

Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ 2021 Lenten Reflection Book



The Fight between Carnival and Lent, 1559, Pieter Bruegel (Northern Renaissance)

Ash Wednesday, Day 1
Fasting and Feasting

Lent should be more than a time for fasting. It should also be a joyous season of feasting. Lent is a time to fast from certain things and to feast on others. It is a season in which we should:

*Fast from judging others ❖ Feast on the Christ dwelling within,
Fast from apparent darkness ❖ Feast on the reality of light,
Fast from ill thoughts ❖ Feast on the healing power of God,
Fast from words that pollute ❖ Feast on phrases that purify,
Fast from discontent ❖ Feast on gratitude,
Fast from anger ❖ Feast on patience,
Fast from pessimism ❖ Feast on optimism,
Fast from worry ❖ Feast on Divine Order,
Fast from complaining ❖ Feast on appreciation,
Fast from negativity ❖ Feast on affirmation,
Fast from pressure ❖ Feast on unceasing prayer,
Fast from hostility ❖ Feast on nonresistance,
Fast from bitterness ❖ Feast on forgiveness,
Fast from self-concern ❖ Feast on compassion for others,
Fast from personal anxiety ❖ Feast on Eternal Truth,
Fast from discouragement ❖ Feast on hope,
Fast from facts that depress ❖ Feast on truths that uplift,
Fast from lethargy ❖ Feast on enthusiasm,
Fast from suspicion ❖ Feast on truth,
Fast from shadows of sorrow ❖ Feast on sunlight of serenity,
Fast from idle gossip ❖ Feast on purposeful silence.*

I am the one whose praise echoes on high.

I adorn all the earth.

I am the breeze that nurtures all things green.

I encourage blossoms to flourish with ripening fruits.

I am led by the spirit to feed the purest streams.

I am the rain coming from the dew that causes the grasses to laugh with the joy of life.

I am the yearning for good.

-Hildegard of Bingen

WE are the people who continue the story of Jesus and a love which is offered to all.

Many remember Easter as the salvific Christian holiday, the one that reminds us of God's great sacrifice. As we reflect personally in this season of Lent, let us also consider that WE are the ones through which God is made manifest. It is in this manifestation that saving grace is actualized through deep personal work and *then* through work in the world. WE are the ones called to serve, care, and work towards peace. Hildegard of Bingen might have said, "WE are the yearning for good." We begin with ourselves.

Contributor: Rev. Sara M. Holland

Day 2
Hands to Work ~ Hearts to God



“Put your hands to work and give your hearts to God.”
~ Mother Ann Lee, founder of the Shakers

I marvel at the miracle that is the human hand. Think of what human hands can do and have done across the eons of time. Our hands with their opposable thumbs gave us the evolutionary advantage over all of God’s other creatures. We fashion our lives with our hands, and God wants us to put our hands and hearts to good use.

The grace of Amanda Gorman’s hands as she recited her poetry at the recent presidential inauguration accented her words with beauty. Or consider the long, slender fingers of the pianist Jon Batiste running effortlessly over the keys making music. Our hands have the power to bring forth love and beauty, grace and goodwill. And some day soon we’ll once again be able to join hands together for God’s work, for we have it in our power to do so. It is what Jesus calls us to do helping fashion a just world for all. The whole world needs our hands now more than ever. It is indeed time to put our hands to work and give our hearts to God!

Holy God, give us the strength and wisdom to put our hands to work and set our hearts on you. Amen.

Contributor: Rebecca Larson

Day 3

"Lent means lengthen in German, and stands for the time in spring when the days are getting longer." I like to think that spending time in prayer each day during lent leads to increased light, increasing a little each day and leading to ultimate understanding at Easter. Jesus the person, who knew the joys, sorrows and grief we come to know in life, shares our journey through lent. His choice to follow God's will, to suffer and die that we would then know who He is, gives us our true identity, our spiritual identity.

Contributor: anonymous

Day 4

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I —
I took the one less traveled by
And that has made all the difference.

-Robert Frost

I think a lot of us take the road less traveled by. What does it have to do with Lent? Our paths during this time can be one of reflection about where our lives are going...

Contributor: Georgene Fabian

Day 5

*Grandfather,
Look at our brokenness.
We know that in all creation
Only the human family
Has strayed from the Sacred Way.
We know that we are the ones who are divided
And we are the ones
Who must come back together
To walk in the Sacred Way.
Grandfather,
Sacred one,
Teach us love, compassion, and honor
That we may heal the earth
And heal each other.
- Prayer of Ojibway people of Canada*

This prayer, though not in the Christian Canon, speaks to a God of ALL Creation, confessing our brokenness and calling us to unity.



