

From Ashes to Easter

Opening Doors

Nourishing Souls

Praising God



Lutheran Church of the Reformation

Lent 2019

From Ashes to Easter

The Meditations of our Hearts

By Members & Friends of this Community

LUTHERAN CHURCH OF THE REFORMATION

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33.....Volume.....2019

Worship Times at Lutheran Church of the Reformation

Ash Wednesday

March 6, 2019
Noon & 7:00 p.m.

Weekly Services

Sundays at 8:30 a.m. & 11:00 a.m.
Education Hour for All Ages at 10 a.m.

Midweek Lenten Supper Service

Thursdays (*March 14 - April 11*) at 6:00 p.m.

Holy Week Services

Information can be found at www.ReformationDC.org

Easter Morning

April 21, 2019
8:30 a.m. & 11:00 a.m.
Easter Morning Brunch at 10 a.m.

Join your neighbors & friends for this journey!

Cover Art by Gloria Kenyon

From Ashes to Easter 2019

The theme of this year's From Ashes To Easter is "Opening Doors, Nourishing Souls, Praising God," the same as our anniversary campaign. It's fitting, really, because every year during Lent, Reformation Members contribute their reflections on various biblical passages in order to help us all reflect on the season. We join together as a community to nourish each other's souls and help each other better praise God. And it gives us a chance to open doors within our own church family.

Maybe it gives you a reason to talk to a new member you've been meaning to get to know. Maybe you learn something about that member you've seen for years, never really gotten to know, and have been too embarrassed to approach because, well, you've been seeing them for years and never gotten to know them. Or maybe you're new to Reformation yourself and taking an opportunity to learn something new about some of the folks this community you've joined.

This booklet is full of doors your fellow members have opened to help us all nourish our souls and praise God. I hope you'll walk through them.

Matt Fuehrmeyer
President, Congregational Council

*The printing of this devotional was made possible through the use of
undesignated bequests.*

*We give thanks for all of the saints who have
journeyed before us and especially those who have made this printing
possible.*

*A special thanks to all those who have crafted this annual book
throughout its 30+ years.*

One Way to Use this Booklet:

Opening: Trace a small cross on your forehead to remind yourself of the ashes that you received,

*Today, Lord, help me to
Open Doors
Nourish Souls
And Praise God
In all that I do, in all that I say, in all that I am.*

Scripture: Find the Scripture passage for the appropriate day. You will find this located at the top right of each page. Some authors have also included a specific ‘focus verse’, as well, before their devotion.

Reflection & Pray: After reading the assigned Scripture passage, read the words from the author of the daily reflection. Pray with the author at the end.

Closing: Take a moment to reflect, breathe, and then go in peace.

March 6

Ash Wednesday

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

In God's Eyes

If Jesus says to us that we should give alms, pray, and fast *in secret*, why do we walk around with ashes on our foreheads on Ash Wednesday? And what do ashes represent anyway?

Catholic theologian Dr. Brant Pitre says that historically, ashes represent several things—our mortality (“ashes to ashes, dust to dust”); repentance, from our Old Testament roots—wearing scratchy sackcloth and ashes as an outward sign of inward repentance; and intercession for others, as in the story of Esther, who replaced her queenly raiment with humble clothes, ashes and dung, to enter into prayer for her people’s salvation.

Why the external sign of ashes on our foreheads? Return to me, says God in the book of Joel. Call a solemn assembly, gather the children. The description is of an official, public fast—calling all the people together in solidarity, to come back to God.

And then, Jesus says, go deeper. Do the external sign of ashes for this moment of public “recall,” but also practice in secret—for God’s eyes only. In counterpoint to the temptations of Christ in the wilderness—temptations to possessions, pleasure, and pride (or in modern human terms, money, sex, and power), we are called to:

- ◆ Give alms—overcome our attachment to possessions and money; share our substance.
- ◆ Pray—overcome our attachment to pride and replace it with humility.
- ◆ Fast—get our minds off the pleasures of food and drink; open up to spiritual alertness.

Where can these practices take us? Personally, I’ve been thinking about going deeper into understanding how I am caught up in privilege and what to do about it. My “fast” may include reading, journaling, and meditating with that as a starting point.

Where will Lent 2019 take you? I wish you and all of us a time that is powerful, meaningful, and filled with grace.

Lord Jesus Christ, you know us in public and in secret. Walk with us on our daily Lenten journey, teach us to do your loving will. Amen

Kathryn Tobias

March 7

Thursday

Exodus 5:10-23

Bricks Without Straw

“Why have you treated your servants this way? Your servants are given no straw, yet are told, ‘Make bricks!’”

