



## *Lenten Devotional 2022*

We hope you'll follow along daily, be deepened in your faith through this year's ministry of our community, and prepare your heart to celebrate at Easter the new life that Jesus Christ made possible for all.

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**PITTSBURGH  
THEOLOGICAL  
SEMINARY**

## WEDNESDAY, MARCH 2, 2022

*Dr. Wendy Farone '21, MAPS Student*

### SCRIPTURE

#### Luke 18:9-14

9 He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt: 10 "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee, standing by himself, was praying thus, 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of all my income.' 13 But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even look up to heaven, but was beating his breast and saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' 14 I tell you, this man went down to his home justified rather than the other; for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted."

### DEVOTIONAL

There is an old Mac Davis song called "It's Hard to be Humble" that begins, "Oh, Lord, it's hard to be humble when you're perfect in every way." This satirical song points out how quickly we determine our place as above that of others. At times we believe that the blessings we have received are of our own making, due to our brilliance and good works.

In today's parable, Jesus teaches about the human condition of self-righteousness. The Pharisee is learned, of high status, and follows the rules of fasting and tithing. The Pharisee prays to God, not for his undeserved gifts, but in thanks that he isn't one of "those people." One can just envision his upturned nose and eyes scanning others over his robed shoulder. It is as if he is saying, "Lord, it's hard to be humble, when you're perfect in every way like me."

The tax collector also stood before the altar in prayer. In contrast to the Pharisee's haughty assuredness, the tax collector "would not even look up to heaven" (18:13). He stood away from the others because he felt unworthy before God. He displayed his repentant heart as he cried, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" hoping to be restored to righteousness.

The twist at the end of Jesus' lesson is that the tax collector who recognized his sinful nature and turned to God for mercy was the one exalted! The Pharisee found no need to repent since he was "perfect."

Martin Luther wrote about believers not focusing on themselves but rather, by faith, on Christ and their neighbors. We are far from perfect in every way—and that is exactly why we seek the Lord's mercy.

### PRAYER

Good and gracious God, thank you for your steadfast mercy. Though I fail, I thank you for your forgiveness and guidance as I try again and again to be humble. I am reminded in your word to look toward you and not within myself. Amen.

## THURSDAY, MARCH 3, 2022

*Anne Malone, Registrar and Student Support Specialist*

### SCRIPTURE

#### Philippians 3:12-21

12 Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. 13 Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus. 15 Let those of us then who are mature be of the same mind; and if you think differently about anything, this too God will reveal to you. 16 Only let us hold fast to what we have attained. 17 Brothers and sisters, join in imitating me, and observe those who live according to the example you have in us. 18 For many live as enemies of the cross of Christ; I have often told you of them, and now I tell you even with tears. 19 Their end is destruction; their god is the belly; and their glory is in their shame; their minds are set on earthly things. 20 But our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. 21 He will transform the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, by the power that also enables him to make all things subject to himself.

### DEVOTIONAL

Paul's language in this passage brings to mind the image of a race and of a competitor waiting for the starting gun to go off so they can go for the prize. I am not a racer, but I enjoy watching a lot of racing events. I am an Olympics junkie, and I am always tuned into the swimming, track and field, skiing, skating, and other events that involve striving for the gold, achieving the fastest time, or breaking world records. I love hearing about how the athletes prepare for their events and overcome obstacles that might interrupt the achievement of their goals. There are a number of reasons why individuals may enter a race. For many, their goal is to win and set records. Others race to achieve a personal best, or simply to be able to say they did it. What matters to some is not winning, but finishing.

Paul is not an athlete. He sees himself in a different kind of race, and he is in it to win it. He tells us in verses 13-14 of

today's passage that he is "forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead." He is focused on the finish line. Paul presses on "toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." But what is his race? What is his goal? To answer this, we must look a few verses earlier in the chapter. Paul has given up everything in order to gain Christ and his righteousness, to know the power of his resurrection, to share in his suffering and resurrection (3:7-11). Then he invites us in 3:17 to join him, to imitate him in pursuit of this goal. And the prize is not earthly—it is heavenly.

The Lenten season is a time for each of us to reflect on our kingdom calling. What is it we are striving for? What is the goal we are straining to reach? Is it "the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" or something for our own glory? Are we looking behind or striving toward the prize? If we're not striving forward, how do we get into this race?

### PRAYER

Lord God, there are so many things which can interrupt and keep us from reaching our goal to serve you. During this season, help us to reflect on our calling and strive to know you and the power of your resurrection more fully. In Jesus' name. Amen.

## FRIDAY, MARCH 4, 2022

*The Rev. Dave Dack '11*

### SCRIPTURE

#### John 17:9-19

9 I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. 10 All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. 11 And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one. 12 While I was with them, I protected them in your name that you have given me. I guarded them, and not one of them was lost except the one destined to be lost, so that the scripture might be fulfilled. 13 But now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves. 14 I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. 15 I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. 16 They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. 17 Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. 18 As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. 19 And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth.

### DEVOTIONAL

Just knowing that Christ prays for us is a tremendous encouragement. Of all that he has done for us, this scene of Jesus' prayer in John 17 is perhaps the most touching. Having loved us so thoroughly in his ministry, and knowing he would soon suffer for our sins, Jesus made the effort to pray for us.

Our Savior's prayer was simpler than the thick grammar of John's Gospel suggests. Jesus asked the Father to protect us from the evil one. Echoing the Lord's Prayer in which we ask to be delivered from evil (or "the evil one"), Jesus asked the same thing on our behalf. Jesus wanted God to protect us from the evil one.

People will pay good money for protection. We buy insurance against loss and theft; we invest money to protect against an impoverished retirement; we vaccinate our children to protect them from disease. In our spiritual life, we try to protect ourselves from the evil one by practicing our faith, keeping busy with religious activity, or even by deciding that evil isn't real and "the evil one" doesn't exist.

But only God in heaven can protect us from the evil one. And according to Jesus, this protection takes a very specific form: unity. "Protect them . . . that they may be one." Unity is the best protection against evil, whether personified or not. Of course, unity does not require uniformity, but our best chance of being protected from evil is to remain united in Christ.

May this season of Lent be an occasion for us to recommit ourselves to Christian unity, not only to guard against the divisive schemes of the evil one, but most of all to enjoy Christ together and so fulfill humanity's chief purpose.

### PRAYER

O God of reconciliation and peace, who loved us first and initiated our salvation, open our hearts and make us willing to pursue unity within your Church, not waiting for others to meet us where we are, but eager to meet others where they are. Bid us to surrender every priority and pretense that keeps us apart and make us one in Christ, that we may overcome evil with good. Amen.

## SATURDAY, MARCH 5, 2022

*Dr. Franklin Tanner over, Director of the Miller Summer Youth Institute*

### SCRIPTURE

#### Psalms 31

1 In you, O LORD, I seek refuge;  
do not let me ever be put to shame;  
in your righteousness deliver me.

2 Incline your ear to me;  
rescue me speedily.  
Be a rock of refuge for me,  
a strong fortress to save me.  
3 You are indeed my rock and my fortress;  
for your name's sake lead me and guide me,  
4 take me out of the net that is hidden for me,  
for you are my refuge.  
5 Into your hand I commit my spirit;  
you have redeemed me, O LORD, faithful God.  
6 You hate those who pay regard to worthless idols,  
but I trust in the LORD.  
7 I will exult and rejoice in your steadfast love,  
because you have seen my affliction;  
you have taken heed of my adversities,  
8 and have not delivered me into the hand of the enemy;  
you have set my feet in a broad place.  
9 Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am in distress;  
my eye wastes away from grief,  
my soul and body also.  
10 For my life is spent with sorrow,  
and my years with sighing;  
my strength fails because of my misery,  
and my bones waste away.  
11 I am the scorn of all my adversaries,  
a horror to my neighbors,  
an object of dread to my acquaintances;  
those who see me in the street flee from me.  
12 I have passed out of mind like one who is dead;  
I have become like a broken vessel.  
13 For I hear the whispering of many —  
terror all around! —  
as they scheme together against me,  
as they plot to take my life.  
14 But I trust in you, O LORD;  
I say, "You are my God."  
15 My times are in your hand;  
deliver me from the hand of my enemies and persecutors.  
16 Let your face shine upon your servant;  
save me in your steadfast love.  
17 Do not let me be put to shame, O LORD,  
for I call on you;  
let the wicked be put to shame;  
let them go dumbfounded to Sheol.  
18 Let the lying lips be stilled  
that speak insolently against the righteous  
with pride and contempt.  
19 O how abundant is your goodness  
that you have laid up for those who fear you,  
and accomplished for those who take refuge in you,  
in the sight of everyone!  
20 In the shelter of your presence you hide them  
from human plots;  
you hold them safe under your shelter  
from contentious tongues.

21 Blessed be the LORD,

for he has wondrously shown his steadfast love to me  
when I was beset as a city under siege.

22 I had said in my alarm,  
"I am driven far from your sight."

But you heard my supplications  
when I cried out to you for help.

23 Love the LORD, all you his saints.

The LORD preserves the faithful,  
but abundantly repays the one who acts haughtily.

24 Be strong, and let your heart take courage,  
all you who wait for the LORD.

## DEVOTIONAL

There is an important piece of advice in wilderness training that goes like this: if you're ever lost in the forest, find running water and follow it downhill. The idea is that if you do this then, hopefully, you'll come to some sort of structure—a dam, culvert, or road crossing that might guide you to help.

But what happens when you hear no running water, when everywhere you turn, things look unfamiliar? The hard swallow. Shortness of breath. The dizziness that comes with the feeling of being utterly alone. Do you move? Or do you stay put and wait on help that may never come?

The words of Psalm 31 roar with dread and with the angst of desolation, like being lost in the wilderness with no clear path. In the pain of solitude that gives way to disorientation, the psalmist opens with a cry: "In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust!" That which was familiar has become strange and friends have become enemies. There is no solace in the solitude, only grief.

Many people have recently experienced something of the turmoil that leaks from the psalmist's mind and heart. We've witnessed incredible material loss, the decay of social relationships, and failed friendships resulting in profound isolation. The emotions that follow are familiar. Psalm 31 sets them out in excruciating detail.

But after darkness, light. "I will rejoice in your steadfast love," comes the refrain. "Let your face shine upon me" is the hopeful petition, even as the psalmist declares, "Blessed be the LORD, for the LORD has wondrously shown steadfast love to me."

These words remind us that we are accepted by the one whom the psalmist calls Lord and God, the one who "hears our supplications" amid our pain. To pray Psalm 31 is to hope, and to hope is to believe that God is for us, not against us. And in this there is great comfort, like running water in the wilderness.

## PRAYER

We give you thanks, O Lord, for the words of Psalm 31 that affirm us in our distress and in our sadness. We ask for deliverance from despair, that we would take heart, knowing that you are indeed our rock and our fortress. Amen.

## SUNDAY, MARCH 6, 2022

Kori Robbins, MDiv Student

## SCRIPTURE

### Psalm 42

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 and my God.

My soul is cast down within me;  
therefore I remember you  
from the land of Jordan and of Hermon,  
from Mount Mizar.

7 Deep calls to deep  
at the thunder of your cataracts;  
all your waves and your billows  
have gone over me.

8 By day the LORD commands his steadfast love,  
and at night his song is with me,  
a prayer to the God of my life.

9 I say to God, my rock,  
“Why have you forgotten me?  
Why must I walk about mournfully  
because the enemy oppresses me?”

10 As with a deadly wound in my body,  
my adversaries taunt me,  
while they say to me continually,  
“Where is your God?”

11 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 and my God.

## DEVOTIONAL

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 and my God.

Psalm 42 is one of my favorite psalms. It's a psalm of longing, asking for God's help amid the bad stuff of life. The psalmist is remembering all the hope that God brings, even as the psalmist is in the midst of their despair.

We live in a world where toxic positivity is a thing. People tell us “Hey! Don't be sad, because . . .” and list a million reasons why. On the other hand, we also live in a world where people tend to dwell too much in the bad. And to be fair, the last several years have brought us more sorrow than reasons to leap for joy. What I like most about this psalm is that it doesn't tell us to disregard the bad. The psalmist is experiencing something that is clearly not good. However, whatever bad the psalmist is experiencing, they are also remembering the good things, the parties and processions the community held in celebration of God.

In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, the first in the Narnia series by C. S. Lewis, Mr. Tumnus tells Lucy that “It is winter in Narnia and has been for ever so long . . . always winter but never Christmas.”

Now, pardon me for mixing up my seasons, but this quote seems ever so appropriate. Lent sometimes feels like a long winter. Many of us have given up something: meat or sweets or coffee. Sometimes we promise to do more of something: smile at neighbors or spend time volunteering. Lent is a time of mourning and sacrifice. We have not yet gotten to the joy of the Resurrection, the joy of Easter morning.

However, like the psalmist of Psalm 42, even amidst the bleakness of the season, hope ever prevails. Our trust and our love in God are always there. We don't need to feel joyful all the time, but in those bad moments, it helps to have something to hold onto. To help us remember that bad days don't last forever, and that good days are coming.

## PRAYER

Loving and Gracious God,  
Sometimes we feel so dry, so thirsty.  
We become preoccupied with our bad days, forgetting your presence always.

Where can we find you? When can we gather in worship again? Where do we find refuge?

Help us remember that you are present, right with us, right now.

Remind us to turn toward you, to open our hearts and minds

to your loving presence.  
Help us remember the good times, even as we experience  
bad days.  
Amen

## MONDAY, MARCH 7, 2022

*Dr. Helen Blier, Director of Continuing Education*

### SCRIPTURE

#### Psalm 121

1 I lift up my eyes to the hills —  
from where will my help come?  
2 My help comes from the LORD,  
who made heaven and earth.  
3 He will not let your foot be moved;  
he who keeps you will not slumber.  
4 He who keeps Israel  
will neither slumber nor sleep.  
5 The LORD is your keeper;  
the LORD is your shade at your right hand.  
6 The sun shall not strike you by day,  
nor the moon by night.  
7 The LORD will keep you from all evil;  
he will keep your life.  
8 The LORD will keep  
your going out and your coming in  
from this time on and for evermore.

### DEVOTIONAL

In his book *The Solace of Fierce Landscapes*, Belden Lane wonders what it is that has drawn mystics and seekers alike to mountains and deserts. What is it about times of crisis that pull us to these stark and uncompromising places? After all, Lane says, mountains and deserts are indifferent to us. They exist whether we are there or not and, quite frankly, have no need of us. As such, he says, there's something about the sheer power and otherness of these landscapes that strips away all that is extraneous in our hearts and minds and forces us to come face to face with what is most essential.