May we pray this prayer for our own brokenness as well as for our world torn asunder.

Contributor: Rev. Dr. Kate Kallis (member of another UCC community in the New England region)

Day 6

Thoughts on the Season of Lent

As we approach the season of Lent, I approach it as an evolutionary biologist rather than a true believer. Belief in a creator must have some sort of evolutionary underpinnings, as many cultures not only have a god, but also accessory deities (such as Jesus, Buddha, Mohammed and other leaders of modern day and/or ancient religious beliefs). Just as physical adaptations in all living things must provide some sort of advantage to them, so must behavioral actions. In the long run, creatures lacking features that adapt them to their environment are less successful than those that have functional adaptations. Unless those organisms come to have more effective adaptations, they go extinct.

Organisms that are narrowly physically and behaviorally adapted to their environments do well over the short period of time, but what happens if that environment changes. Unless there is genetic diversity amongst that population of creatures, it is likely that their over-adaptation to that particular environment foretells their imminent extinction. Thus, all though specific adaptation to one's environment is important over the short haul, genetic diversity over the long haul is just as, if not more important.

How do these biologic principles apply to human existence and what Lenten lesson do they provide for us? Various societies have been extremely successful in the past. If one has visited the American southwest and viewed the cliff dwellings and other artifacts located throughout those states, one comes away with sense of amazement with respect to the folks to who built and lived in those dwellings. How come no one is living in them now? Apparently, those societies were adapted to a particular climatic regime and when those conditions changed their livelihood was impacted and those dwelling locations were no longer viable. If they were to survive as a society, they had to move and adapt to the new conditions.

What does this say of our modern situation? If we as a nation want to last as a society, then we must not only stress adaptability in our society (i.e., a willingness to accept different modes of human sexuality, different modes of religious beliefs, different modes of work), but also work towards diversity not only in our societal environment, but also in our ecological environment. A world that is only white and evangelical will not survive. A world where 1% own all the resources will not survive. A world where the well-to-do inhabitants live in locked enclaves will not survive. A world in which hundreds of species go extinct every year will not survive. A world in which we ravage our environment rather than apply stewardship to it, will not survive. We must support societal and ecologic diversity. We must have equality amongst ourselves and the living creatures of the earth. If we support these efforts, then we as humans might have a chance to continue into the next millennium.

Contributor: Larry Spencer

Day 7

Today you can take a great step toward a return to love by healing your relationship with yourself. Love for yourself is the key to loving others. Love begins with you. When your relationship with yourself is based on love and respect, your relationship with everything in life will change, including your relationships with the people you love.

-Don Miguel Ruiz



We pray today that we will release our self-judgement and hold ourselves with care and patience. In this moment, we acknowledge the difficulties the world presents us; we pray for care and intention for each moment. We pray Christ will meet us in these moments.

Contributor: Rev. Sara M. Holland

Day 8

The Evening [or morning] Review



⚙ *How open or aware was I to the presence of God in my day [or yesterday]?*

⚙ *What kind of nourishment did I receive? Did I give?*

⚙ *Does anything need to be emptied out in order for me to be at peace tonight?*

⚙ *For what do I thank God as I enter into sleep [or my day]?*

Contributor: This review was given to a group of retreatants at St. Joseph, Cohasset, MA led by Brita Gill Austern, professor at Andover Newton.

Day 9

THANK YOU

- by R. B. Curry

Thank you for giving me the springtime
Thank you for everything so new,
Thank you for the life within me
And in others too

Thank you for my church and family
Thank you for all who really care,
Thank you for the ways of knowing
You are always there

Thank you for my Church School teachers
Thank you for all the fun we've had
Thank you that the year's all over
I sure bet they're glad

Thank you for gifts we're giving
Thank you through our quiet prayer;
Thank you for the joy of singing
Happiness in the air.

Thank you now for summer coming
Thank you for the times of play
Thank you for our expectations
Fulfilled today.

Thank you O Lord, most holy
Thank you Father of us all
Thank you for the ears to hear
When to us you call.