During their enslavement in Egypt, Moses encouraged the Israelites to ask Pharaoh for permission to go to the desert to worship God. Pharaoh denied them and in punishment required them to make bricks without the benefit of provided straw. Pharaoh ordered the same daily quota of bricks with the added task of finding their own straw or making bricks without straw.

Who are we asking to make bricks without straw? The families coming to our country’s southern border are being asked to prove their need for asylum with literally no resources. Children in poverty are required to take standardized tests when they worry about their parents, home lives, and getting enough food. Women carry the mental load of home and family while being told to “Lean In” for success at work. Men hear messages of toxic masculinity and rebuke one another for seeking a healthier emotional life.

The Israelites pleaded with Pharaoh and Moses for deliverance. God eventually delivered the people, but at great cost and not in the way they expected. God used real people—Moses, Aaron, and their families—to lead them out of Egypt. We must still hold strong to the belief that God will deliver those who suffer now; that those who live in pain, fear, loneliness, poverty, prison, and under oppression will be first among the ever-living. God is with us, even when we are without the hay to make the bricks the world asks of us.

Heavenly Father, we plead like Moses, “why have you brought trouble on this people?” In hope we pray for you to bring us and all in need out from under the yoke of oppression and sadness through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Ivy Finkenstadt

March 8

Friday

Acts 7:35-42

Leadership is Hard Work

³⁵“This is the same Moses they had rejected with the words, ‘Who made you ruler and judge?’ He was sent to be their ruler and deliverer by God himself, through the angel who appeared to him in the bush. ³⁶He led them out of Egypt and performed wonders and signs in Egypt, at the Red Sea and for forty years in the wilderness.

If I had to lead a group of people through the desert for 40 hours they would be questioning my leadership. I would not last 40 years.

We may not have received our leadership assignments by way of burning bush, but we each have leadership roles in our lives. Leadership is even amongst the youngest of our membership – the brightly crayon-colored bulletin covers on the door of the sanctuary lead us into worship. God might not have given us the gifts of miracle working which were given to Moses, but we each have our own talents (and remember that Moses recognized his weaknesses and had others, such as Aaron, to assist where needed).

This passage reflecting upon the Old Testament comes from Stephen one of the leaders in the New Testament. It points out that we can not forget the leadership of the past, even if, in this case, it costs Stephen his life.

We also have times to follow the leadership of others. At times our frustrations of being “stuck in the desert” might call us to question their leadership skills. Before we deviate and stray away from our true mission, we need to reflect on the bigger picture. Before entering into a gripe session behind someone’s back, look for a way to communicate with them and provide constructive criticism.

Take the time of Lent to reflect on our theme: Opening Doors, Nourishing Souls, Praising God. Where can you, like Moses, lead? Where can you, like Aaron, support a leader? How can you, like Stephen, remember the successful leaders of the past? When following, how can you support your fellow followers along the path?

Dear God, thank you for the leadership skill you have endowed in us, and the leadership skills endowed to others. Help us to develop our skills and support each other along the journey.

Andy Weaver

March 9

Saturday

Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16

Refuge and Fortress

“You who live in the shelter of the Most High, who abide in the shadow of the Almighty, will say to the Lord, ‘My refuge and my fortress; my God, in whom I trust.’” - Psalm 91:1-2

This Psalm fills me with feelings of comfort and safety. It reminds me of words like retreat, rest, dwell, abide, sojourn — that feeling of coming home at the end of a long day.

It also immediately reminds me of all the people who don't have that feeling, whose basic need for a safe place to dwell is not met. I think of those whose "homes" are border detention centers, refugee camps, disaster shelters, homeless shelters, and more. Their need for a refuge and fortress is urgent.

Whatever situation we are in, this verse tells us that God is close to us. Though She may seem distant and mysterious, She is close enough for us to abide in Her shadow — to sit in Her shade on a hot day and hide behind Her when we are scared or in danger.

Dear God, You opened the doors of your fortress to us; please help us do the same for our neighbors who are urgently in need. Use us to help them find comfort and safety. Please remind us how close you are to us always, and of your constant promise to protect us. Amen.

Jenna Jablonski

March 10

Sunday

Luke 4:1-13

God Is

“Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, ² where for forty days he was tempted^a by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry.”

Southeast Ministry recently completed an extensive renovation after ongoing plumbing, roofing and rodent issues which disrupted our service delivery. The original timeline of six months was doubled but we moved back to a beautiful, functional space that has filled staff and our learners with a sense of joy and value. I thought my “forty days” was over until there was another bump in the road. Changes had to be made to our outdoor landscaping plan to be compliant with the city’s environmental laws. I dealt with city agencies and inspectors, I ran into multiple brick walls, I cried private tears, I had some restless nights and I asked God why and when was it going to finally end.