I know something of this. A few years ago, grief hit me hard—and after enough months of trying to put one foot in front of the other, I knew I needed to do whatever it took to visit a friend in Denver so that we could hike the Rockies. As we made our way to the city from the airport, I lifted my eyes to the Front Range, pink and yellow with the mid-morning sun. Look at us, the mountains said, *Look up. Look up from your troubles and grief, up from the immediacy of what seems all-consuming.* Lift your eyes, says the psalmist—that's where your help will come from. And then it hit me: it wasn't about the hiking or even the mountains (although they are my happiest of places). It was about the looking

up—and the letting go required to do it. "God can only be met in emptiness," writes Lane, "by those who come in love, abandoning all effort to control, every need to astound."

You see, the psalm isn't about the hills, or even the fact that we need help. That's only the first two lines. It's about God—God who made heaven and earth, God who is sturdy enough to hold us steady and watch over our comings and goings. The God who is greater than our troubles and deeper than our grief. These fierce landscapes reorient us—away from distractions and toward the holy one, up from the overwhelm of what troubles us and out to a broader horizon—and in doing so, they reorient us to the stories of our lives. And isn't that the task of Lent, to reorient us, to remind us to lift our eyes?

### PRAYER

God, remind me in this season of Lent to lift my eyes—to look beyond the troubles and know that you are there to guide my step and hold me close. And when lifting my eyes seems too hard, cup my chin gently and raise my face to yours, from this time on and forevermore. Amen.

## TUESDAY, MARCH 8 2022

*The Rev. Brian Wallace '06*

### SCRIPTURE

#### Genesis 37:12-24

12 Now his brothers went to pasture their father's flock near Shechem. 13 And Israel said to Joseph, "Are not your brothers pasturing the flock at Shechem? Come, I will send you to them." He answered, "Here I am." 14 So he said to him, "Go now, see if it is well with your brothers and with the flock; and bring word back to me." So he sent him from the valley of Hebron. He came to Shechem, 15 and a man found him wandering in the fields; the man asked him, "What are you seeking?" 16 "I am seeking my brothers," he said; "tell me, please, where they are pasturing the flock." 17 The man said, "They have gone away, for I heard them say, 'Let us go to Dothan.'" So Joseph went after his brothers, and found them at Dothan. 18 They saw him from a distance, and before he came near to them, they conspired to kill him. 19 They said to one another, "Here comes this dreamer. 20 Come now, let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits; then we shall say that a wild animal has devoured him, and we shall see what will become of his dreams." 21 But when Reuben heard it, he delivered him out of their hands, saying, "Let us not take his life." 22 Reuben said to them, "Shed no blood; throw him into this pit here in the wilderness, but lay no hand on him" - that he might rescue him out of their hand and restore him to his father. 23 So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him

of his robe, the long robe with sleeves that he wore; 24 and they took him and threw him into a pit. The pit was empty; there was no water in it.

## DEVOTIONAL

Dreams are powerful. Whether actual brain activity during sleep or a more figurative imagining of what could be, dreams can help unlock new God-breathed possibilities in our lives. For Joseph, the dream he had (and shared) was one that threatened much of what his brothers understood as normal in their time and place. And yet, the dream he had would be a critical piece in the fulfillment of God's covenant promise to the Hebrew people and the world. In many ways, Joseph's dream was part of a larger dream—a divine dream—to heal the separation between God and the people.

In Lent, we spend time reflecting upon who we are and who God is in preparation for rejoicing in what God did in raising Jesus from the dead. Lent is a time in which we prepare to celebrate the fulfillment of the dream that Joseph carried. In the midst of this Lenten season, is there space for us to dream? To think about God's call to places we may never have considered because they would threaten our understanding of what is "normal"? Which would push and stretch us into new places and new situations? That at points along the road we might find ourselves at the bottom of a pit, wondering if we got the dream wrong?

## PRAYER

God, this Lenten season, may we have the courage to dream about what you might have for us on the other side of Good Friday. After all, echoing Tony Campolo's famous line, even on Friday, Sunday is still coming. Amen.

## WEDNESDAY, MARCH 9, 2022

*Dr. Scott Hagley, Associate Professor of Missiology*

## SCRIPTURE

### 1 Corinthians 2:1-13

1 When I came to you, brothers and sisters, I did not come proclaiming the mystery of God to you in lofty words or wisdom. 2 For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified. 3 And I came to you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. 4 My speech and my proclamation were not with plausible words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, 5 so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God. 6 Yet among the mature we do speak wisdom, though it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to perish. 7 But we speak God's wisdom, secret and hidden, which God decreed

before the ages for our glory. 8 None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. 9 But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him" 10 these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. 11 For what human being knows what is truly human except the human spirit that is within? So also no one comprehends what is truly God's except the Spirit of God. 12 Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. 13 And we speak of these things in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things to those who are spiritual.

## DEVOTIONAL

Lydia Millet's novel *A Children's Bible* depicts a group of families who are vacationing together at a large seaside manor when a hurricane brings American society to the edge of collapse. Told from the perspective of an adolescent looking after her younger brother, the adults in this story are feckless and fragile, more interested in escapist fantasies than taking responsibility for their children or the world they have created. The scaffolding these adult professionals once depended upon as professors, artists, and bankers has collapsed before their eyes; their collective passivity regarding climate change and political polarization has borne catastrophic fruit, and they have no skills to meet the moment. The adolescents, however, take the apocalypse in Gen-Z style, searching out DIY videos to learn to grow food, bring discipline to their unruly parents, and create new community from the ashes of the old. In a crisis of biblical proportions, wisdom gets turned inside out and upside down, for a child shall lead them.

In the opening verses of 1 Corinthians 2, Paul insists upon the upside-down, inside-out wisdom of God disclosed by the cross of Jesus Christ: "When I came to you, brothers and sisters . . . I decided to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified." A crucified Messiah is a contradiction in terms. We don't expect God's anointed to die a criminal, abandoned by friends. The disruptive and disjunctive reality of the cross strips away our pretensions, placing us in a world without the usual scaffolding of knowledge, with only a connection to the one Jesus calls "Father" by way of the Holy Spirit: "Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God" (2:12).

In many ways, the various social, political, environmental, and personal crises we face only make sense in light of the cross: for at the end of human wisdom is the folly of a crucified Messiah, through whom God loves the world back to life.

## PRAYER

(Psalms 5:1-3)

Give ear to my words, O LORD;

give heed to my sighing.

Listen to the sound of my cry,

my King and my God,

for to you I pray.

O LORD, in the morning you hear my voice;

in the morning I plead my case to you, and watch.

Amen.

## THURSDAY, MARCH 10, 2022

*The Rev. Scott Paul-Bonham, DMin Student*

## SCRIPTURE

### 1 Corinthians 2:14-3:15

14 Those who are unspiritual do not receive the gifts of God's Spirit, for they are foolishness to them, and they are unable to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

15 Those who are spiritual discern all things, and they are themselves subject to no one else's scrutiny. 16 "For who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.

1 And so, brothers and sisters, I could not speak to you as spiritual people, but rather as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. 2 I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for solid food. Even now you are still not ready, 3 for you are still of the flesh.

For as long as there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not of the flesh, and behaving according to human inclinations? 4 For when one says, "I belong to Paul," and another, "I belong to Apollos," are you not merely human? 5 What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you came to believe, as the Lord assigned to each.

6 I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth.

7 So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. 8 The one who plants and the one who waters have a common purpose, and each will receive wages according to the labor of each. 9 For we are God's servants, working together; you are God's field, God's building. 10 According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building on it. Each builder must choose with care how to build on it.

11 For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw 13 the work of each builder will become visible, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each has done. 14 If what has been built on the foundation survives, the builder will receive a reward. 15 If the work is burned up, the builder will suffer loss; the builder will be saved, but only as through fire.

## DEVOTIONAL

How grateful we should all be that the Corinthians were such a dysfunctional group of Christians with so many misunderstandings. If they were not so, we would have not have the detailed teaching from Paul about spiritual divisions in the Church.

For two decades I was a chaplain in a U.S. penitentiary. I marveled at the intensity of converts to Christianity. They would throw themselves into the study of Scripture, even learning biblical Hebrew or Greek. They would spend every moment they could worshipping in the chapel. Some converts became extremely judgmental incredibly quickly, decrying things like tattoos and gambling—activities in which they had participated mere weeks before. Many thought of themselves as amazingly spiritual, better than all the rest of us Christians.

They thought they could handle the solid food. They could not. Many flamed out. I asked one such convert in the dining hall why he stopped coming to the chapel. His response was something like: "I tried it. I got really good at it. It didn't work. I knew it wouldn't." It seems this man had thought that if he became the perfect Christian, God would grant him release from prison. Funny how he never noticed in his Bible study how faith got a lot of biblical people into prison, not out of it.

To counter this convert crisis, we began a mentoring program. Men of faith, volunteers of all ages, would come in on Monday nights and just talk with two inmates for an hour each. The positive spiritual effect was dramatic upon both mentors and mentees. These meetings fostered humility and trust, positive growth and prayer.

It is not only the penitentiary that needs relationships like these. Let us endeavor this Lent to participate personally in intentional spiritual mentoring and to seek the mind of Christ together.

## PRAYER

Lord God, give me the grace to see myself as you see me, loved but lacking. Help me to seek, in humility and faith, to grow in the mind of Christ with other Christians. Please bring a mentor, or an opportunity to mentor, into my life. In Jesus' name, amen.

## FRIDAY, MARCH 11, 2022

*Dr. Shan Overton, Director of the Center for Writing and Learning Support*

### SCRIPTURE

#### Mark 2:13-22

13 Jesus went out again beside the sea; the whole crowd gathered around him, and he taught them. 14 As he was walking along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he got up and followed him. 15 And as he sat at dinner in Levi's house, many tax collectors and sinners were also sitting with Jesus and his disciples - for there were many who followed him. 16 When the scribes of the Pharisees saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, they said to his disciples, "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?" 17 When Jesus heard this, he said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I have come to call not the righteous but sinners." 18 Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting; and people came and said to him, "Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?" 19 Jesus said to them, "The wedding guests cannot fast while the bridegroom is with them, can they? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. 20 The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast on that day. 21 "No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old cloak; otherwise, the patch pulls away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear is made. 22 And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost, and so are the skins; but one puts new wine into fresh wineskins."

### DEVOTIONAL

"Drive your cart and plough over the bones of the dead." - William Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790)

This Blakean proverb has always struck me as true, despite its initial disorienting harshness. At first glance, Blake's directive sounds barbarous. Who in their right mind would drive a vehicle over someone else's bones, burying them? But a second read reminds me that plowing bones into the earth enriches the dirt, making it more productive for growth.

A bag of fish meal dug into a backyard garden makes for healthier soil and root development and produces a greater bounty of vegetables. Flowers and trees often grow very well on top of graves. Allowing the old to decompose into the soil of life provides sustenance for creative and spiritual growth. For some reason, Blake's dictum always makes me think of Jesus' teaching in the Gospel about the old wineskins. It's a

very different analogy, but the renewing spirit is the same. If you want to enjoy new wine, you have to get rid of those inflexible old containers, which are unable to hold the fresh liquid. Having settled into a particular shape, the old skins are not elastic; freshly pressed and fermented wine will simply burst the skins, resulting in lost wine and useless vessels.

I know that driving my cart and plough over old bones is good for my garden of spirituality and creativity because it makes possible new growth, but I am very reluctant to release those old bones into the dirt. Though we may know it is good to shed old wineskins to make way for the new wine, most of us have a hard time discarding the old stuff. Letting go is not easy.

But Lent gives us a time to reflect on doing just that. This season is an opportunity to bury those old bones and let them fertilize the ground, to discard the old wineskins, so that we might enjoy new wine and to grow into new life.

### PRAYER

This Lenten season, we pray that God might grace us with the strength and courage to let go of the old wineskins, to plant the old bones in the dirt, so that we might be filled with new wine, bear witness to new growth, and cultivate a new life in Christ. Amen.

## SATURDAY, MARCH 12, 2022

*Nick Bersin, MTS Student*

### SCRIPTURE

#### Psalm 149

1 Praise the Lord!  
Sing to the Lord a new song,  
his praise in the assembly of the faithful.  
2 Let Israel be glad in its Maker;  
let the children of Zion rejoice in their King.  
3 Let them praise his name with dancing,  
making melody to him with tambourine and lyre.  
4 For the Lord takes pleasure in his people;  
he adorns the humble with victory.  
5 Let the faithful exult in glory;  
let them sing for joy on their couches.  
6 Let the high praises of God be in their throats  
and two-edged swords in their hands,  
7 to execute vengeance on the nations  
and punishment on the peoples,  
8 to bind their kings with fetters  
and their nobles with chains of iron,  
9 to execute on them the judgment decreed.  
This is glory for all his faithful ones.  
Praise the Lord!

## DEVOTIONAL

When we begin this psalm, reading it for private devotion or perhaps chanting it in worship, it is fairly congenial to us. Singing! Celebration! Rejoicing! The humble being adorned with victory! There is some war imagery—the previously mentioned victory, and the two-edged swords—but this imagery is clearly metaphorical, so we go with it.

Then we get to verse 7.

Suddenly, we're talking about executing vengeance on the nations—the others—and about punishing people, binding kings and nobles and executing judgment on them. This is not what I signed up for!

This kind of violent imagery is a stumbling block for many of us. How can we claim such violent and tribalistic texts as our Scripture? What happened to loving your enemies and worshipping with every tribe and tongue?

I am inclined to agree with Origen that such stumbling blocks are not embarrassing mistakes to be left out of the liturgy and forgotten, but rather inspired features of the text pushing us to deeper spiritual meanings. We approach this text in the penitential season of Lent, a time when we examine ourselves and repent of our sin in anticipation of Good Friday and Easter. As we read this psalm, we may find that there is indeed a part of us that wants to chant these words about our earthly enemies. There is so much wickedness in the world, so many people who have wronged us. We would love to execute judgment on them!

But as we go down this path, we start to wonder whether we may not be the ones on the receiving end of the judgment. Why are we so sure that we are sitting in judgment over others and not the other way around?

If we continue to follow this thought, we realize that it is foolish either way. Jesus Christ will come again in glory to judge the quick and the dead. We will all stand before his judgment seat on the last day. Rather than propping ourselves up to judge others, we must throw ourselves before him and cry, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, have mercy on us!" And when we do, we will find that he has already handed down his verdict: we are declared righteous in his sight, not on the basis of what we have done, but what he has done for us. By his faithfulness, we have been released from the judgment of the law and set free to live in fellowship with him.

Once we have realized this, we will come to read this psalm aright. Those who are being cast down and bound here are not ultimately human rulers. As Paul tells us, our enemies are not "of blood and flesh"; rather, we fight "against the cosmic powers of the present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" (Eph. 6:12). Our own

sin must be bound and judged to prepare us for the Lord's coming. These prayers of vengeance direct our attention away from our earthly enemies and toward the one who has defeated sin, death, and Satan by his cross and resurrection. As we anticipate the commemoration of the Lord's death and resurrection and eagerly await his return, let us remember that he has already won the victory.