Day 10

There he walks in your past. He walks in all the dark rooms you pretend are closed, that He may bring light. Invite Him into your past. Experience His forgiveness. His acceptance of you, Offer especially all that you are ashamed of . . . all that you wish to forget . . . all that still pains and hurts you . . . all the hurt you have caused others. Walk there in the places you are afraid of, knowing that He walks with you and will lead you on!

from *Celtic Daily Prayer: Prayers and Readings from the Northumbria Community*



Prayer: May we each lean into the path that Christ lays before us on this very day and experience a sense of gratitude. This we pray, for Love's sake. Amen.

Contributor: anonymous

Day 11

AN APRIL MORNING PRAYER

Wake up from the soft sleep of quiet.
Stretch out from toes to the tips of your ears.
See sunlight cross the window ash
And cascade down upon the floor to climb again up over the quilt.
Hear birds singing.
That puppy down the street is learning guardianship and
Barks his wailing warning to a passerby
Early on his way to work.

Lord, an April day is for the filling of our world with LIFE.
Warm sun lets us cast away our jackets.
A girl shakes her hair loose to catch sunlight and color.
Hints of pregnant possibility seem to propel
Living things in cycle-dramas ancient but new.

It is the awakening of a spirit within us that speaks of Love.
And what is love?

Lord, teach us how to dance the dance of life.
Lord, are you the stranger met upon the roadway, distant, unknown?
Lord, maker of small people, children, and little folks.
Lord, lighter of darkness and kinder of life.
Lord, inquisitive we come seeking the April in today.

How can we understand pain when the forsythia yells yellow?
When tulips wave blazing color and exposed radiance
Can we look away and say
"It does not matter what I do today."
When frogs shrill their chorus from the roadside bog
Or fields hide in the early morning fog
Can we experience something of wonder and awe?

It is promise that You bring to us this time of year.
The bittersweet understanding of Your power and grace to us
Who walk the take-for-granted way
And all but miss the grandeur of an April day.

Thanks be to God for quiet words breaking forth in green.
For the hidden splendors of Nature's delicacy unseen.
Remote discoveries without, within.
Growth visible and much unseen beneath ourselves.

Lord, teach us of the dance of LIFE.
And praise be to You
For an April morning turned toward heaven's promise
And earth's reality.

Amen.
Robert B. Grry
11.11.11



Day 12

*I give you thanks, O Lord, with my whole heart;
before the gods I sing your praise;
I bow down toward your holy temple
and give thanks to your name
for your steadfast love and your faithfulness;
for you have exalted your name
and your word above everything.
On the day I called, you answered me,
you increased my strength of soul.
The Lord will fulfill his purpose for me;
your steadfast love, O Lord, endures forever.
Do not forsake the work of your hands.*

-- Psalm 138:1-3, 8



“steadfast love endures forever.”

How can we lean into God’s steadfast love on this very day? Name one way we will catch a glimpse of God’s love. _____

Question presented by: Rev. [Sara M. Holland](#)

Day 13



Artist: Susan Wei

Consider the significance of the cross for you today and throughout your life. Does it provide you deep meaning? If so, how? Are you conflicted about the cross? Why or why not? If you are conflicted about it, what would it look like to reclaim such a symbol?

Questions posed by Rev. Sara

Day 14

O Radiant Dawn, O loving God
as the day begins to tell of your glory
etch into our hearts a bit of heaven
that we may take your shining light wherever we go.
Shine on us, in us, and through us
just as your sun shines in the sky
Give us enough of your light
that we may see the new
Greening Power within us

. . .

With trust, we expect this prayer to come true in our lives
for it is in the name of Jesus we pray.