My faith faltered on more than one occasion and I was tempted in terms of a quick fix. A solution was finally offered, I could plant a tree behind the building off the alley. Initially, a tree in the alley felt absurd and was expensive but we moved forward. Tree planting day came, a river birch; when I looked at it my heart swelled and I heard myself begin humming the words of a James Cleveland song my mother often played, “God is my protection, my all in all, my light in darkness.”

Almighty and powerful God, thank you for making a pathway out of the wilderness. Help me in my weakness to better hear your voice, obey your voice and know your will not mine. In your name, I pray. Amen.

Valarie Ashley

The Devil Made Me Do it and Pick Your Punishment

Satan rose up against Israel & incited David to take a census of Israel. So David said to Joab & the commanders of the troops, "Go & count the Israelites from Beersheba to Dan. Then report back to me so that I may know how many there are."

What kind of guy was King David? Through violence, he rose to be King. Sometimes it seems to me that the only thing he knew was to kill & take what was not his. He earned the right to marry King Saul's daughter by delivering 200 foreskins from Philistines he killed. Then there was Bathsheba & her unfortunate husband Uriah!

In this instance, David decides he needs a census. He orders his nephew Joab to do it. Joab tries talking him out of it. He says in verse 3, *"My lord the king, are they not all my lord's subjects? Why does my lord want to do this? Why should he bring guilt on Israel?"*

Joab knew that taking the census would not be popular with the people or with God, but David would not listen. Joab knew that the people would resent the census because the only purpose is to take from them; their sons for battle & their money for taxes.

To make a long story short, God was angry (again) & sent a message through David's seer Gad, that he could pick his own punishment. He could have 7 years of famine, 3 months of being swept away before his enemies or 3 days of being punished by the angel of the Lord ravaging every part of Israel. David couldn't decide, so God sent the Angel of the Lord & 70,000 people died of plague.

Lord, Please guide our Leaders. Provide wisdom and good counsel to those in power. There is a lot at stake. Amen

Del Voss

Dark Times, Indeed!

My first reaction when I read this passage was how violent it was. The words are full of anger, of frustration, of pain. In the first four verses alone (NRSV), we have angels cast into hell, a flood on the ungodly, and Lot's distress. But in verse 9, we get our first glimmer of God's promises, "then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trial, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment."

I find we often put a lot of hope and stock in words of this type. That we, as the godly, will be kept from "trial," which is often interpreted as getting an easier life, and that the unrighteous will suffer. It helps us order our world to know that those who seem to be doing wrong or have wronged us will get the proper punishment. I also find that punishment doesn't always satisfy us. Yet, that is what we see of God in this passage. That in the waiting, we will have our reward, but it may not look like what we want.

I spend a lot of time thinking about the justice of God and how that differs from what our sense of justice on earth may be. When you consider God's mercy from the lens of God's deep and abiding love for all, the ways in which that justice is meted out changes dramatically. It is precisely that mercy that we should rely on when the world feels unmerciful.

God, may we trust in your mercy, patience, and justice as we struggle with what that looks like to us. Give us a sense of hope that even in dark times, we will see and trust in your light. Help us to shine that light in the world around us. Amen.

Gloria Kenyon

Do Not Let My Heart Become Callous

As I read and re-read my assigned verses I find myself creating the following cliffnotes. David lives a righteous life – and gives himself much credit ***“I have planned no evil; my mouth has not transgressed.”*** David asks God to save him from the ***“mortal enemies”*** that surround him, who pose not physical harm but something equally dangerous. ***“They close up their callous hearts, and their mouths speak with arrogance.”*** He describes their threat as having all the perils of physical danger, ***“They are like a lion hungry for prey, like a fierce lion crouching in cover.”***

I agree! Calloused hearts and arrogance are dangerous! Of course – and I start citing many, many examples. As I am thinking through this long list I can feel my anger grow towards the “others” who I perceive as mortal enemies. Then the single most challenging verse jumps out at me. ***“They close up their callous hearts, and their mouths speak with arrogance.”***

I return to the beginning of the Psalm – where I thought David was bragging about his virtue, but now think it may have been a hopeful prayer: ***“Let my vindication come from you, may your eyes see what is right.”*** Is this David realizing that it is not our job to judge – that we should leave that to God? Is this God reminding us that mortal vindication leads to calloused hearts and arrogance? Is the message that we need to keep our hearts open? The psalm ends with a similar refrain,¹⁵ ***As for me, I will be vindicated and will see your face; when I awake, I will be satisfied with seeing your likeness”.***

And I pray: Show me the wonders of your great love, oh God. Do not let my heart become callous.