## PRAYER

O God, you have made of one blood all the peoples of the earth and have sent your blessed Son to preach to those who are far off and to those who are near. Grant that people everywhere may seek after you and find you; bring the nations into your fold; pour out your Spirit upon all flesh; and hasten the coming of your kingdom. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

## SUNDAY, MARCH 13, 2022

*The Rev. Kendra Buckwalter Smith '12/'13, Worship Coordinator*

## SCRIPTURE

### Psalm 42

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 and my God.  
My soul is cast down within me;  
therefore I remember you  
from the land of Jordan and of Hermon,  
from Mount Mizar.  
7 Deep calls to deep  
at the thunder of your cataracts;  
all your waves and your billows  
have gone over me.

8 By day the LORD commands his steadfast love,  
and at night his song is with me,  
a prayer to the God of my life.  
9 I say to God, my rock,  
“Why have you forgotten me?  
Why must I walk about mournfully  
because the enemy oppresses me?”  
10 As with a deadly wound in my body,  
my adversaries taunt me,  
while they say to me continually,  
“Where is your God?”  
11 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 and my God.

## DEVOTIONAL

“Where is your God?” To inquiring observers, it seems that the psalmist has been abandoned. And indeed, our writer speaks from a place of desperate longing. Yet the psalmist chooses, even fights, to hope in the Lord. “Hope in God,” the psalmist speaks to the soul, “for I shall again praise him, my help and my God.”

The psalmist writes in Babylonian exile, longing to worship God in the temple. It is a longing that resonates with the church of our own time as we have come to know what it feels like to be separated from our houses of worship and the worshiping community. Perhaps our souls have come to be more closely aligned with the longing, not only of the psalmist, but of God who indeed longs so deeply to bring us into the divine presence that God took on flesh, suffered at the hands of those who would not receive Jesus, and raised us to eternal life in Christ.

Where is your God?  
God is on the cross, crying out in thirst, that all our longings may be quenched.  
God is in the wounded body of Christ, that we may be made whole.  
God is in the abandoned soul of Jesus, that we may never be abandoned.

Where is your God?  
God is with you. Even now, leading a joyful procession to the house of God.

## PRAYER

God of longing and of hope, our hearts are restless until they find rest in you. As we walk this Lenten journey, may we know your presence in the depths of our souls and be led with all of creation to behold your face in glory. Amen.

## MONDAY, MARCH 14, 2022

*The Rev. Andy Greenhow, Chief of Staff to the President and Secretary to the Board of Directors*

## SCRIPTURE

### Mark 3:7-19a

7 Jesus departed with his disciples to the sea, and a great multitude from Galilee followed him; 8 hearing all that he was doing, they came to him in great numbers from Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, beyond the Jordan, and the region around Tyre and Sidon. 9 He told his disciples to have a boat ready for him because of the crowd, so that they would not crush him; 10 for he had cured many, so that all who had diseases pressed upon him to touch him. 11 Whenever the unclean spirits saw him, they fell down before him and shouted, “You are the Son of God!” 12 But he sternly ordered them not to make him known. 13 He went up the mountain and called to him those whom he wanted, and they came to him. 14 And he appointed twelve, whom he also named apostles, to be with him, and to be sent out to proclaim the message, 15 and to have authority to cast out demons. 16 So he appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter); 17 James son of Zebedee and John the brother of James (to whom he gave the name Boanerges, that is, Sons of Thunder); 18 and Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Cananaean, 19 and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

## DEVOTIONAL

One of the roles I’m pleased to have at PTS is the secretary to the Board of Directors and perhaps I had board business on the brain when considering this passage.

Much is rightly made of Lent as a time for us as individuals to spend time in prayer and reflection to better connect with God. The operative metaphor for so much of Lent is Jesus’ time in the desert, and the way that his 40 days alone mirror our 40 days of reflection.

But it didn’t take long after that solo desert sojourn for Jesus to appoint a board of directors, even giving some of them cool nicknames. When I think back to my own Lenten disciplines that failed to stand the test of time or be sustained in my life after Lent, I realize it was because I tried to do things myself. Never a good idea.

This Lent, I’ll spend some time reflecting on my own board of directors, those who encourage me, keep me on the straight and narrow, and provide me with much-needed disconfirming information. This Lent, I’ll be asking, “Who would Jesus appoint?”

## PRAYER

Triune God, thank you for appointing people to keep us company on our Lenten journey with you.

## TUESDAY, MARCH 15, 2022

*Judy Zimmerman Herr '82*

## SCRIPTURE

### Mark 3:19b-35

19b Then he went home; 20 and the crowd came together again, so that they could not even eat. 21 When his family heard it, they went out to restrain him, for people were saying, "He has gone out of his mind." 22 And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, "He has Beelzebul, and by the ruler of the demons he casts out demons." 23 And he called them to him, and spoke to them in parables, "How can Satan cast out Satan? 24 If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. 25 And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. 26 And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but his end has come. 27 But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his property without first tying up the strong man; then indeed the house can be plundered. 28 "Truly I tell you, people will be forgiven for their sins and whatever blasphemies they utter; 29 but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit can never have forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin" – 30 for they had said, "He has an unclean spirit." 31 Then his mother and his brothers came; and standing outside, they sent to him and called him. 32 A crowd was sitting around him; and they said to him, "Your mother and your brothers and sisters are outside, asking for you." 33 And he replied, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" 34 And looking at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! 35 Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother."

## DEVOTIONAL

Mark's Gospel shows us Jesus in a whirlwind of activity—healing, teaching, calling disciples and collecting crowds—and now, in today's passage, turning up at home again. His family doesn't know what to do with him. *Is he having a mental break, needing to be controlled? How can we get him to settle down and be more "normal"?*

The Jerusalem establishment also doesn't know what to do with him. *Is he getting his power from Beelzebul, the evil one? What else would explain the healings and the charisma? How else to understand someone who calls into question the structures of faith and of family?*

If we're honest, we don't always know what to do with Jesus either. How are we to follow a Lord who pushes back on the definitions of correctness, someone who argues with and calls out the religious leaders, someone who violates deeply-held norms about the role of the family, and even redefines what family is?

The Lenten fast calls us to self-reflection, to repentance. As we walk these 40 days, what are we being called to give up? What are the assumptions of value, of people or actions, we need to ask questions about? And what are the new directions we are being called to go? What are we being called to say yes to?

Who belongs to our family?

## PRAYER

Lord Jesus, open our eyes this day to see where you are leading us. Break down our easy assumptions about worth and about structures, to see how God's reign, that Kingdom you spoke of, turns us in new directions. Make us channels for your healing and hope in all the corners of our lives and the world. Amen.

## WEDNESDAY, MARCH 16, 2022

*The Rev. Chris Taylor '19, Admissions Counselor / Miller SYI Program Coordinator*

## SCRIPTURE

### Mark 4:1-20

1 Again he began to teach beside the sea. Such a very large crowd gathered around him that he got into a boat on the sea and sat there, while the whole crowd was beside the sea on the land. 2 He began to teach them many things in parables, and in his teaching he said to them: 3 "Listen! A sower went out to sow. 4 And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path, and the birds came and ate it up. 5 Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and it sprang up quickly, since it had no depth of soil. 6 And when the sun rose, it was scorched; and since it had no root, it withered away. 7 Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. 8 Other seed fell into good soil and brought forth grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirty and sixty and a hundredfold." 9 And he said, "Let anyone with ears to hear listen!" 10 When he was alone, those who were around him along with the twelve asked him about the parables. 11 And he said to them, "To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside, everything comes in parables; 12 in order that 'they may indeed look, but not perceive, and may indeed listen, but not understand; so that

they may not turn again and be forgiven.” 13 And he said to them, “Do you not understand this parable? Then how will you understand all the parables? 14 The sower sows the word. 15 These are the ones on the path where the word is sown: when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them. 16 And these are the ones sown on rocky ground: when they hear the word, they immediately receive it with joy. 17 But they have no root, and endure only for a while; then, when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away. 18 And others are those sown among the thorns: these are the ones who hear the word, 19 but the cares of the world, and the lure of wealth, and the desire for other things come in and choke the word, and it yields nothing. 20 And these are the ones sown on the good soil: they hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirty and sixty and a hundredfold.”

## DEVOTIONAL

Wendell Berry’s essay “Damage” offers a personal lament. Having dug a small pond to supply water for a track of land he wished to farm, Berry notes that a cold and wet winter resulted in the earth slumping, his pond now useless, his work undone. Bemoaning the defacement of the soil, he writes, “In general, I have used my farm carefully. It could be said, I think that I have improved it more than I have damaged it . . . But now a part of its damage is my own.”

Sowing seeds necessitates the disruption of soil. Not always through extensive digging, but enough to allow creation to flourish over and against the damage of the earth. Till too little and the birds, sun, and thorns claim the growth; till too much and the soil becomes unhealthy, unstable, and marred. It is a delicate balance between tilling the earth for the sake of new growth and injuring the landscape.

So it is with our hearts this Lenten season. From day one, Ash Wednesday, we contemplate our mortality and wrestle over the next 40 days about what it means that our savior is betrayed, is unfairly crucified, and dies on a cross. This disruption in us is necessary so that God’s Word may take root and deepen our understanding of Christ’s sacrifice. But the agitation in our hearts during Lent can also seem, at times, like too much. How can God’s Word find good soil, earth that has been disturbed and tilled, but not overworked by guilt or self-flagellation?

Sowing seeds, and the growing of God’s Word in us, require some disruption of the soil and of our hearts. This Lent, as you walk from the cross and the tomb, right on to the promise of Easter and the full knowledge of the resurrection to come, may the stirrings of your heart be good soil in which to root God’s Word and your life. May your heart find itself properly tilled in the promise of Christ’s everlasting reign.

## PRAYER

Farmer God, till our hearts this Lent to be ready to receive your Word. Let us be places of growth where scattered seed may take root and flourish in the promise of your son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

## THURSDAY, MARCH 17, 2022

*The Rev. Dr. Steve Tuell, Professor Emeritus of Hebrew and Old Testament*

## SCRIPTURE

### Psalm 147:12-20

12 Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem!  
Praise your God, O Zion!  
13 For he strengthens the bars of your gates;  
he blesses your children within you.  
14 He grants peace within your borders;  
he fills you with the finest of wheat.  
15 He sends out his command to the earth;  
his word runs swiftly.  
16 He gives snow like wool;  
he scatters frost like ashes.  
17 He hurls down hail like crumbs —  
who can stand before his cold?  
18 He sends out his word, and melts them;  
he makes his wind blow, and the waters flow.  
19 He declares his word to Jacob,  
his statutes and ordinances to Israel.  
20 He has not dealt thus with any other nation;  
they do not know his ordinances.  
Praise the Lord!

## DEVOTIONAL

In Pittsburgh where I live, Lent always comes in wintertime. But the wintry language of Psalm 147 may seem suitable to this season of the church year wherever you call home. The liturgical color for Lent is purple—an appropriately grim and gloomy shade. But we likely think of Lent in even more somber, *Winter* shades: the penitential black of clerical robes and leafless branches; the gray of ash on our foreheads and of clouded winter skies; the dingy off-white of sackcloth, like dirty snow.

Yet, curiously, the word “Lent” has nothing to do with Winter—or for that matter, with fasting or penitence. Etymologically, “Lent” derives from the Middle English *lenten* and the Old English *lencten*, and is related to the Old High German *lenzin*, all of which mean “Spring”!

These 40 days of preparation are appropriately penitential, marked by self-examination, prayer and fasting, but they

need not be grim and colorless. “Lent” means *Spring*—a green season, a time of growth. Lent provides the opportunity for us to break up the fallow ground of our cold hearts, as God makes the wind of the Spirit blow and the Water of Life flow into us. Lent is the time for the Spirit to prune away our dead branches so that we may bear fruit. Lent can be a season of new life—a springtime for our souls.

Friends, God grant you a green, growing, God-filled Lent!

## PRAYER

Artist of souls,  
you sculpted a people for yourself  
out of the rocks of wilderness and fasting.  
Help us as we take up your invitation to prayer and simplicity,  
that the discipline of these forty days  
may sharpen our hunger for the feast of your holy friendship,  
and whet our thirst for the living water you offer  
through Jesus Christ. Amen.

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## FRIDAY, MARCH 18, 2022

*Jason Dauer '21*

## SCRIPTURE

### Mark 4:35-41

35 On that day, when evening had come, [Jesus] said to [the disciples], “Let us go across to the other side.” 36 And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. 37 A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. 38 But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him up and said to him, “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?” 39 He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, “Peace! Be still!” Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. 40 He said to them, “Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?” 41 And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?”

## DEVOTIONAL

Life has felt like a never-ending storm these last two years. Just as we think the seasickness is going away, another storm comes. As we strengthen our “sea legs,” another wave hits the side of the boat, and we’re thrown off-balance. Meanwhile, Jesus is sleeping through all of it!

My favorite Lent song is “Wake Up, Jesus” by The Porter’s Gate. The song is a desperate cry for help from Jesus. It is a simple song that yearns for a response: “Jesus, when you gonna wake up? / When you gonna wake up and calm this raging sea? / Jesus, when you gonna wake up? / When you gonna wake up? / How can you sleep when we’re in need?”

The call for help is simple: Jesus, wake up! The dramatic irony of this song and Scripture is that we know Jesus wakes up and everything is okay in the end, but that’s not how it always works. Having faith doesn’t make the seasickness go away or help us sturdy our legs. Storms can still make boats sink, cargo can fall overboard, and people can drown. In the chorus, The Porter’s Gate sings, “Just one word from the Maker and all the waves will be made still / Just one touch from the Healer and all will be made well.”

In Lent, we cry out for God to respond. We could all create a list of the things we would like God to do, yet we plead for a simple response—just one word. What is the word you need to hear from God today? What is the word that might give you peace? Is it a command to the storm to be still, or is it an encouragement for you to rest and take care of yourself? Meditate on this word today and make it your prayer. Is it *peace, breathe, rest*? Maybe it’s *eat, drink, or sleep*.

## PRAYER

Sleeping Jesus, wake up! We need you. How can you sleep when there is so much injustice in the world, when your children are continually in danger? Wake up, and speak a word to us or the storm. Tell the powers and principalities to stop. Tell us to rest and sleep like you. Remind us to eat and take care of our bodies. But Jesus, please wake up. Amen.

## SATURDAY, MARCH 19, 2022

*The Rev. Elizabeth Wallace '07*

## SCRIPTURE

### Psalms 143

1 Hear my prayer, O LORD;  
give ear to my supplications in your faithfulness;  
answer me in your righteousness.  
2 Do not enter into judgment with your servant,  
for no one living is righteous before you.  
3 For the enemy has pursued me,  
crushing my life to the ground,  
making me sit in darkness like those long dead.  
4 Therefore my spirit faints within me;  
my heart within me is appalled.  
5 I remember the days of old,  
I think about all your deeds,  
meditate on the works of your hands.