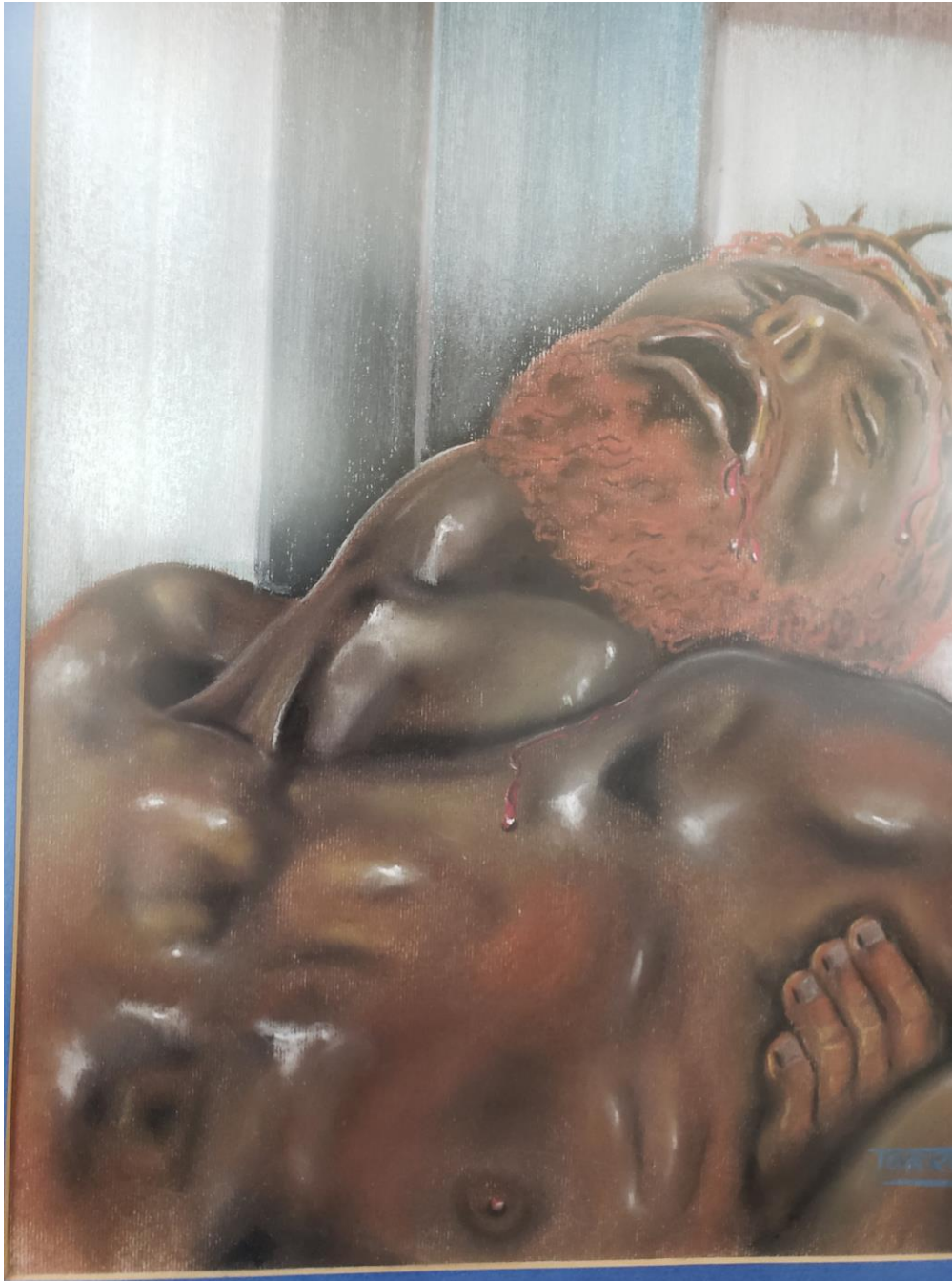
-Macrina Wiederkehr



Invitation - Consider God's radiance this day!

Contributor: Rev. [Sara M. Holland](#)

Day 15



Crucified by Bill Torrey

Matthew 26: 1-2-

When Jesus had finished saying all these things, he said to his disciples, ²'You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified.'

Day 16

"Lenten practices of giving up pleasures are good reminders that the purpose of life is not pleasure. The purpose of life is to attain to perfect life, all truth and undying ecstatic love – which is the definition of God. In pursuing that goal we find happiness. Pleasure is not the purpose of anything; pleasure is a by-product resulting from doing something that is good. One of the best ways to get happiness and pleasure out of life is to ask ourselves, 'How can I please God?' and, 'Why am I not better?' It is the pleasure-seeker who is bored, for all pleasures diminish with repetition."

-- Fulton J. Sheen



Contributor: anonymous

Day 17

When I am down and, oh my soul, so weary;
When troubles come and my heart burdened be;
Then, I am still and wait here in the silence,
Until you come and sit awhile with me.
-Lyrics by Brendan Graham



Sit in the silence and be with God today. Consider God in the wind or in a song.

Contributor: anonymous

Day 18

1st Corinthians 12: 12-14 - For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body -- Jews or Greeks, slaves or free -- and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many.



How might we reflect on our baptism and/or confirmation during the Lenten season. We join the local church and Church universal in a communion of reflection, for one. What else might we consider during this time?