Alesia Frerichs

March 14

Thursday

Genesis 13:1-7, 14-18

There He Built an Altar to the Lord

“From the Nagev he went from place to place until he came to Bethel, to the place between Bethel and Ai where his tent had been earlier ⁴and where he had first built an altar. There Abram called on the name of the Lord.”

I think many of us can relate to Abram’s situation at the beginning of this passage of being materially blessed, but spiritually disoriented. Abram was being forced to regroup after being driven out of Egypt where he had travelled against God’s will, yet had been fortunate enough to leave with plentiful riches. It’s what Abram did next that I hope we will all find encouraging this Lenten season: he found a familiar place of prayer to call on God. And of course, God answered.

It seems so easy that I often forget, God does not need fanciful prayers or even grand gestures of recompense, he just wants us to call on him and he will bless us beyond what we can imagine. We just need to remember that blessings beyond our imagination may not be the blessings we ask for. Being forced to separate from his nephew Lot must have been difficult for Abram, but soon thereafter God reasserted his promise to give Abram vast lands and innumerable descendants. How did Abram respond to this awesome blessing? He built an altar to praise God.

Lord God, we often allow this world to confuse us and lead us away from you. Help us to remember this Lenten season that you’re never far off. All we need to do is reach out to you in praise and you’ll be there to lead us exactly where we need to go.

Matt Aviles

God's Forgiveness

This short passage from Exodus is immediately preceded by one showing God's disappointment with the behavior of the Israelites, who have melted gold jewelry to make an image of a Golden Calf. At this point, God calls the Israelites "stiff necked," but nevertheless charges Moses to "Depart, go up hence, you and the people whom you have brought up out of the land of Egypt....Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey...." God even promises to send an angel to guide them on their way.

We are all familiar with God's command that "thou shalt have no other gods before me." We are all too familiar, however, with how often we fall short of that goal. It's unlikely to be for a Golden Calf, but sometimes it's for money. Or sometimes it may be for an enhanced position in a government office or in the private sector. Or sometimes it may be as simple as desire for a new outfit or shoes or a handbag. In my case, of all things, it's movies. And at this time of year, I tend to drive myself and others crazy, trying to see as many of the Oscar-nominated films as possible. These behaviors are definitely "stiff-necked."

But God sees all things, knows all things, and forgives all things. When we fail to live up to God's commandment to put Him first, He forgives. And in this season of Lent, let us be thankful for this I credible blessing, and forgive others in our turn.

Heavenly Father, we don't always put You first in our lives. Help us to discern the path we should be taking and the goal we should be striving for. We offer our gratitude for sending your angel to guide us onward. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Susan Blackman

Trust in the Lord

*"I remain confident of this: I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living."
Psalm 27:13*

Psalm 27 is a tour de force. It rings with confidence and triumph. The psalmist, David, fears nothing because God is with him. Armies rise against him, but he will not fear. Wars come, and he is confident. There is such assurance in this psalm that I wonder if David wasn't putting on a bit of a show; whistling in the dark so to speak. It would be natural, when you think about his life. David knew his share of trials, and probably even terror, before he became king and also during his reign. There had been plenty of times when things might have gone differently and he would have been killed. Maybe David is putting on a brave face here, confronting some daunting threats.

Even so, David is right to put his trust in God, and so are we. At the very least, his priorities are in order. The one thing he asks is to be close to God, to dwell in God's house throughout his life. And think about it. If David, or anyone for that matter, truly lives with God, then even if the armies rise, even if wars break out, even if those armies are victorious, those victories cannot remove us from God's presence. Even if the worst does happen, the Lord still receives us. The Lord still shows his face to us. So, with David, let us put on a brave show, even if we're not entirely one hundred percent sure in our courage. Let us go out into life facing all the troubles that come our way knowing that we will see the goodness of the Lord here and now, in the land of the living.

Loving God, we all face our share of troubles in this world. Give us brave hearts like David, and keep our minds fixed on the sure truth that your goodness is always present. Amen.

Craig Haas

March 17

Sunday

Luke 13:31-35

Bone Tired, Thank God

“I will keep driving out demons and healing people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal. In any case, I must press on today and tomorrow and the next day [...]” (Luke 13, v. 32-33)

It is ten p.m. and I have barely eaten dinner. There is work to do. The laundry remains in piles on the floor. I need to clean the high chair. As a child, I never understood the phrase “bone tired.” As a mother of three young kids and a full time public servant on Capitol Hill, a wife besides, and something called a “room mom” – I now deeply understand the meaning of this phrase.