## SUNDAY, MARCH 20, 2022

Andy Hill '20, MDiv Student

### SCRIPTURE

#### Romans 8:1-10

1 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. 3 For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and to deal with sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, 4 so that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. 5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. 6 To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. 7 For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law - indeed it cannot, 8 and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. 9 But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. 10 But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

### DEVOTIONAL

My Sunday School teacher once taught us to ask a question whenever we see the word "therefore" in the Bible: "What is the *therefore* there for?" So before we consider the conundrum between flesh and spirit that Paul presents in today's passage, we need to look back to chapter 7's discussion of sin, the flesh, and the battle that consumes them both.

First up is sin. Contrary to popular belief, sin is not simply the act of doing something wrong. Unless there is a common definition of what "wrong" means, there is no such thing as wrongdoing. The law had to be given to define what is wrong, not so that we might blindly follow the law. But, in fact, the opposite often occurs. The law can heighten the desire to do what is wrong, and here Paul seems to absolve himself of sin. Sin, he argues, takes on a life of its own in light of the law. The law comes to declare war on sin, and sin responds by doubling down.

This war takes place in the flesh, which Paul distinguishes from the mind. Sin lives in the flesh and constantly rebels against the law, while the mind sets itself on godly matters and tries to will sin away. But it fails. The mind is not strong enough to overcome the will of the flesh to sin. The flesh is in slavery to sin and cannot escape except through death.

6 I stretch out my hands to you;  
my soul thirsts for you like a parched land.  
7 Answer me quickly, O LORD;  
my spirit fails.  
o not hide your face from me,  
or I shall be like those who go down to the Pit.  
8 Let me hear of your steadfast love in the morning,  
for in you I put my trust.  
Teach me the way I should go,  
for to you I lift up my soul.  
9 Save me, O LORD, from my enemies;  
I have fled to you for refuge.  
10 Teach me to do your will,  
for you are my God.  
Let your good spirit lead me  
on a level path.  
11 For your name's sake, O LORD, preserve my life.  
In your righteousness bring me out of trouble.  
12 In your steadfast love cut off my enemies,  
and destroy all my adversaries,  
for I am your servant.

### DEVOTIONAL

I have a recurring dream that stems from my unfortunate habit of sleeping with my mouth open, especially when I'm sick and can't breathe through my nose. In this dream, I am consumed by thirst. No matter how much water I drink, nothing quenches it. I start with a glass of water, and I drink the whole thing. But nothing changes. I inevitably dream that I am drinking straight from a faucet, and can feel the cold water all around my face. But my thirst is not slaked.

Finally, I become so frantic that I wake up and realize I'm still thirsty because I only dreamed of drinking something. As soon as I am able to actually take a drink, there is immediate relief. Even one sip of water makes a tremendous difference, and there is no substitute for the real thing. Psalm 143:6 says, "My soul thirsts for you like a parched land." I think this is such a helpful image of how we long for God. How we need a reminder of God's presence, God's provision, and God's goodness. Just a taste helps us feel connected again. One sip gives us hope again, no matter what we are going through.

This Lenten season, may we all thirst for God as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.

### PRAYER

Holy God, make me thirsty for you—for your word, for your presence, for your grace. Remind me that all of life flows from you. I pray this in the name of Jesus, who gives living water. Amen.

Now back to our passage's "therefore." Therefore, Paul teaches, if the Spirit dwells in you, you are not condemned for your sin. Christ has set you free from the law that defined what sin is, so that you are also free from the war between sin and the law that lives in your flesh.

You don't have to toil and strive and obsess over this battle between what you do and what you think you ought to do. You can instead bask in the peace and joy of the Spirit. The flesh has already been condemned through Christ's death on the cross, so let that war between sin and the law go on without you. Take no part in it; find your life and peace in the Spirit who dwells within you.

## PRAYER

God, we thank you for the Holy Spirit who dwells in us. We were struggling in vain in the war between sin and law, but you have set us free. Teach us to live in joy and peace this season. Amen.

## MONDAY, MARCH 21, 2022

*Kathryn Ophardt, MDiv Student*

## SCRIPTURE

### Mark 5:21-43

21 When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered around him; and he was by the sea. 22 Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and, when he saw him, fell at his feet 23 and begged him repeatedly, "My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live." 24 So he went with him. And a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him. 25 Now there was a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years. 26 She had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had; and she was no better, but rather grew worse. 27 She had heard about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, 28 for she said, "If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well." 29 Immediately her hemorrhage stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. 30 Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd and said, "Who touched my clothes?" 31 And his disciples said to him, "You see the crowd pressing in on you; how can you say, 'Who touched me?'" 32 He looked all around to see who had done it. 33 But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth. 34 He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease." 35 While he was still speaking, some people came from the leader's house to say, "Your daughter is dead.

Why trouble the teacher any further?" 36 But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, "Do not fear, only believe." 37 He allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. 38 When they came to the house of the leader of the synagogue, he saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. 39 When he had entered, he said to them, "Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping." 40 And they laughed at him. Then he put them all outside, and took the child's father and mother and those who were with him, and went in where the child was. 41 He took her by the hand and said to her, "Talitha cum," which means, "Little girl, get up!" 42 And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about (she was twelve years of age). At this they were overcome with amazement. 43 He strictly ordered them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.

## DEVOTIONAL

"Do not fear, only believe." This is such a bold commandment. I find myself often overcome by fear: fear of instability, fear of uncertainty, fear that what hurts us will be with us for the rest of our lives, or fear that what we have today may not be there tomorrow. There are fears of individual concerns like the failing health of a loved one. There are fears of the health of the world, plagued by war, injustice, and abuse of nature. Yet, Jesus calls us to have faith rather than fear.

Jesus encounters several suffering people in this passage: the woman who suffered hemorrhages for 12 years, and the parents of a child whom they thought to be dead. Jesus healed them all, not just of their physical afflictions, but also of their fear. It is easy to focus on the healing in this story, but these are also stories of damage already done. The woman had already suffered for more than a decade, and the child was already thought to be dead. These are not stories of how having faith protects us from suffering. Rather, they are stories of how having faith liberates us from the fear that things will never get better.

Since reading this passage, Jesus' words, "Do not fear, only believe," have echoed in my ears. I pray that they echo in yours today, begging you to name not just your fear, but to also name your faith. How might God be inviting you to let go of a fear and to hold fast to faith today?

## PRAYER

God, you are so bold. Help me to live with boldness today, to embrace the faith that you have given me and to let go of the fear that afflicts me. Amen.

## TUESDAY, MARCH 22, 2022

*The Rev. Erin Davenport '05, LSW, Director of Strategic Initiatives*

### SCRIPTURE

#### Psalm 146

1 Praise the LORD!  
Praise the LORD, O my soul!  
2 I will praise the LORD as long as I live;  
I will sing praises to my God all my life long.  
3 Do not put your trust in princes,  
in mortals, in whom there is no help.  
4 When their breath departs, they return to the earth;  
on that very day their plans perish.  
5 Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob,  
whose hope is in the LORD their God,  
6 who made heaven and earth,  
the sea, and all that is in them;  
who keeps faith forever;  
7 who executes justice for the oppressed;  
who gives food to the hungry.  
The LORD sets the prisoners free;  
8 the LORD opens the eyes of the blind.  
The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down;  
the LORD loves the righteous.  
9 The LORD watches over the strangers;  
he upholds the orphan and the widow,  
but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.  
10 The LORD will reign forever,  
your God, O Zion, for all generations.  
Praise the LORD!

### DEVOTIONAL

I spend a lot of my time reading the news on my phone or in some of my favorite magazines. As I read, I often wonder: where is the hope? I spend hours researching candidates for elections, reading up on policies, and educating myself so that I have a glimmer of understanding of what is or is not happening in the world around me. And I often wonder: where is the hope? I confess that at times, I find myself looking for hope in all the wrong places. I look for hope in politics, government, and social service organizations. I look for hope in my checking account, online shopping, and local stores. And yet this hymn reminds me that the hopes of this world perish when the person, place, or thing connected to them perishes. These hopes are temporal. The hope of the God of Jacob is eternal. This hope is not something I wander around looking for, but something that finds me. God's hope is a hope that finds all of us.

### PRAYER

Jesus, you are our hope. Thank you for reaching out to us with your hope this day and every day. Help us to see the hope that you provide us today. Amen.

## WEDNESDAY, MARCH 23, 2022

*Luke Hillier, MDiv Student*

### SCRIPTURE

#### Psalm 147:1-11

1 Praise the Lord!  
How good it is to sing praises to our God;  
for he is gracious, and a song of praise is fitting.  
2 The Lord builds up Jerusalem;  
he gathers the outcasts of Israel.  
3 He heals the brokenhearted,  
and binds up their wounds.  
4 He determines the number of the stars;  
he gives to all of them their names.  
5 Great is our Lord, and abundant in power;  
his understanding is beyond measure.  
6 The Lord lifts up the downtrodden;  
he casts the wicked to the ground.  
7 Sing to the Lord with thanksgiving;  
make melody to our God on the lyre.  
8 He covers the heavens with clouds,  
prepares rain for the earth,  
makes grass grow on the hills.  
9 He gives to the animals their food,  
and to the young ravens when they cry.  
10 His delight is not in the strength of the horse,  
nor his pleasure in the speed of a runner;  
11 but the Lord takes pleasure in those who fear him,  
in those who hope in his steadfast love.

### DEVOTIONAL

In full transparency, this was originally, mistakenly, written as a devotional for Advent. Returning to it now with Lent in mind, I wonder what distinguishes these two liturgical seasons. I am reminded that Advent is a time of preparation; Lent a time of penance. In Advent, we await Christ's birth among us; in Lent, we anticipate Christ's death and resurrection. Both are also seasons of wandering and wondering. And what wisdom of the Church, what mercy of God, to realize we're likely to find ourselves lost in the wilderness more than once each year.

The Scriptures of Lent express the ways our lives groan under the weight of sin, both our own and other's. Reading through the first stanza of today's psalm, we see a picture of that sort of Lenten faith. The psalmist wakes up with a worn-down

sigh, crying out to God with prayer and pleading before committing to the seemingly endless watch (147:1-3).

What are they watching for? Some sign that evil has been cast aside from sojourning with the God who has heard them (147:4). Some way to make penance, to be led into the way of righteousness they've strayed from (147:8). Some assurance that their afflictors will be made to bear their guilt, held responsibility for their rebellion against God (147:10). Again and again, the psalmist cries out with the language of lament. However, as is typically the case with a psalmist's lament, it also moves toward praise. "But let all who take refuge in you rejoice," they say, "let them ever sing for joy." Even amidst the constant longings of Lent, there is also, still, reason for sounding joy.

## PRAYER

God of Lent, who hears our cries as we watch and wait,  
Cast aside the evil within us and within our world.  
Lead us into righteousness, and under your refuge,  
Lead us into joyful songs of praise.

## THURSDAY, MARCH 24, 2022

*The Rev. Kay Day '97*

## SCRIPTURE

### Psalm 126

1 When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion,  
we were like those who dream.  
2 Then our mouth was filled with laughter,  
and our tongue with shouts of joy;  
then it was said among the nations,  
"The LORD has done great things for them."  
3 The LORD has done great things for us,  
and we rejoiced.  
4 Restore our fortunes, O LORD,  
like the watercourses in the Negeb.  
5 May those who sow in tears  
reap with shouts of joy.  
6 Those who go out weeping,  
bearing the seed for sowing,  
shall come home with shouts of joy,  
carrying their sheaves.

## DEVOTIONAL

Sometimes during Lent, we feel as if we are in a place of exile, away from the joy and comfort of all that is familiar. Sometimes in the midst of the stress of life and the challenges of the situations around us, we also feel that way. That was where the children of Israel were for many years. But today's psalm is the promise of the end of that exile for the children of Israel and for us.

The hopeful expectation is that God will bring us back to a home base. And we, like the children of Israel, move as in a dream. That is the state of delight that seems too good to be true. To once again be surrounded by all that is comforting, that is filled with good memories that have sustained us during times of trouble and exile. You know those times, in the midst of difficulties, when you remember the goodness of a place or event. But God returns us, not to memory, but to the reality of that place that feels like home. That is what God has for us at the end of the struggles and isolation that we face. That is the focus of the first three verses of this psalm: the delight of being restored to our home place.

The joy is that the Lord has done great things for us. We see them more clearly when we have come through the times of exile, the times of struggle and alienation. But there is more to the psalm. It is a prayer that God will restore all that we have lost, that our sorrow and tears will be turned to joy and plenty. This is a prayer that the restoration will be complete.

Where are you at this point in Lent? Maybe still feeling exiled, away from all that you love, as you experience the discipline and direction of God? Perhaps recovering from tears of sorrow and loss? Or maybe ready to enter again into God's joy for you? Wherever you are on your journey, may you be able to say with the psalmist, "The Lord had done great things for us."

## PRAYER

God, we thank you that you bring us back to a home base. You sustain us with comfort, memories, and goodness in the midst of our difficulties. And we look forward to when memories will no longer be needed, because we will enter the reality of home. Amen.

## FRIDAY, MARCH 25, 2022

*The Rev. Darryl Lockie '17*

## SCRIPTURE

### Psalm 22

1 My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?  
Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my  
groaning?  
2 O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer;  
and by night, but find no rest.  
3 Yet you are holy,  
enthroned on the praises of Israel.  
4 In you our ancestors trusted;  
they trusted, and you delivered them.  
5 To you they cried, and were saved;  
in you they trusted, and were not put to shame.  
6 But I am a worm, and not human;  
scorned by others, and despised by the people.

7 All who see me mock at me;  
they make mouths at me, they shake their heads;  
8 "Commit your cause to the LORD; let him deliver —  
let him rescue the one in whom he delights!"  
9 Yet it was you who took me from the womb;  
you kept me safe on my mother's breast.  
10 On you I was cast from my birth,  
and since my mother bore me you have been my God.  
11 Do not be far from me,  
for trouble is near  
and there is no one to help.  
12 Many bulls encircle me,  
strong bulls of Bashan surround me;  
13 they open wide their mouths at me,  
like a ravening and roaring lion.  
14 I am poured out like water,  
and all my bones are out of joint;  
my heart is like wax;  
it is melted within my breast;  
15 my mouth is dried up like a potsherd,  
and my tongue sticks to my jaws;  
you lay me in the dust of death.  
16 For dogs are all around me;  
a company of evildoers encircles me.  
My hands and feet have shriveled;  
17 I can count all my bones.  
They stare and gloat over me;  
18 they divide my clothes among themselves,  
and for my clothing they cast lots.  
19 But you, O LORD, do not be far away!  
O my help, come quickly to my aid!  
20 Deliver my soul from the sword,  
life from the power of the dog!  
21 Save me from the mouth of the lion!  
From the horns of the wild oxen you have rescued me.  
22 I will tell of your name to my brothers and sisters;  
in the midst of the congregation I will praise you:  
23 You who fear the LORD, praise him!  
All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him;  
stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel!  
24 For he did not despise or abhor  
the affliction of the afflicted;  
he did not hide his face from me,  
but heard when I cried to him.  
25 From you comes my praise in the great congregation;  
my vows I will pay before those who fear him.  
26 The poor shall eat and be satisfied;  
those who seek him shall praise the LORD.  
May your hearts live forever!  
27 All the ends of the earth shall remember  
and turn to the LORD;  
and all the families of the nations  
shall worship before him.  
28 For dominion belongs to the LORD,  
and he rules over the nations.  
29 To him, indeed, shall all who sleep in the earth bow down;  
before him shall bow all who go down to the dust,

and I shall live for him.