If we have not been baptized or confirmed, maybe now is a good time to consider that for ourselves?
If you are interested in baptism or an adult confirmation program, please let Rev Sara know.

Contributor: Rev [Sara M. Holland](#)

Day 19

1 Peter 5:6 - Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you in due time.



The Washing of the Feet by Ghislaine Howard
<http://ghislainehoward.com/>

How might we humble ourselves on this very day?

What ways are we forced to be humble, even when we do not want to be?

How might we lean into humility on this Lenten journey?

Prayer: O Holy God, let us know you are with us as we serve one another. Let us figure ways of being humble even during this global pandemic. Let us serve our neighbor as best we can. Amen.

Contributor: anonymous

Day 20

The Lenten Journey

The timeless call:
To discipleship.

The way is marked
The end a cross,
The choice always free.

Amid
Chaos
Confusion
Clash
Conflict
Sorrow
Woe and Loss,
Contrite and Humbled
The bleeding
Feet
are tracked...

Contributor: [Susan Wei](#)

Day 21

Monet Refuses the Operation [Lisel Mueller]

*Doctor, you say there are no haloes
around the streetlights in Paris
and what I see is an aberration
caused by old age, an affliction.*

*I tell you it has taken me all my life
to arrive at the vision of gas lamps as angels,
to soften and blur and finally banish
the edges you regret I don't see,
to learn that the line I called the horizon
does not exist and sky and water,
so long apart, are the same state of being.*

*Fifty-four years before I could see
Rouen cathedral is built
of parallel shafts of sun,
and now you want to restore
my youthful errors: fixed
notions of top and bottom,
the illusion of three-dimensional space,
wisteria separate
from the bridge it covers.*

*What can I say to convince you
the Houses of Parliament dissolve
night after night to become
the fluid dream of the Thames?*

*I will not return to a universe
of objects that don't know each other,
as if islands were not the lost children
of one great continent. The world
is flux, and light becomes what it touches,
becomes water, lilies on water,
above and below water,
becomes lilac and mauve and yellow
and white and cerulean lamps,
small fists passing sunlight
so quickly to one another
that it would take long, streaming hair
inside my brush to catch it.*

*To paint the speed of light!
Our weighted shapes, these verticals,
burn to mix with air
and changes our bones, skin, clothes
to gases. Doctor,
if only you could see
how heaven pulls earth into its arms
and how infinitely the heart expands
to claim this world, blue vapor without end.*

Contributor: anonymous

Day 22

Take this day to draw or write about your experience with Lent so far. What color do you use to describe it? How does it feel? What is it like this year? Does the pandemic affect your experience?

Day 23:

Psalm 33:20-22

We wait in hope for the Lord; he is our help and our shield. In him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in his holy name. May your unfailing love be with us, Lord, even as we put our hope in you.



We are peering through the crack as we continue in this liminal pandemic space. How might you find hope, even when surrounded by cold pavement? What soothes you during this strange time? Today, for just 10 minutes, we invite you to do something that is really enjoyable for you.

Our prayer on this day is that you find both joy and peace. Let it be so.

Contributor: Rev [Sara M. Holland](#)

Day 24:



Lent is the season of the Church year that begins with Ash Wednesday for 40 days of spiritual preparation, to look at the intensive events of Jesus' last days before Easter. We look at the intensive face of Jesus who is likely looking at us his believers who are called to look at our own life in confession of the need to take more seriously the sins of our world and our failure to practice our faith in the grace of God and love and justice for the neighbor in need.

O Sacred Head, Now Wounded, with grief and shame weighed down,
Now scornfully surrounded with thorns, thine only crown:
How pale thou art with anguish, with sore abuse and scorn!
How does that visage languish which once was bright as morn!
What thou, my Lord, hast suffered was all for sinner's gain;
Mine, mine was the transgression, but thine the deadly pain.
Look on me with thy favor, vouchsafe to me thy grace. #418

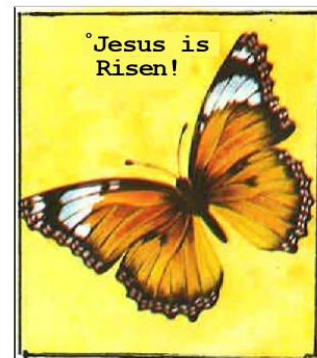
Past days once saw Lent as a time of abstaining or giving up something like chocolate, meat or drug and alcohol abstention; naming it "sacrifice!" Better to look on what we could or should do about the sins of social and personal violence, political hate, racial injustice which are the violation of Jesus' commandment to love God intensely and neighbor and the land as self. According to St John 3, the atonement of the cross means to be at-one-ment. (reconciled) God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world but to save, and be saved, to make it right again by following Jesus in the way to a whole life here and everlasting life eternally.

