, March 6, 2021:
Psalm 19;
Exodus 19:16-25;
Mark 9:2-8

Sunday, March 7, 2021: Third Sunday in Lent:

Exodus 20:1-17

Psalms 19

1 Corinthians 1:18-25

John 2:13-22

Monday, March 8, 2021:

Psalms 84;

1 Kings 6:1-4, 21-22;

1 Corinthians 3:10-23

Tuesday, March 9, 2021:

Psalms 84;

2 Chronicles 29:1-11, 16-19;

Hebrews 9:23-28

Wednesday, March 10, 2021:

Psalms 84;

Ezra 6:1-16;

Mark 11:15-19

Thursday, March 11, 2021:

Psalms 107:1-3, 17-22;

Genesis 9:8-17;

Ephesians 1:3-6

Friday, March 12, 2021:

Psalms 107:1-3, 17-22;

Daniel 12:5-13;

Ephesians 1:7-14

Saturday, March 13, 2021:

Psalms 107:1-3, 17-22;

Numbers 20:22-29;

John 3:1-13

Sunday, March 14, 2021: Fourth Sunday in Lent

Numbers 21:4-9

Psalms 107:1-3, 17-22

Ephesians 2:1-10

John 3:14-21

Monday, March 15, 2021:

Psalms 107:1-16;

Exodus 15:22-27;

Hebrews 3:1-6

Tuesday, March 16, 2021:

Psalms 107:1-16;

Numbers 20:1-13; 1

Corinthians 10:6-13

Wednesday, March 17, 2021:

Psalms 107:1-16;

Isaiah 60:15-22;

John 8:12-20

Thursday, March 18, 2021:

Psalms 51:1-12;

Isaiah 30:15-18;

Hebrews 4:1-13

Friday, March 19, 2021:

Psalms 51:1-12;

Exodus 30:1-10;

Hebrews 4:14-5:4

Saturday, March 20, 2021:

Psalms 51:1-12;

Habakkuk 3:2-13;

John 12:1-11

Sunday, March 21, 2021: Fifth Sunday in Lent:

Jeremiah 31:31-34

Psalms 51:1-12 or Psalms 119:9-16

Hebrews 5:5-10

John 12:20-33

Monday, March 22, 2021:

Psalms 119:9-16;

Isaiah 43:8-13; 2

Corinthians 3:4-11

Tuesday, March 23, 2021:

Psalms 119:9-16;

Isaiah 44:1-8;

Acts 2:14-24

Wednesday, March 24, 2021:

Psalms 119:9-16;

Haggai 2:1-9, 20-23;

John 12:34-50

Thursday, March 25, 2021:

Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29;
Deuteronomy 16:1-8;
Philippians 2:1-11

Friday, March 26, 2021:

Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29;
Jeremiah 33:1-9;
Philippians 2:12-18

Saturday, March 27, 2021:

Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29;
Jeremiah 33:10-16;
Mark 10:32-34, 46-52

Sunday, March 28, 2021: Palm/Passion Sunday

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

Mark 11:1-11 or John 12:12-16

Passion: Isaiah 50:4-9a

Psalm 31:9-16 Philippians 2:5-11

Mark 14:1-15:47 or Mark 15:1-39, (40-47)

Monday, March 29, 2021: Monday of Holy Week:

Isaiah 42:1-9

Psalm 36:5-11

Hebrews 9:11-15

John 12:1-11

Tuesday, March 30, 2021: Tuesday of Holy Week:

Isaiah 49:1-7

Psalm 71:1-14

1 Corinthians 1:18-31

John 12:20-36

Wed., March 31, 2021: Wednesday of Holy Week

Isaiah 50:4-9a

Psalm 70

Hebrews 12:1-3

John 13:21-32

Thursday, April 1, 2021: Maundy Thursday

Exodus 12:1-4, (5-10), 11-14

Psalm 116:1-2, 12-19

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

John 13:1-17, 31b-35

Friday, April 2, 2021: Good Friday:

Isaiah 52:13-53:12

Psalm 22

Hebrews 10:16-25 or Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9

John 18:1-19:42

Saturday, April 3, 2021:

Job 14:1-14 or Lamentations 3:1-9, 19-24

Psalm 31:1-4, 15-16

1 Peter 4:1-8

Matthew 27:57-66 or John 19:38-42

Sunday, April 4, 2021: Easter:

Acts 10:34-43 or Isaiah 25:6-9

Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24 1

Corinthians 15:1-11 or Acts 10:34-43

John 20:1-18 or Mark 16:1-8

*From the Revised Common Lectionary, Year B