30 Posterity will serve him;  
future generations will be told about the Lord,  
31 and proclaim his deliverance to a people yet unborn,  
saying that he has done it.

## DEVOTIONAL

I am always astonished by the varied spiritual experiences we can have throughout a given day. I can't count how many mornings I have woken up feeling so palpably in God's grace that I am going to "carpe diem!" my way through the next waking hours. Yet so often by mid-morning, after a few setbacks and stumbles, I'll be saying an approximation of this Psalm: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Perhaps such a statement is a little overly-dramatic when applied to the copy machine going down for the third time this week, but it's also the case in matters of more substance.

That is the very reason I've always appreciated this Psalm. In just the first few verses, we glimpse what is so often our experience of the life of faith. There is deep despair as well as persistent hope. Sometimes we experience these heights and depths in the same day, or even in one particular moment. When this happens, I am grateful for this Psalm, where we find wide margins to acknowledge all the ways and places we feel our God has been too slow to deliver—yet the feelings are expressed in faith. We can lament while still remembering who God is.

I think the season of Lent is an invitation to consider this for ourselves. Where have we experienced the strange paradox of being both forsaken yet faithful, heartbroken yet not without hope? This season and this Psalm offer an invitation to explore the depths of our human experience. But our exploration will not lead us to empty despair, for there is hope that even amid such darkness, "The Lord is enthroned as the Holy One."

## PRAYER

Dear God, give us the grace to accept the tension of this challenging but necessary season. As we look at some areas of our lives and our world, it seems as though we are forsaken and all traces of you are gone. Yet we still confess that you are on your throne. Grant to us the wisdom and strength to live into both of these realities, as we grow in the likeness of your son, Jesus Christ.

## SATURDAY, MARCH 26, 2022

*The Rev. Mikayla Kovacic '19*

### SCRIPTURE

#### Psalm 31

1 In you, O LORD, I seek refuge;  
do not let me ever be put to shame;  
in your righteousness deliver me.  
2 Incline your ear to me;  
rescue me speedily.  
Be a rock of refuge for me,  
a strong fortress to save me.  
3 You are indeed my rock and my fortress;  
for your name's sake lead me and guide me,  
4 take me out of the net that is hidden for me,  
for you are my refuge.  
5 Into your hand I commit my spirit;  
you have redeemed me, O LORD, faithful God.  
6 You hate those who pay regard to worthless idols,  
but I trust in the LORD.  
7 I will exult and rejoice in your steadfast love,  
because you have seen my affliction;  
you have taken heed of my adversities,  
8 and have not delivered me into the hand of the enemy;  
you have set my feet in a broad place.  
9 Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am in distress;  
my eye wastes away from grief,  
my soul and body also.  
10 For my life is spent with sorrow,  
and my years with sighing;  
my strength fails because of my misery,  
and my bones waste away.  
11 I am the scorn of all my adversaries,  
a horror to my neighbors,  
an object of dread to my acquaintances;  
those who see me in the street flee from me.  
12 I have passed out of mind like one who is dead;  
I have become like a broken vessel.  
13 For I hear the whispering of many —  
terror all around! —  
as they scheme together against me,  
as they plot to take my life.  
14 But I trust in you, O LORD; I say, "You are my God."  
15 My times are in your hand;  
deliver me from the hand of my enemies and persecutors.  
16 Let your face shine upon your servant;  
save me in your steadfast love.  
17 Do not let me be put to shame, O LORD,  
for I call on you;  
let the wicked be put to shame;  
let them go dumbfounded to Sheol.  
18 Let the lying lips be stilled  
that speak insolently against the righteous  
with pride and contempt.

19 O how abundant is your goodness  
that you have laid up for those who fear you,  
and accomplished for those who take refuge in you,  
in the sight of everyone!

20 In the shelter of your presence you hide them  
from human plots;  
you hold them safe under your shelter  
from contentious tongues.

21 Blessed be the LORD,  
for he has wondrously shown his steadfast love to me  
when I was beset as a city under siege.

22 I had said in my alarm,  
"I am driven far from your sight."

But you heard my supplications  
when I cried out to you for help.

23 Love the LORD, all you his saints.

The LORD preserves the faithful,  
but abundantly repays the one who acts haughtily.

24 Be strong, and let your heart take courage,  
all you who wait for the LORD.

### DEVOTIONAL

Psalm 31 is particularly poignant during the season of Lent. According to the Gospel of Luke, the last words that Jesus spoke from the cross were from this Psalm. "Into your hand, I commit my spirit." Though this Psalm has come to be associated with Jesus' death, it also has a message for us as Christ's followers today. Psalm 31 is a prayer for God's help that leads into a song of thanksgiving. The psalmist writes of enduring a city under siege, navigating uncertainty, despair, brokenness, and death. With this in mind, the psalmist imagines God as a strong fortress, a protector, a shelter.

As followers of Christ we, like the psalmist, experience lives that sometimes feel as if they are under siege. We navigate uncertainty, despair, brokenness, grief, and death. The season of Lent brings these feelings to the forefront of our minds as we journey with Jesus toward the cross. Psalm 31, though, is good news for us today and always. It reminds us that God is our fortress, our protector, our shelter. We can trust God because God cares for us and loves us beyond all measure. With safety and confidence, we can place our lives in God's hands. No matter the range of emotions that we experience or the situations we navigate, God is with us and God is for us. May we commit our lives into God's hands once again.

### PRAYER

Bless you, O Lord, because you are faithful and loving. You lead me, guide me, and care for me all the days of my life. Be a shelter for me, O God. Protect me. Give me all confidence and assurance to commit my life to your hands. Amen.

## SUNDAY, MARCH 27, 2022

*Samuel McCann '19*

### SCRIPTURE

#### Psalm 84

1 How lovely is your dwelling place,  
O LORD of hosts!  
2 My soul longs, indeed it faints  
for the courts of the LORD;  
my heart and my flesh sing for joy  
to the living God.  
3 Even the sparrow finds a home,  
and the swallow a nest for herself,  
where she may lay her young,  
at your altars, O LORD of hosts,  
my King and my God.  
4 Happy are those who live in your house,  
ever singing your praise. Selah  
5 Happy are those whose strength is in you,  
in whose heart are the highways to Zion.  
6 As they go through the valley of Baca  
they make it a place of springs;  
the early rain also covers it with pools.  
7 They go from strength to strength;  
the God of gods will be seen in Zion.  
8 O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer;  
give ear, O God of Jacob! Selah  
9 Behold our shield, O God;  
look on the face of your anointed.  
10 For a day in your courts is better  
than a thousand elsewhere.  
I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God  
than live in the tents of wickedness.  
11 For 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.  
12 O LORD of hosts,  
happy is everyone who trusts in you.

### DEVOTIONAL

This beloved psalm evokes pilgrimage. Pilgrimage imagery is not merely a powerful metaphor for the Christian life, but is often a spiritually powerful experience for those who undertake a literal pilgrimage. Occasionally, language about pilgrimage (literal or metaphorical) yields an obsession with the journey rather than the destination. While being concerned with the journey is worthwhile, it is good to stop and reflect on where we are going. Often our destination will determine not only the route we take, but the attitude we adopt on the journey.

As I read Psalm 84, I find myself asking, "Where are we going?" One can confidently assert that, based on this psalm, we go to the presence of God. But who is this God? A God who provides a home for the sparrow, a nest for the swallow. What's so moving about this imagery is that birds are fragile creatures. In essence, this psalm describes those traveling to a refuge for the fragile. People are journeying to a God who is gentle with the vulnerable. As you journey to the holiest days in the Christian calendar, what steps do you take knowing that you are seeking a gentle God who cultivates a home for the fragile and vulnerable?

### PRAYER

Gracious God, Creator of the universe, we humbly ask for your guidance in our journey to draw near to you. We pray that the paths we take are informed by your love and gentleness. Amen.

## MONDAY, MARCH 28, 2022

*The Rev. Greg Steible '14*

### SCRIPTURE

#### Mark 7:24-3

24 From there he set out and went away to the region of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know he was there. Yet he could not escape notice, 25 but a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately heard about him, and she came and bowed down at his feet. 26 Now the woman was a Gentile, of Syrophenician origin. She begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. 27 He said to her, "Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." 28 But she answered him, "Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." 29 Then he said to her, "For saying that, you may go - the demon has left your daughter." 30 So she went home, found the child lying on the bed, and the demon gone. 31 Then he returned from the region of Tyre, and went by way of Sidon towards the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. 32 They brought to him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech; and they begged him to lay his hand on him. 33 He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue. 34 Then looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, "Ephphatha," that is, "Be opened." 35 And immediately his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. 36 Then Jesus ordered them to tell no one; but the more he ordered them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. 37 They were astounded beyond measure, saying, "He has done everything well; he even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak."

## DEVOTIONAL

Did we just see Jesus get schooled by a Syrophenician? It's a notoriously tricky passage to interpret. Tricky isn't the right word: disturbing is better. Where's the justice for this woman? Why does Jesus seem so rude? Is his healing of her daughter some sort of apology? She comes, she bows down at his feet, she begs for help, and in response it looks like he calls her a dog. Some will tell you Jesus was just testing her, but perhaps a more powerful Lenten moment is to see how Jesus rectifies his (perceived) gaffe.

How often do we scoff at those in pain? It's hard to admit, I know, but I also recognize the *schadenfreude* associated with watching the news. I've experienced how slowly highway traffic crawls near an accident—how often it's motivated by "better them than me" instead of any real compassion. How quick we are to turn people away rather than to offer them real, relational healing and hope. Or maybe it's our best intentions that have been interpreted as hurtful and judgmental. How can we be more like Jesus? How can we turn our scoffs into moments of real compassion?

As followers of Christ, we are called to embody love in the world. When we miss those opportunities to embody love, we aren't alone. Christ is right there with us in our missteps to help rectify our wrongdoing and to point us toward healing and wholeness. Christ empowers us to offer apologies and to love.

## PRAYER

Have mercy on us, O Lord, and help us to have mercy on others. You call us to love other people, but so often we assume they deserve what they get. Free us from these broken attitudes and use us to build up the world in love. Amen.

## TUESDAY, MARCH 29, 2022

*Lori Arnold, Continuing Education Coordinator*

## SCRIPTURE

### Genesis 49:29-50:14

29 Then he charged them, saying to them, "I am about to be gathered to my people. Bury me with my ancestors - in the cave in the field of Ephron the Hittite, 30 in the cave in the field at Machpelah, near Mamre, in the land of Canaan, in the field that Abraham bought from Ephron the Hittite as a burial site. 31 There Abraham and his wife Sarah were buried; there Isaac and his wife Rebekah were buried; and there I buried Leah 32 the field and the cave that is in it were purchased from the Hittites." 33 When Jacob ended his charge to his sons, he drew up his feet into the bed, breathed

his last, and was gathered to his people. 1 Then Joseph threw himself on his father's face and wept over him and kissed him. 2 Joseph commanded the physicians in his service to embalm his father. So the physicians embalmed Israel; 3 they spent forty days in doing this, for that is the time required for embalming. And the Egyptians wept for him seventy days. 4 When the days of weeping for him were past, Joseph addressed the household of Pharaoh, "If now I have found favor with you, please speak to Pharaoh as follows: 5 My father made me swear an oath; he said, 'I am about to die. In the tomb that I hewed out for myself in the land of Canaan, there you shall bury me.' Now therefore let me go up, so that I may bury my father; then I will return." 6 Pharaoh answered, "Go up, and bury your father, as he made you swear to do" 7 So Joseph went up to bury his father. With him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his household, and all the elders of the land of Egypt, 8 as well as all the household of Joseph, his brothers, and his father's household. Only their children, their flocks, and their herds were left in the land of Goshen. 9 Both chariots and charioteers went up with him. It was a very great company. 10 When they came to the threshing floor of Atad, which is beyond the Jordan, they held there a very great and sorrowful lamentation; and he observed a time of mourning for his father seven days. 11 When the Canaanite inhabitants of the land saw the mourning on the threshing floor of Atad, they said, "This is a grievous mourning on the part of the Egyptians." Therefore the place was named Abel-mizraim; it is beyond the Jordan. 12 Thus his sons did for him as he had instructed them. 13 They carried him to the land of Canaan and buried him in the cave of the field at Machpelah, the field near Mamre, which Abraham bought as a burial site from Ephron the Hittite. 14 After he had buried his father, Joseph returned to Egypt with his brothers and all who had gone up with him to bury his father.

## DEVOTIONAL

When Jacob died, Joseph's actions were a testament to their relationship. He wept out of love for his parent. He honored his father by observing rituals of mourning. Then, after seeking Pharaoh's permission to leave Egypt, Joseph respected Jacob's dying wish by taking his father's body to its burial site. Joseph obeyed Jacob's final wish to bury Jacob among his ancestors – an oath Joseph was able to fulfill by pledging that he would return to Egypt. Finally, Joseph lived his life in relationship with God, according to the model of father during Joseph's childhood. In doing so, Joseph continued weaving the threads of the bond with his father for the remainder of his life.

For many, the years 2020 and 2021 brought loss of loved ones: some from COVID-19 and some from other causes. Unlike Joseph, our means of honoring those loved ones probably differed from our usual traditions. New circumstances to which we had to adapt might have included not being able to be present at the death of loved ones,

delayed memorial services, or no large gathering of family to mourn. What did not change was our desire to honor their lives because we loved them. COVID-19 may have influenced *how* we celebrated their lives, but it did not stop the celebration. While we prepare for the resurrection, may we remember to celebrate the lives of those we love as well as the blessings we have.

## PRAYER

Holy Trinity, help us to find you even when surrounded by darkness and loss. Let us be living testimonies to those who took part in raising us. Remind us of your steadfast love and help us exemplify that love in the world. In your name we pray. Amen.

## WEDNESDAY, MARCH 30, 2022

*The Rev. Carolyn Cranston '99, Director of Alumnae/i and Church Relations*

## SCRIPTURES

### I Corinthians 12:1-11

1 Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. 2 You know that when you were pagans, you were enticed and led astray to idols that could not speak. 3 Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says "Let Jesus be cursed!" and no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except by the Holy Spirit. 4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; 5 and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; 6 and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. 7 To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. 8 To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, 10 to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. 11 All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.

## DEVOTIONAL

What an amazing gift God has given us in the Holy Spirit. It is only through the Spirit of God that we are able to know and love Jesus as our Lord and Savior. As followers of Jesus, we receive an invitation to journey with him to the cross. We experience the dark days of Jesus' crucifixion, death, resurrection, and final victory as he ascends to heaven with God.