A prayer for Lent

Lord, lean us out during Lent, trim the fat from our souls and make us aware of our priorities and the pain of absence of Christian goals, holy habits and simple acts of Christian kindness when we take our sins lightly and fail to love and honor neighbors. Enable us to know when to speak up about evil; when to give and forgive. Amen.

Lent is not all about looking at ourselves and not always like what we see but come to see the joy of Good News. I can imagine the resurrected Jesus' face smiling when he greets the 12 disciples at a barbecue on the shore. Forgiveness of grace of God makes a new life possible as we journey toward our resurrection in the end, so we keep on smiling!

Rev. Bill Torrey



Day 25:

Psalm 25:4-5

Show me your ways, Lord, teach me your paths. Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long.



The path on which we walk is filled with twists and turns. It is confusing and complicated. As we call out to God, we center around that humility which God calls us to; on this very day, let us be taught, once again, that we do not need to have all the answers. Let us find hope on this twisting and turning path.

Contributor: anonymous

Day 26:

Galatians 5:5

For through the Spirit we eagerly await by faith the righteousness for which we hope.



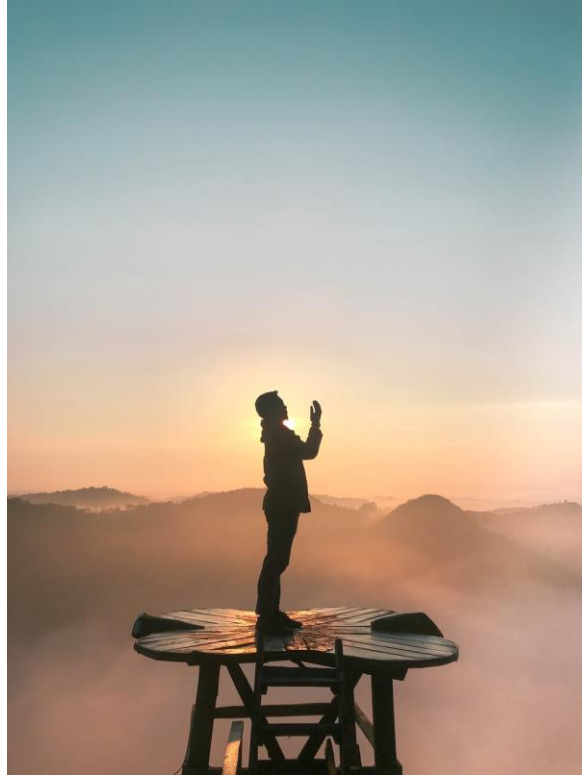
If we have been seeking through only worldly avenues we are doomed to repeat sadness and despair in our lives. In looking to Spirit, we find hope and are able to point to something that is far larger than ourselves. Let it be so this day. Today, consider an avenue which might lead you to Holy Spirit, to Jesus, to God. Write it here:

Contributor: anonymous

Day 27:

Romans 12:12

Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.



What is inside of your hands or your body today? How is Jesus meeting you at this very moment?
Have you left enough space on the platform for Christ to join?

Contributor: anonymous

Day 28:

Matthew 6:33

But seek first God's kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.



Perhaps the box of worldly treasures is quite empty. What are the treasures of God's kingdom which you long to collect? Patience? Perseverance? Courage? List 3 here and name one way you will seek each this week.

Contributor: anonymous

Day 29:

Psalm 62:5

For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence, for my hope is from God.



How does God call you to patience during this time?

Prayer: O Holy God, guide us in patience and understanding. Let us strive to be more in tune with your time, one beyond understanding. Let us lean into your mysterious breath and being. Amen.

Contributor: Rev. [Sara M. Holland](#)

Day 30:

Hosea 12

12 Ephraim herds the wind,
and pursues the east wind all day long;
they multiply falsehood and violence;
they make a treaty with Assyria,
and oil is carried to Egypt.