Scripture tells us that there are varieties of spiritual gifts given to God's children. There are also many ways to serve and work to use those gifts. All of these things come from the same Spirit, for in all things it is the same God at work. It is not up to us to decide which gift we want to receive and which gift we have no interest in using.

The Holy Spirit determines how to distribute the spiritual gifts. The Spirit does not distribute spiritual gifts to everyone equally, but as the Spirit of God so chooses. The beauty of this is that we have no reason for pride or envy. The gifts we possess are just that—gifts. They are not of our own making. We do not claim, nor should we desire, what the Spirit has not given us.

The Holy Spirit has bestowed spiritual gifts upon every one of God's children to use for the common good of all in building up the Kingdom of God. It is most important for all of God's children to discern which spiritual gifts they possess. Spiritual gifts should never lay idle. If you have not identified your own gifts, seek clarity through a spiritual gifts inventory, or perhaps through conversations at your church.

Your gifts will make a unique difference, because only you possess them.

## PRAYER

Holy and gracious God, thank you for the Spirit who generates in us the love of Jesus Christ. We are grateful that, through the Holy Spirit, every person receives spiritual gifts. Help us to use our gifts for the benefit of others. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

## THURSDAY, MARCH 31, 2022

*The Rev. Charles L. Fischer III, Vice President for Seminary Advancement*

## SCRIPTURE

### Psalms 27

1 The LORD is my light and my salvation;  
whom shall I fear?  
The LORD is the stronghold of my life;  
of whom shall I be afraid?  
2 When evildoers assail me  
to devour my flesh —  
my adversaries and foes —  
they shall stumble and fall.  
3 Though an army encamp against me,  
my heart shall not fear;  
though war rise up against me,  
yet I will be confident.  
4 One thing I asked of the LORD,

that will I seek after:  
to live in the house of the LORD  
all the days of my life,  
to behold the beauty of the LORD,  
and to inquire in his temple.  
5 For he will hide me in his shelter  
in the day of trouble;  
he will conceal me under the cover of his tent;  
he will set me high on a rock.  
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.  
11 Teach me your way, O LORD,  
and lead me on a level path  
because of my enemies.  
12 Do not give me up to the will of my adversaries,  
for false witnesses have risen against me,  
and they are breathing out violence.  
13 I believe that I shall see the goodness of the LORD  
in the land of the living.  
14 Wait for the LORD;  
be strong, and let your heart take courage;  
wait for the LORD!

## DEVOTIONAL

We all have fears. We know that constant tug within ourselves that reminds us of what does not feel safe or might be uncomfortable. Fear is that shadow that we cannot escape from because it is tethered to us and we are unable to release ourselves from it until we change our position or move our location. It may be the fear of the unknown, failure, people, places, what the day may bring, and what lies in the future. Fear prevents us from being willing to face some situations, and precludes us from living more fully into our divinely ordered lives. It takes work to overcome fear.

The psalmist acknowledges that the Lord who is their light and salvation, the very stronghold of their lives stands between themselves and that which they were once afraid to address, face, or acknowledge. When the psalmist asks, "Whom shall I fear?" and, "Of whom shall I be afraid?" we remember that we are hearing the proclamation of an individual and a community who has overcome what has

haunted others. The psalmist has found a new location and/or a different position to stand so that the shadow of fear no longer follows them.

On this your Lenten journey, may we find that which is within us to change our location and position so that the fears that once accompanied us will be no longer. It is not about finding the courage but rather it is to place our faith in the Lord who will redirect us so that you will bask in a new light and not be consumed with the shadows of the past.

## PRAYER

Lord God, almighty and everlasting Father, you have brought us in safety to this new day: Preserve us with your mighty power, that we may not fall into sin, nor be overcome by adversity; and in all we do, direct us to the fulfilling of your purpose; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## FRIDAY, APRIL 1, 2022

*The Rev. B.T. Gilligan '11*

## SCRIPTURE

### Mark 9:2-13

2 Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, 3 and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. 4 And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus. 5 Then Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." 6 He did not know what to say, for they were terrified. 7 Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!" 8 Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them any more, but only Jesus. 9 As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead. 10 So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what this rising from the dead could mean. 11 Then they asked him, "Why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?" 12 He said to them, "Elijah is indeed coming first to restore all things. How then is it written about the Son of Man, that he is to go through many sufferings and be treated with contempt? 13 But I tell you that Elijah has come, and they did to him whatever they pleased, as it is written about him."

## DEVOTIONAL

Imagine being in this event. Imagine being with Jesus as he transfigures, and then two giants of the faith show up in front of you. Elijah and Moses have been dead for

generations, and now they are standing in front of Peter, James, and John. If that were you, what would you say? Peter certainly doesn't know what to say. He has nothing brilliant to add to the moment. As a result, he says, "Let's build a monument."

Peter is in an amazing situation and has nothing of value to add. Instead of enjoying the moment and being in it, he decides it is necessary to make noise. Instead of simply being terrified, Peter decides to fake confidence by speaking nonsense that Jesus doesn't even acknowledge. How often do we do the same?

How often do we come face to face with the full beauty of God and our first response is to add noise? Lent is a season of quiet and contemplation, focused on all that Jesus accomplishes in three days; how often is our response to fill it with noisy words and noisy actions? Those actions might even look spiritual, but sometimes they are only a means to cover up the fact that we are terrified by what Jesus is doing in our midst.

During Lent, we are face to face with the divine work of Christ. May we do the opposite of Peter and remain quiet. May we simply allow ourselves to be terrified and quiet in the presence of the holy work of Christ in our midst this Lenten season.

## PRAYER

Dear Jesus, so often we are terrified of what you are doing in our lives. Help us to be quiet and to hear what you are up to, so that we might more fully experience your presence in our lives. Amen.

## SATURDAY, APRIL 2, 2022

*Joel Peterson '18*

## SCRIPTURE

### Mark 9:14–29

14 When they came to the disciples, they saw a great crowd around them, and some scribes arguing with them.

15 When the whole crowd saw him, they were immediately overcome with awe, and they ran forward to greet him.

16 He asked them, "What are you arguing about with them?" 17 Someone from the crowd answered him, "Teacher, I brought you my son; he has a spirit that makes him unable to speak; 18 and whenever it seizes him, it dashes him down; and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid; and I asked your disciples to cast it out, but they could not do so." 19 He answered them, "You faithless generation, how much longer must I be among you? How much longer must I put up with you? Bring him to me."

20 And they brought the boy to him. When the spirit saw him, immediately it convulsed the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth. 21 Jesus asked the father, "How long has this been happening to him?" And he said, "From childhood. 22 It has often cast him into the fire and into the water, to destroy him; but if you are able to do anything, have pity on us and help us." 23 Jesus said to him, "If you are able! All things can be done for the one who believes." 24 Immediately the father of the child cried out, "I believe; help my unbelief!" 25 When Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You spirit that keeps this boy from speaking and hearing, I command you, come out of him, and never enter him again!" 26 After crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out, and the boy was like a corpse, so that most of them said, "He is dead." 27 But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he was able to stand. 28 When he had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?" 29 He said to them, "This kind can come out only through prayer."

## DEVOTIONAL

The place where a crowd has gathered in today's passage is a passing town not even worth naming. Context tells the reader only that it is a place in Galilee between the Mount of Transfiguration and Capernaum. As Jesus and his disciples attempt to sneak through to Jerusalem, they are delayed by a pressing need: a boy with an afflicting spirit.

Those who travel through my particular Pennsylvania passing town might stop in a small restaurant surrounded by empty hardware stores and banks. The lone server rises from the jigsaw puzzle that has momentarily kept their attention and brings your menus. As you wonder which selection might get you on your way the fastest, the server tells you the history of the town and recounts her trip to Woodstock '69. But the anecdotes turn a corner as she begins to tell you about her family. The stories of overdose deaths and addictions are enfolded in her telling. And yes, there's a boy—just 8 years old—with an afflicting spirit.

A passer-through might initially be taken aback by her vulnerability, but regulars know that this never-busy restaurant is a place of prayer. The boy, just like the nameless child in Mark's Gospel, has an ailment that makes normal life impossible. The doctors have diagnostic terms for his condition. They have treatments and medications that insurance won't cover. The need is no different than it was for the disciples of Jesus. "Why can we not cast it out and set the boy free?" we ask.

Lent invites us to spend time in the places of little importance, to stop in the town where most only pass through. This season invites us to spend time with the unanswerable questions, with people who cry out for a healing that seems like a fantasy. As we pray, we say "I believe; help my

unbelief." We hold fast to the promise that the one who travels through the valley of the shadow of death with us rebukes the spirit of death itself. We declare our belief that the children of God whom the world does not even stop to notice will be taken by the hand and enlivened with the Spirit who gives abundant life to all.

## PRAYER

Savior, remind us of the world's need for your healing power from the spirits of affliction. Help us to believe even when we find ourselves unbelieving. Lift us up with the determination to seek your liberating power in places where we might otherwise give up. Fill us with awe at the wonders you will show us in unlikely places. Amen.

## SUNDAY, APRIL 3, 2022

*Dave Keys, Database and Website Administrator*

## SCRIPTURE

### Romans 12:1-21

1 I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. 2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God - what is good and acceptable and perfect. 3 For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. 4 For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, 5 so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. 6 We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; 7 ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; 8 the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness. 9 Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; 10 love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. 11 Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. 12 Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. 13 Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers. 14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. 16 Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. 17 Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. 18 If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. 19 Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will

repay, says the Lord." 20 No, "if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads." 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

## DEVOTIONAL

Paul is defining and describing a picture-perfect Christian life. He begins by telling us to present our bodies as a living and holy sacrifice. If we offer ourselves in spiritual worship to God, God will transform and renew us. Paul then tells us to use sound judgment, which is dependent on the faith and grace that has been given to us through our transformation. We all have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us. No one gift is more important than another gift. We are all members of one body, and we should use our gifts for the building up and the edifying of the body of Christ. Be devoted to one another in brotherly and sisterly love, giving preference to one another with honor. And finally, we are told to be at peace with all humankind. Even our enemies. Because good will always overcome evil, we must strive to be good and follow these standards in our Christians lives. We should not be discouraged by the reality that we will never live up to these standards. The key is to use the talent and grace that God has given to each of us to always strive toward the principles that Paul has laid out. For it is through our struggle and humility that we are continually being sanctified, made holy. Therefore, our worship is truly a living and holy sacrifice.

## PRAYER

Take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to thee. Take my moments and my days; let them flow in endless praise. Take my life, Lord, and I will pour it out as a living sacrifice to you. For you alone are worthy of my eternal love and praise. Amen.

## MONDAY, APRIL 4, 2022

*The Rev. Joshua Demi '20*

## SCRIPTURE

### Mark 9:30-41

30 They went on from there and passed through Galilee. He did not want anyone to know it; 31 for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, "The Son of Man is to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed, he will rise again." 32 But they did not understand what he was saying and were afraid to ask him. 33 Then they came to Capernaum; and when he was in the house he asked them, "What were you arguing about on the way?" 34 But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another who was the greatest. 35 He sat

down, called the twelve, and said to them, "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all." 36 Then he took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them, 37 "Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me." 38 John said to him, "Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us." 39 But Jesus said, "Do not stop him; for no one who does a deed of power in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me. 40 Whoever is not against us is for us. 41 For truly I tell you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you bear the name of Christ will by no means lose the reward."

## DEVOTIONAL

Easter and Christmas, Lent and Advent: it is utterly unexpected that the two great festivals and two great seasons of the church year surround times when God was vulnerable. Eternity, infinity, majesty, and glory, cooed and cried, bled and died. The Almighty One became small, in order to lift up the lowly. The Immortal One died, to lead those held captive by death through the grave and out the other side, into a new creation, into a world made whole, made new.

There is a lot of talk in the world today, even (or perhaps particularly) in ministry settings, about success. Discussions of "What is a successful ministry?" often quickly become discussions of "Who is the greatest?" What constitutes success? What is greatness? Where do we find it, and how ought we to measure it? Is it in the size of our platform? Is it in our talents, or skills, or personal charisma? What Jesus teaches in both word and deed is that greatness is found in humility and love.

Do not let anyone tell you that you are too small, too poor, too weak to matter. Do not let anyone tell you that you or your church is too small, too weak to matter. Every act of humility and love is a fragrant offering to God. In every community that shares the love of God with the lowly and welcomes the outcast, in every person who comforts the afflicted and loves their neighbor, there is greatness.

## PRAYER

God of humble glory and glorious humility, who lifts up the lowly and comforts the afflicted, may we not seek to be great in the eyes of the world, but seek the greatness revealed in you. Thank you for the ways you are at work in countless small communities—feeding the hungry, welcoming the outcast, and comforting the afflicted. In the name of Christ, the Incarnate One, who cooed and cried, bled and died, we pray. Amen.

## TUESDAY, APRIL 5, 2022

*The Rev. Colin Pritchard '18*

## SCRIPTURE

### Psalm 34

1 I will bless the LORD at all times;  
his praise shall continually be in my mouth.  
2 My soul makes its boast in the LORD;  
let the humble hear and be glad.  
3 O magnify the LORD with me,  
and let us exalt his name together.  
4 I sought the LORD, and he answered me,  
and delivered me from all my fears.  
5 Look to him, and be radiant;  
so your faces shall never be ashamed.  
6 This poor soul cried, and was heard by the LORD,  
and was saved from every trouble.  
7 The angel of the LORD encamps  
around those who fear him, and delivers them.  
8 O taste and see that the LORD is good;  
happy are those who take refuge in him.  
9 O fear the LORD, you his holy ones,  
for those who fear him have no want.  
10 The young lions suffer want and hunger,  
but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing.  
11 Come, O children, listen to me;  
I will teach you the fear of the LORD.  
12 Which of you desires life,  
and covets many days to enjoy good?  
13 Keep your tongue from evil,  
and your lips from speaking deceit.  
14 Depart from evil, and do good;  
seek peace, and pursue it.  
15 The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous,  
and his ears are open to their cry.  
16 The face of the LORD is against evildoers,  
to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.  
17 When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears,  
and rescues them from all their troubles.  
18 The LORD is near to the brokenhearted,  
and saves the crushed in spirit.  
19 Many are the afflictions of the righteous,  
but the LORD rescues them from them all.  
20 He keeps all their bones;  
not one of them will be broken.  
21 Evil brings death to the wicked,  
and those who hate the righteous will be condemned.  
22 The LORD redeems the life of his servants;  
none of those who take refuge in him will be condemned.

## DEVOTIONAL

In a season of protracted challenge, it can be hard to bless the Lord at all times. It is false to claim no anxiety or an

absence of wanting the world to be different. The poetry of the Psalm may not have the specific application we may wish for on the days when we don't know what to do next. While precision may be lacking, wisdom is abundant.

What would it look like to magnify and exalt the Lord together, seeking the presence of the holy? Would it bring deliverance from all our fears? Or at least a step back from hopelessness? We can do that.

What would it look like to cast our eyes toward our Savior? Perhaps it would bring radiant faces reflecting love and security. In these times of downcast glances and worried looks, we can be shining lights. Let us do that.

The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit. As the body of Christ, we can choose to do the same. May it be so.

Perhaps all we need to do to bless the Lord this day, and to choose hope for ourselves, is to praise, shine, and serve.

## PRAYER

In times of trouble, O Lord, our souls cry out. In each and every hour, O Lord, you hear our cries. In this hour, O Lord, hear us once again. Draw our eyes upward, our feet forward, and our hearts toward your sure and certain hope. Release the fears of those burdened in spirit and guide the steps of those who have an opportunity to shine. Amen.

## WEDNESDAY, APRIL 6, 2022

*Dr. Scott Hagley, Associate Professor of Missiology*

## SCRIPTURE

### 2 Corinthians 2:14-3:6

14 But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads in every place the fragrance that comes from knowing him. 15 For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; 16 to the one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things? 17 For we are not peddlers of God's word like so many; but in Christ we speak as persons of sincerity, as persons sent from God and standing in his presence. 1 Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Surely we do not need, as some do, letters of recommendation to you or from you, do we? 2 You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all; 3 and you show that you are a letter of Christ, prepared by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. 4 Such is the confidence that we have through

Christ toward God. 5 Not that we are competent of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us; our competence is from God, 6 who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of letter but of spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

## DEVOTIONAL

In the book *God the Spirit*, Michael Welker describes the Holy Spirit as a "force field" of love. In using this language, Welker understands the Spirit as analogous to a gravitational field. Like gravity, God's Spirit is a force operating between, around, and through us. But we can use the term 'field' to describe relational realities and not only forces acting on objects. A decade ago, James Fowler and Nicholas Christakis argued in their book *Connected* for a much more social understanding of human behavior than previously understood. Our social networks, they insist, shape our attitudes, habits, and emotional well-being. We exist in emotional and relational fields—social realities created by, in, and through our shared life.

God, in Christ and through the Holy Spirit, "spreads in every place the fragrance that comes from knowing God" in and through those found in Christ. "For we are the aroma of Christ," Paul says (referring to his apostolic ministry) and "you are a letter of Christ . . . written . . . with the Spirit of the living God." Thanks be to God, the gospel of Jesus Christ is a social reality among us, a field, an aroma, a love letter written by the Spirit through our shared life. Let us recognize and not resist this force field of love that is the Holy Spirit.

## PRAYER

(Psalm 5)

1 Give ear to my words, O LORD;  
give heed to my sighing.

2 Listen to the sound of my cry,  
my King and my God,  
for to you I pray.

3 O LORD, in the morning you hear my voice;  
in the morning I plead my case to you, and watch.

4 For you are not a God who delights in wickedness;  
evil will not sojourn with you.

5 The boastful will not stand before your eyes;  
you hate all evildoers.

6 You destroy those who speak lies;  
the LORD abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful.

7 But I, through the abundance of your steadfast love,  
will enter your house,  
I will bow down toward your holy temple  
in awe of you.

8 Lead me, O LORD, in your righteousness  
because of my enemies;  
make your way straight before me.

9 For there is no truth in their mouths;  
their hearts are destruction;

their throats are open graves;  
they flatter with their tongues.  
10 Make them bear their guilt, O God;  
let them fall by their own counsels;  
because of their many transgressions cast them out,  
for they have rebelled against you.  
11 But let all who take refuge in you rejoice;  
let them ever sing for joy.  
Spread your protection over them,  
so that those who love your name may exult in you.  
12 For you bless the righteous, O LORD;  
you cover them with favor as with a shield.  
Amen.

## THURSDAY, APRIL 7, 2022

*The Rev. Chad Bogdewic '10/13*

### SCRIPTURE

#### Mark 10:17-31

17 As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" 18 Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. 19 You know the commandments: 'You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; You shall not defraud; Honor your father and mother.'" 20 He said to him, "Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth." 21 Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, "You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me." 22 When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions. 23 Then Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!" 24 And the disciples were perplexed at these words. But Jesus said to them again, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! 25 It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God." 26 They were greatly astounded and said to one another, "Then who can be saved?" 27 Jesus looked at them and said, "For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible." 28 Peter began to say to him, "Look, we have left everything and followed you." 29 Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the good news, 30 who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age - houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields with persecutions - and in the age to come eternal life. 31 But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first."

### DEVOTIONAL

What do you have to lose? This is an interesting response to the prospect of trying something new. For some, this question is an automatic reaction to the presentation of a different possibility. The rich man in today's passage had a very real chance of losing everything. In his mind, he could not follow Jesus, because it was too expensive.

Jesus, I would imagine, was quite sad about this exchange. The rich man asked the wrong question, as people tend to do. The question was not "What do I have to lose?" but "What do I have to gain?" We are sometimes afraid to try new things or experiences because of the potential cost. A former professor of mine said, "People prefer the misery they know to the mystery they don't."

We can get stuck at times—stuck in the things that we own and stuck in the things that own us. We get stuck because we are afraid of change, because our identities are intricately tied to and interwoven with the various things we have. If the rich man would have given away all the things he owned, he would no longer be "the rich man," causing an existential identity crisis. But unbeknownst to him, there was a new and better identity waiting for him in the arms of Jesus: an identity of love, an identity a community, an identity of care and concern, an identity of baptism, an identity of adoption. An identity that transforms us, molds us, and completes us.

Sometimes we get stuck not knowing who we truly are, unaware of the truth that Jesus offers us: not just a *new* identity, but a *better* identity. In our search for identity, we pick up a few needless things along the way, but the waters of baptism can wash them off as we put on the garments of humility and grace. When we do this, we learn who we are and whose we are, and that identity is better than anything the world can offer.

### PRAYER

Wondrous Lord, we often don't know who we are. We think we do, but then we get lost in the things that weigh us down. Free us from our misery and lead us into your mystery. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

## FRIDAY, APRIL 8, 2022

*The Rev. Annie Parker '13*

### SCRIPTURE

#### Psalms 130

1 Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD.  
2 Lord, hear my voice!  
Let your ears be attentive

## SATURDAY, APRIL 9, 2022

Heather Henkel '20

### SCRIPTURE

#### Exodus 10:21-11:8

21 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand toward heaven so that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, a darkness that can be felt." 22 So Moses stretched out his hand toward heaven, and there was dense darkness in all the land of Egypt for three days. 23 People could not see one another, and for three days they could not move from where they were; but all the Israelites had light where they lived. 24 Then Pharaoh summoned Moses, and said, "Go, worship the LORD. Only your flocks and your herds shall remain behind. Even your children may go with you." 25 But Moses said, "You must also let us have sacrifices and burnt offerings to sacrifice to the LORD our God. 26 Our livestock also must go with us; not a hoof shall be left behind, for we must choose some of them for the worship of the LORD our God, and we will not know what to use to worship the LORD until we arrive there." 27 But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he was unwilling to let them go. 28 Then Pharaoh said to him, "Get away from me! Take care that you do not see my face again, for on the day you see my face you shall die." 29 Moses said, "Just as you say! I will never see your face again." 1 The LORD said to Moses, "I will bring one more plague upon Pharaoh and upon Egypt; afterwards he will let you go from here; indeed, when he lets you go, he will drive you away. 2 Tell the people that every man is to ask his neighbor and every woman is to ask her neighbor for objects of silver and gold." 3 The LORD gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians. Moreover, Moses himself was a man of great importance in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh's officials and in the sight of the people. 4 Moses said, "Thus says the LORD: About midnight I will go out through Egypt. 5 Every firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne to the firstborn of the female slave who is behind the handmill, and all the firstborn of the livestock. 6 Then there will be a loud cry throughout the whole land of Egypt, such as has never been or will ever be again. 7 But not a dog shall growl at any of the Israelites - not at people, not at animals - so that you may know that the LORD makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel. 8 Then all these officials of yours shall come down to me, and bow low to me, saying, 'Leave us, you and all the people who follow you.' After that I will leave." And in hot anger he left Pharaoh.

### DEVOTIONAL

Where do you see yourself in this Scripture? Are you the leader, Moses? Are you one of the Israelites, finding favor with God, living in the light and just waiting for God's continued blessings? I have to admit that sometimes I relate

to the voice of my supplications!

3 If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities,  
Lord, who could stand?

4 But there is forgiveness with you,  
so that you may be revered.

5 I wait for the LORD, my soul waits,  
and in his word I hope;

6 my soul waits for the Lord

more than those who watch for the morning,  
more than those who watch for the morning.

7 O Israel, hope in the LORD!

For with the LORD there is steadfast love,  
and with him is great power to redeem.

8 It is he who will redeem Israel  
from all its iniquities.

### DEVOTIONAL

Waiting—let alone being patient as we wait—does not come easily to most of us. And so much in life requires waiting.

There is trivial waiting that pops up in our day-to-day living: waiting in line at the store, waiting to pick up a loved one from the airport, waiting for that present you ordered online to arrive. But there is another kind of waiting, a much more difficult kind that is hard to live through. It's a soul-wrenching, heart-weakening kind of waiting, like waiting for a diagnosis after a medical test, waiting to hear how a loved one's surgery went, or waiting for a phone call from a family member we can't seem to reach.

This kind of waiting is full of questions: how long will it take, what will the answer be, is it a worst-case scenario, will I survive? This is the kind of waiting we dread, filled with the questions we hope we'll never have to ask.

And while we still have pain and unanswered questions, we trust in God. We remember the promises God has made to us, and we remember that our God never breaks a promise. We have hope in God, who is a mighty redeemer. Part of that waiting is hard, as we still experience the pain of a broken world. But through all the struggles and triumphs, we do not wait in vain, for our God brings redemption for all of creation.

### PRAYER

God, in this season of waiting, grant us peace in our hearts. Grant us hope that all our questions will be answered and all creation will be redeemed. Wait with us, as we are impatient and long to know the ending. Remind us of your many promises and your steadfast love for us always. Amen.

to the Egyptians. Living in the darkness. The shadowed days. Losing my first-born child, very suddenly. Perhaps you relate to Pharaoh, being asked for something you feel is unjustly sought, and then trying to negotiate—"You can go, but leave the livestock"—and that isn't enough.

Where does that leave us in this story, if we don't relate to Moses and the Israelites? Whenever we read the Old Testament stories, we must remember that Jesus has not yet come as the savior. God was the God of the Israelites before Jesus came along, at which point the picture started to shift: God is the God of all people. So when I read this story, I remember that at this time, God wasn't known as the God of the Egyptians, or of Pharaoh—but now, thousands of years later, I know this God as my God. And God does see my suffering, and walks by my side in my times of darkness and grief. God will walk with all of us; we just need to allow it.

### PRAYER

Faithful God, thank you for sending your son Jesus to be among us, to walk with us, and to teach us. His lessons transcend time. This precious gift cannot be overstated. Thank you for walking with us in our times of need. Send your Holy Spirit to be with us, to guide us, to continually teach us, and to watch over us as your children. In Jesus' name. Amen.

## SUNDAY, APRIL 10, 2022

*Jake Horner '15*

### SCRIPTURE

#### **Zechariah 9:9-12**

9 Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter Jerusalem! Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. 10 He will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the war horse from Jerusalem; and the battle bow shall be cut off, and he shall command peace to the nations; his dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth. 11 As for you also, because of the blood of my covenant with you, I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit. 12 Return to your stronghold, O prisoners of hope; today I declare that I will restore to you double.

### DEVOTIONAL

One of the most important aspects of YHWH's unimpeachable character toward us humans is that YHWH keeps covenant. Always and forever. In today's passage from the prophet Zechariah, YHWH appeals to the blood of the covenant with Israel as the reason the people can expect rescue and restoration. There are two impossibilities present

which preclude God from not rescuing and restoring Israel. First, it is impossible for God to violate the divine character by not fulfilling covenant obligations towards Israel. Second, how can it be possible, even granting the impossible circumstance of covenant failure on YHWH's part, for the blood of the covenant to fall on the "head" of the eternal, invisible, omnipotent, omniscient God? Short answer: it's not possible.

Yet God makes the impossible possible in the incarnation. God is the "head" upon which the curses of failed covenant may fall. Humanity had left itself outside of any claim of relationship with YHWH long ago. That is why every time God enters into relationship with a human being, there is a covenant. Our first forbears experienced both steps prescribed in the punishment for covenant failure: exile (from the garden), and falling under the ban (in the flood). Israel did too, eventually falling under the Assyrians and Babylonians.

Christ came among us and did what had to be done, both in his perfect obedience to God and in his submission to the curse of failed covenant. For this we can rejoice greatly!

### PRAYER

Holy Father, Son, and Spirit, today we give thanks for our King, Jesus Christ, who entered into our brokenness and yet kept covenant, who opened a gate for us to enter into the pasture of your presence. Grant that we may live as covenant-keepers through Christ in your eternal kingdom. Please let this be so!

## MONDAY, APRIL 11, 2022

*The Rev. Alice Phillips '94*

### SCRIPTURE

#### **Mark 11:12-25**

12 On the following day, when they came from Bethany, he was hungry. 13 Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to see whether perhaps he would find anything on it. When he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. 14 He said to it, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again." And his disciples heard it. 15 Then they came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling and those who were buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves; 16 and he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple. 17 He was teaching and saying, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'? But you have made it a den of robbers." 18 And when the chief priests and the scribes heard it, they kept looking for a way to kill him; for they were afraid of him,

because the whole crowd was spellbound by his teaching. 19 And when evening came, Jesus and his disciples went out of the city. 20 In the morning as they passed by, they saw the fig tree withered away to its roots. 21 Then Peter remembered and said to him, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree that you cursed has withered." 22 Jesus answered them, "Have faith in God. 23 Truly I tell you, if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and thrown into the sea,' and if you do not doubt in your heart, but believe that what you say will come to pass, it will be done for you. 24 So I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. 25 "Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone; so that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses."

## DEVOTIONAL

I was in Doug Hare's Greek Exegesis class. We were never to call him Dr. Hare; it was Doug. During that particular week, a student group was hosting the Rev. Don Bartow. Don was a friend of mine, and he and his wife were both on campus. I was transporting them to various places and making sure they were fed each day. Needless to say, something had to go . . . which was my Greek homework. On this particular day in class, I "passed" twice. Doug always let students pass when they did not know the answer to a homework question, but it was unusual for a student to pass on two questions in a row. After I passed the second time, Doug asked me how many times I was going to pass. My face obviously showed embarrassment and hurt. With hesitation, I said I also had to leave early as I was responsible for chapel that day.

At the end of the chapel service, I was holding the tray of the remaining communion cups as I began to clean up the chapel. Doug walked up to me and said he realized he was a little sharp with me in class and could tell by my face that my feelings had been hurt. He said it was obvious I had been quite busy that week. Then he asked me if I would forgive him.