2 The Lord has an indictment against Judah,
and will punish Jacob according to his ways,
and repay him according to his deeds.
3 In the womb he tried to supplant his brother,
and in his manhood he strove with God.
4 He strove with the angel and prevailed,
he wept and sought his favour;
he met him at Bethel,
and there he spoke with him.*
5 The Lord the God of hosts,
the Lord is his name!
6 But as for you, return to your God,
hold fast to love and justice,
and wait continually for your God.

Contributor: anonymous

Day 31:

Psalm 27: 6- 10

6 Now my head is lifted up
above my enemies all around me,
and I will offer in his tent
sacrifices with shouts of joy;
I will sing and make melody to the Lord.



7 Hear, O Lord, when I cry aloud,
be gracious to me and answer me!
8 'Come,' my heart says, 'seek his face!'
Your face, Lord, do I seek.
9 Do not hide your face from me.

Do not turn your servant away in anger,
you who have been my help.
Do not cast me off, do not forsake me,
O God of my salvation!
10 If my father and mother forsake me,
the Lord will take me up.

In our wilderness, perhaps we can make music along the way, even when we struggle?

Contributor: anonymous

Day 32:

Isaiah 30: 1-5

1 Oh, rebellious children, says the Lord,
who carry out a plan, but not mine;
who make an alliance, but against my will,
adding sin to sin;

2 who set out to go down to Egypt
without asking for my counsel,
to take refuge in the protection of Pharaoh,
and to seek shelter in the shadow of Egypt;

3 Therefore the protection of Pharaoh shall become your shame,
and the shelter in the shadow of Egypt your humiliation.

4 For though his officials are at Zoan
and his envoys reach Hanes,

5 everyone comes to shame
through a people that cannot profit them,
that brings neither help nor profit,
but shame and disgrace.

How has shame and disgrace negatively affected your faith journey? Perhaps this Lenten season you could try to set them aside! Be free from the bondage of shame - know that God loves you just as you are.

Let it be so today!!!

Contributor: anonymous

Day 33:

Psalm 42: 1- 5

Longing for God and His Help in Distress
To the leader. A Maskil of the Korahites.

1 As a deer longs for flowing streams,
so my soul longs for you, O God.

2 My soul thirsts for God,
for the living God.

When shall I come and behold
the face of God?

3 My tears have been my food
day and night,
while people say to me continually,
'Where is your God?'



4 These things I remember,
as I pour out my soul:
how I went with the throng,
and led them in procession to the house of God,
with glad shouts and songs of thanksgiving,
a multitude keeping festival.

5 Why are you cast down, O my soul,
and why are you disquieted within me?
Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,
my help 6and my God.

Contributor: anonymous

Day 34:

Read Isaiah 58 and consider this image



How might I break the bonds of injustice for myself or people I encounter in the world?

Contributor: anonymous

Day 35:

1st Peter 5: 5-8

5 In the same way, you who are younger must accept the authority of the elders.* And all of you must clothe yourselves with humility in your dealings with one another, for

‘God opposes the proud,

but gives grace to the humble.’

6 Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you in due time.

7 Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you. 8 Discipline yourselves; keep alert.* Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour.

35 days into Lent we might ask ourselves how we are doing with regard to pride and humility. How have we been proud lately? How have we expressed humility?

Prayer: Creator God, let us be humble in our walk with You and let us express gratitude as we aim to show Your gospel in our journey. Amen.

Contributor: anonymous

Day 36:

Matthew 4: 1 - 7

1Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. 2He fasted for forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. 3The tempter came and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.' 4But he answered, 'It is written,

"One does not live by bread alone,
but by every word that comes from the mouth of God." '

5 Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, 6saying to him, 'If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written,

"He will command his angels concerning you",
and "On their hands they will bear you up,
so that you will not dash your foot against a stone." '

7Jesus said to him, 'Again it is written, "Do not put the Lord your God to the test." '

What does it mean to join Jesus in the wilderness? What hope might we find in knowing that God struggles next to us, especially during a global pandemic?

Contributor: anonymous

Day 37:

Ecclesiastes 3:1–11

3For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:

2 a time to be born, and a time to die;

a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;

3 a time to kill, and a time to heal;

a time to break down, and a time to build up;

4 a time to weep, and a time to laugh;

a time to mourn, and a time to dance;

5 a time to throw away stones, and a time to gather stones together;

a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;

6 a time to seek, and a time to lose;

a time to keep, and a time to throw away;

7 a time to tear, and a time to sew;

a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;

8 a time to love, and a time to hate;

a time for war, and a time for peace.