That moment has been etched in my mind ever since. Doug taught me the greatest lesson I ever learned in seminary. It wasn't about Greek. It wasn't from a lecture. It didn't come from a class book. It came from the very best book of all: the Bible. You see, Doug had every right to be irritated with me that day in class. After all, I didn't have my homework done. He was a well-respected, well-seasoned professor, and I was just a student. I have never forgotten the example of humility that he showed me in asking for forgiveness. I will never forget what I was holding in my hand—the cup of forgiveness—Jesus' blood which was shed for each one of us. For Doug Hare, for me, and for you.

Almost 20 years later, and not long before his death, I had the wonderful opportunity to write a letter to Doug to remind him of that incident in chapel. He was grateful and moved. Forgiveness is powerful, and the impact lasts well beyond 20 years!

Today's Scripture passage tells us to forgive. If you have anything against anyone, forgive so that God in heaven may also forgive you.

## PRAYER

Gracious and loving God, we thank you for this season of Lent. It is a time to reflect upon the tremendous sacrifice your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, made for each one of us in his shed blood on the cross. Lord, we ask that you help us not just to remember and reflect, but also help us daily to live with a forgiving spirit toward those who have hurt us and to ask for forgiveness from those whom we have hurt. In Jesus' name. Amen.

## TUESDAY, APRIL 12, 2022

The Rev. Ben Beres '10

## SCRIPTURE

### 2 Corinthians 1:8-22

8 We do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, of the affliction we experienced in Asia; for we were so utterly, unbearably crushed that we despaired of life itself. 9 Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death so that we would rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. 10 He who rescued us from so deadly a peril will continue to rescue us; on him we have set our hope that he will rescue us again, 11 as you also join in helping us by your prayers, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many. 12 Indeed, this is our boast, the testimony of our conscience: we have behaved in the world with frankness and godly sincerity, not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God - and all the more toward you. 13 For we write you nothing other than what you can read and also understand; I hope you will understand until the end 14 as you have already understood us in part - that on the day of the Lord Jesus we are your boast even as you are our boast. 15 Since I was sure of this, I wanted to come to you first, so that you might have a double favor; 16 I wanted to visit you on my way to Macedonia, and to come back to you from Macedonia and have you send me on to Judea. 17 Was I vacillating when I wanted to do this? Do I make my plans according to ordinary human standards, ready to say "Yes, yes" and "No, no" at the same time? 18 As surely as God is faithful, our word to you has not been "Yes and No." 19 For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we proclaimed among you, Silvanus and Timothy and I, was not "Yes and No"; but in him it is always "Yes." 20 For in him every one of God's promises is a "Yes." For this reason it is through him that we say the "Amen," to the glory of God. 21 But it is God who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us, 22 by putting his seal on us and giving us his Spirit in our hearts as a first installment.

## DEVOTIONAL

“But . . . but . . . But I thought God would never give me more than I could handle?!?”

It is a common misconception, but the challenges we face each day are not given to us in proportion to our strength or our ability to navigate such problems. I don't know how or why this became passed off as gospel truth, but you don't have to look any further than the Garden of Eden to see that God knows we are limited. We are finite. It's not good for us to be alone.

Paul starts our reading today by empathizing with the Church in Corinth in the hardships they are facing. This small group of Christ-centered folks finds themselves burdened beyond their ability. Paul tells them of his woes, not because he wants their sympathy, as a catalyst for action, or for any other desire. He tells them so they know that when they hit their limit, when they have nothing left in the tank, when death seems like a possibility, that God is still faithful.

Despite Paul's words to the Church, we are tempted to make our lives seem easier or better than they are. We cling to silly things and shield ourselves with aphorisms that fly in the face of our true circumstances. It is not weakness to need help. It is not unfaithful to struggle. Telling the stories of our hardships allows us to also tell the joy of God's provision, and God's strength to bring us through times that would have otherwise destroyed us.

## PRAYER

Father God, teach us to be more honest in all our dealings, so that we might be the vessels of your glory, for the whole world to see. Let us welcome others into the challenges we face so that they might pray for us and rejoice with us when the victory is yours. Help us to be transparent to our communities. Forgive the ways we try to hide. Amen.

## WEDNESDAY, APRIL 13, 2022

*The Rev. Tara Woodard-Lehman '03*

## SCRIPTURE

### Psalm 27

1 The LORD is my light and my salvation;  
whom shall I fear?  
The LORD is the stronghold of my life;  
of whom shall I be afraid?  
2 When evildoers assail me  
to devour my flesh —  
my adversaries and foes —

they shall stumble and fall.

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

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

5 For he will hide me in his shelter  
in the day of trouble;  
he will conceal me under the cover of his tent;  
he will set me high on a rock.

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.

11 Teach me your way, O LORD,  
and lead me on a level path  
because of my enemies.

12 Do not give me up to the will of my adversaries,  
for false witnesses have risen against me,  
and they are breathing out violence.

13 I believe that I shall see the goodness of the LORD  
in the land of the living.

14 Wait for the LORD;  
be strong, and let your heart take courage;  
wait for the LORD!

## DEVOTIONAL

“Hear, O Lord, when I cry aloud, be gracious to me and answer me!”

We see the full, messy breadth of human emotion throughout the book of Psalms. In it are songs of hope and despair, gratitude and grief, praise and protest. More than a third of the Psalms are songs of lament that boldly express anguish and feelings of abandonment.

We see this in Psalm 27 as the psalmist cries out, “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!"

The psalmist knew isolation and suffering. And so did Jesus. He still does. Jesus is, at the very same time, God with Us, and the God-Forsaken. He is both the source of Joy and the Man of Sorrows.

I don't know about you, but that gives me hope. Because this hurting world doesn't need a God of inspirational quotes or motivational speeches. Our world needs the God of the Psalmist, who is close to the brokenhearted and stands in solidarity with all who suffer.

I don't know what you're going through right now. I don't know what you may need to lament. You may not even know yourself. But I do know this: all of us are invited to join the psalmist and come, just as we are, offering up our whole selves to God.

## PRAYER

God of the Lenten journey,  
Teach us to faithfully lament,  
That we may freely express  
Protest as praise,  
And weeping as worship.  
Amen.

## THURSDAY, APRIL 14, 2022

*The Rev. Carmen D. Cox Harwell '01*

## SCRIPTURE

### Mark 14:12-25

12 On the first day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover lamb is sacrificed, his disciples said to him, "Where do you want us to go and make the preparations for you to eat the Passover?" 13 So he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, "Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you; follow him, 14 and wherever he enters, say to the owner of the house, 'The Teacher asks, Where is my guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?'" 15 He will show you a large room upstairs, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there." 16 So the disciples set out and went to the city, and found everything as he had told them; and they prepared the Passover meal. 17 When it was evening, he came with the twelve. 18 And when they had taken their places and were eating, Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me." 19 They began to be distressed and to say to him one after another, "Surely, not I?" 20 He said to them, "It is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread into the bowl with me. 21 For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but

woe to that one by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that one not to have been born." 22 While they were eating, he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to them, and said, "Take; this is my body." 23 Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, and all of them drank from it. 24 He said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. 25 Truly I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

## DEVOTIONAL

No one wants to be singled out, called out, or the object of a negative shout-out when we've done the wrong thing. We know that "all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God," (Rom. 3:23) but no one wants their "shortness" to be put on blast for the world to see, judge, or condemn. In this text, that's what Jesus does during an evening of fellowship with his disciples over the Passover meal.

After settling into an upper room, out of nowhere, Jesus drops a bomb-shell over the evening: "Truly, I tell you, one of you will betray me" (vv. 17). Distressed by such an emphatic accusation, the disciples questioned who it might be because, "Surely," they all said, "not I?" Without singling out, calling out, or giving a shout-out of the disciple's name, Jesus distresses the brothers further: "It is one of you—one who is dipping bread into the bowl with me" (vv. 20). The disciples think, What? We *all* have—all 12 of us have dipped our hand and our bread into the bowl with you. Are you saying that not just *one* of us will betray you, but all 12 of us will?

No one wants to be "*that one*" who is singled out, or called out with a shout-out of woe for betraying the Lord. But the truth is that we are *all* "*that one*"! Yet even betrayal can't keep Jesus from going to the cross for us!

## PRAYER

Father, we admit we have dipped our hand into the bowl of betrayal. Help us to be more faithful. Single us out for mercy. Call us out when we are unforgiving. Shout-out *our* name among the many who will one day "drink of the fruit of the vine," new with you, in the kingdom of God." Amen!

## FRIDAY, APRIL 15, 2022

*The Rev. Brian Sandell '12*

## SCRIPTURE

### 1 Peter 1:10-20

10 Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and

with the greatest care, 11 trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow. 12 It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told to you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things.

13 Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming. 14 As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. 15 But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; 16 for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy." 17 Since you call on a Father who judges each person's work impartially, live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear. 18 For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. 20 He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake.

## DEVOTIONAL

As human beings we live in a world that is filled with a lot of noise. Phone calls. Spotify. Television. Radio. The list of noise that fills our world goes on and on. On average, human beings have 42 conversations a day. There is noise all around us, but the question remains: are we listening? Are we paying attention?

Our text in 1 Peter reminds us that the prophets told of God's grace that would come to us (v. 10) and shared with us that the sufferings of the Messiah would lead to glory (v. 11). The prophets were able to share the Gospel because of the Holy Spirit's power (v. 12). Listen deeply. Listen intently. This Lenten season may we pay attention to what God is telling us and what God is showing us.

When we do listen and pay attention to what God is sharing with us, it will lead to a transformed life. Our desires will change. Our minds will change. Our hearts will change when we listen to God's voice in our lives. As Peter reminds us in v. 15, be holy in all you do. Holiness can be complex but also incredibly simple. The simple understanding of holiness is loving Jesus above anyone and anything else in this life. When you and I seek to live lives that are focused on holiness, we truly will be free from the emptiness of the pleasures of this world and free to live fully as children of God pursuing holiness all of our days.

## PRAYER

Lord God, we step into your presence once again on this Lenten journey. Revive us, restore us, and cause us our hearts

to listen and respond. May we listen to the wise words of your revealed word, your prophets, your Son, and the Holy Spirit. May our lives be focused on pursuing holiness and loving Jesus above everything else. Amen.

## SATURDAY, APRIL 16, 2022

*The Rev. Felicia Zamora '21*

## SCRIPTURE

### Lamentations 3:37-58

37 Who can command and have it done, if the Lord has not ordained it? 38 Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that good and bad come? 39 Why should any who draw breath complain about the punishment of their sins? 40 Let us test and examine our ways, and return to the LORD. 41 Let us lift up our hearts as well as our hands to God in heaven. 42 We have transgressed and rebelled, and you have not forgiven. 43 You have wrapped yourself with anger and pursued us, killing without pity; 44 you have wrapped yourself with a cloud so that no prayer can pass through. 45 You have made us filth and rubbish among the peoples. 46 All our enemies have opened their mouths against us; 47 panic and pitfall have come upon us, devastation and destruction. 48 My eyes flow with rivers of tears because of the destruction of my people. 49 My eyes will flow without ceasing, without respite, 50 until the LORD from heaven looks down and sees. 51 My eyes cause me grief at the fate of all the young women in my city. 52 Those who were my enemies without cause have hunted me like a bird; 53 they flung me alive into a pit and hurled stones on me; 54 water closed over my head; I said, "I am lost." 55 I called on your name, O LORD, from the depths of the pit; 56 you heard my plea, "Do not close your ear to my cry for help, but give me relief!" 57 You came near when I called on you; you said, "Do not fear!" 58 You have taken up my cause, O Lord, you have redeemed my life.

## DEVOTIONAL

In Nicaragua, we use the verb *resignar* to mean giving up when a situation is entirely impossible to cure or fix. We usually use it when speaking about the loss of a loved one. This verb is embedded in comments we hear from church friends who say, "I know you are going through a painful process, but think about how Suzy is in heaven with Jesus. She is no longer suffering." It attempts to numb someone's pain and grief process using what we think are words of comfort but actually ignore how someone is feeling.

The Book of Lamentations takes place during the destruction of the city of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. The Prophet Jeremiah voices the pain and anguish of the Israelites in all five chapters.

In Lamentations 3, the Prophet does not hold back tears when saying, in paraphrase, “Lord, look at the destruction, look how our enemies are now making fun of us. I feel completely lost. Please help us.”

Even though the situation is out of control, and the Prophet could have quickly taken the *resignar* route, he still does not give up as he writes, “Do not close your ear to my cry for help, but give me relief!” Lament is an act of openness in faith that cries out to God, praying with hope that our Creator will listen to us.

In our prayers to God, let us dispense with the notion that our Creator is only available during our joyful moments. Lament is part of our reality, and God has room for us to weep out our anguish.

## PRAYER

kneeling I pour out  
father – your love I need . . .  
hold me, I shudder  
 (“Prayer Life,” a haiku by David Meade)

## SUNDAY, APRIL 17, 2022

*Mary Washington-Hornezes '09*

## SCRIPTURE

### Psalm 114:1-8 (from the Sunday/Festival Readings)

1 When Israel went out from Egypt,  
the house of Jacob from a people of strange language,  
2 Judah became God’s sanctuary,  
Israel his dominion.  
3 The sea looked and fled;  
Jordan turned back.  
4 The mountains skipped like rams,  
the hills like lambs.  
5 Why is it, O sea, that you flee?  
O Jordan, that you turn back?  
6 O mountains, that you skip like rams?  
O hills, like lambs?  
.7 Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord,  
at the presence of the God of Jacob,  
8 who turns the rock into a pool of water,  
the flint into a spring of water.

## DEVOTIONAL

My own exodus story goes like this: According to the Division of Youth and Family Services of Essex County, N.J., I was born to “unfit” parents in Newark, N.J., in 1966. Due to “parental neglect,” I was removed from their care at 11.5 months of age. I would never see my biological parents again. During

my exodus as a brown-skinned baby with “hazel” eyes and “hair like steel wool,” I was placed in a Catholic orphanage and several foster homes, until I was adopted at age eight.

The three (white) women who lived with my new family were of mixed Jewish heritage (i.e. Jewish, German, Polish). Their parents were “Hidden Children” --a term used for the (mainly Jewish) children who were hidden during the Holocaust, in an attempt to save them from the Nazis. These three women were like my big sisters. I loved them and they loved me. We were different, but I could tell that there was something that made us the same. These women were being hidden, because they were “unfit” too! They were “defective,” just like my biological mother.

When one of the mothers of the three women living with my adoptive family would visit her daughter, Ruth, the mother would always tell the Exodus story—not the story as recited in the Haggadah Jewish historical text, but her own exodus story of the “Hidden Children.”

As we commemorate the work of the cross, on this Easter Sunday, we will celebrate—because we are no longer orphans.

We have been redeemed!

## PRAYER

“Praise the Lord! Praise, O servants of the Lord, Praise the name of the Lord! Blessed be the name of the Lord from this time forth and forevermore! From the rising if the sun to it’s going down The Lords name is to be praised.” Amen. (Psalm 113:1-3)

*The Scripture quotations contained in the lectionary readings are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright 1989, by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.*

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