9 What gain have the workers from their toil? 10I have seen the business that God has given to everyone to be busy with. 11He has made everything suitable for its time; moreover, he has put a sense of past and future into their minds, yet they cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.

For years, Christians have argued about whether or not Jesus had to die. For today, let us rest in scripture and know that no matter where we land theologically or with regard to our belief or doubt, God holds us and meets us, just as we are.

Let this be so today.

Contributor: anonymous

Day 38:

Mark 1: 9- 13:

9 In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 10And 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. 11And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved;* with you I am well pleased.'

12 And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. 13He was in the wilderness for forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

14 Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news* of God,* 15and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near;* repent, and believe in the good news.'

How might you walk in the water with Jesus today?

Do you realize you are beloved and a child of God? If not, pause now to center your attention on this fact. You are beloved. God loves you.

Prayer: Holy One, let me understand how deeply loved I am and let me walk alongside Christ. Even in my own wilderness God is by my side. Amen.

Contributor: anonymous

Day 39:

VACCINE

The last Sunday in January
I received the first shot!
In my upper left arm
Through the driver's side car window.
A young National Guard medic
Performed the act!

After almost eleven months
Of worry
I was rendered hopeful.
Maybe I will not get Covid-19
And just maybe I will not be numbered
among the five hundred thousand
Deaths
In my country alone.

There's little one can say
About this hopefulness.
It is a harbinger of Lent
For Christians.
Suffering quelled;
Anxiety lessened;
Isolation perhaps ended.

When young Lent meant
Friday is fish day on the menu;
Black smudge on the forehead
For Ash Wednesday;
Giving up some bad habits.
Listening to unending tales
Of plight among
So many, so often, so close by.
All toward an event
Named Easter.

I think I would call my vaccine Easter.
Restoring what would be deadly
With a new hope
In the Eternal mystery.

Day 40:

This booklet concludes with a poem from Emily Dickinson and a bit of scripture. We encourage you to offer up a prayer of your own today and consider tuning in for Easter worship at 9:30 am on April 4, 2021.

*A Light exists in Spring
Not present in the Year
At any other period ---
When March is scarcely here*

*A Color stands abroad
on Solitary Fields
That Science cannot overtake
But Human Nature feels.*

*It waits upon the Lawn,
It shows upon the furthest Tree
Upon the furthest Slope you know
It almost speaks to you.*

*Then as Horizons step
Or Noons report away
Without the Formula of sound
It passes and we stay --*

*A quality of loss
Affecting our Content
As Trade had suddenly encroached
Upon a Sacrament.
-Emily Dickinson*

Luke 22: 19 - 20

“Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’ And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.’”

Our staff and church leadership prays for your spiritual growth and renewal as we move from the Lenten Season and into Easter.

Check out these bonus pages (Thanks to Chris Pollock!):

Spiritual Vitamins: Robert H. Roberts

All things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to God's purpose.

Romans 8:28

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me.

Bless God's holy name. Psalm 103:1

Cast all your anxiety on God, because God cares for you. 1 Peter 5:7

Draw near to God, and God will draw near to you. James 4:8

Enter God's gates with thanksgiving, and the courts with praise.

Give thanks to God, bless God's name. Psalm 100:4

Fear not for I am with you; do not be afraid for I am your God. Isaiah 41:10

Give and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back. Luke 6:38

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns." Isaiah 52:7

I can do all things through Jesus Christ who strengthens me. Philippians 4:13

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. Hebrews 13:8
(Inscription in New Century Hymnal)

Know that the Lord is God; It is God that made us and not we ourselves. Psalm 100:3

Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Matthew 28:20

My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness. 2 Corinthians 12:9

Never, no never will I leave you nor forsake you. Hebrews 13:5

Overcome evil with good Romans 12:21

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid. John 14:27

Quit you like men and women. Be strong. 1 Corinthians 16:13

Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for God. Psalms 37:7

Stay with me, and do not be afraid; for the one who seeks my life seeks your life; you are safe with me. 1 Samuel 22:23

Those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint. Isaiah 40:31

Understand that I am [the Lord]. Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me. Isaiah 43:10

Vexed with unclean spirits; and they were healed every one. Acts 5:16

What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? Micah 6:8

(E)-Xercise thyself rather unto godliness. 1 Timothy 4:7

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff –

they comfort me.

Psalm 23:4

Zealous for good deeds.

Titus 2:14