It is exactly in these moments that could so easily be skipped in favor of sleep that my reflections to God bring clarity and purpose to my life. It would be the most logical thing for me to do – to go to sleep – instead, a prayer of gratitude for all that I have and a reflection on my day’s work (both in and outside the home) brings me to see with clearest vision that my purpose is greater than the meetings I schedule, the meals I make, and the laundry I wash (or don’t wash).

In these verses Jesus rejects his earthly presence in recognition of his higher calling. In so doing, he calls us, too, to reflect on our circumstances to examine whether we are living according to our earthly mission, or to God’s.

In my reflection I am reminded that God lives in my ability to be compassionate to my family and to strangers. God lives in me in the care of my children and my household. God lives in the patience with which I approach another uncertain day. I am humbled by his example, and energized by the opportunity to greet another day with His vision.

*Dear God, thank you for another uncertain day. We will serve in your example.
Amen.*

Kristin Mollet

Don't Let the Haters Get You Down

Philippians 3: 17-20: ¹⁷Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do. ¹⁸For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. ¹⁹Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things. ²⁰But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are called this Lenten season to reflect on our lives as members of God's heavenly kingdom. In the time of Christ, the world was full of evil and tumult and voices challenging the growing message of Jesus and salvation. It is not too different from our world today.

Our world is a place that challenges Christian ideals of forgiveness, compromise, understanding, love, and unity. We are constantly reminded of what divides us, placing blame on one another for our lack of communal progress. In this text, and during this Lenten season, God calls us to reflect on our humanity, focusing on our faith community and drawing strength from one another.

We are called to be mindful of those around us and keep them in mind as we do our good work; however we cannot let the haters deter us from the mission at hand. As God tells us in the Philippians text, "our citizenship is in heaven" and we are to let our confidence in our Lord Jesus Christ grow. That confidence serves as our faith foundation, giving us the strength to open doors, nourish souls, and praise God.

Let us pray: God we thank you for bringing us into your faith community and holding a place for us in your heavenly kingdom. We ask that you grant us strength to address the evil in our world and welcome new brothers and sisters into a life with Christ. Amen.

Lindsay Hochberg

March 19

Tuesday

1 Corinthians 10:1-13

Resisting Temptation

As Lutherans, we rarely hear a lecture about sinful lifestyles. After all, Martin Luther brewed his own beer, didn't he? Katy fled a convent in a fish barrel so she could get married! How often do we hear about sex and revelry? Yet here is Paul, our "justification by faith" friend, raising these most uncomfortable subjects. But Paul offers reassurance. "No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear."

When I first came to Washington at age 23, I heard the old advice, "don't do anything you wouldn't want to see on the front page of the *Washington Post*." Over the last few years it appears that bar has fallen very low. So many of our political leaders have engaged in abhorrent behavior without the slightest bit of shame. Lines are blurred – what does it take for society to be shocked?

What I have learned over the last few years is that I cannot trust society at large to adequately judge acceptable behavior. I need my own moral compass for that. In a recent Facebook post, Joshua Becker of *Becoming Minimalist* says, "People were created to be loved. Things were created to be used. The reason why the world is in chaos is because things are being loved and people are being used." While he is specifically referring to things, we can apply the same more widely – chaos ensues when we put "things" – material things, sex, revelry, ambition, money – ahead of people. Yet, Paul assures us "...when you are tempted, [God] will also provide a way out so that you can endure it."

Dear Lord, open our hearts to your guidance as we make our life choices. Let love be our guide. Amen.

Diane Kohn

March 20

Wednesday

Psalm 105:1-4, 42

Sing Praise!

As a member of a choir since childhood, I am always delighted with the admonition to SING! “*Sing to the Lord, sing praises, and speak of all God’s marvelous works*” says the psalmist in verse 2.

A specific history of the marvelous works to which the poet refers is enumerated in the rest of the psalm: the covenant with God, the enslavement in Egypt, the release from captivity, the salvation in the desert, and the gift of the “lands of the nations.” God has remembered His holy word (verse 42)!

How often do we reflect on the marvelous works in our own lives? Do we sing praise even when the way seems dark or when we feel enslaved or trapped by situations in our lives? Are we able to remember the promise of grace each morning and evening, as Luther suggests?

Perhaps if we sing praise we could indeed open doors, we could greet the souls we meet with hope, and gratefully remember the blessings and works God has given us.

In our Lutheran Book of Worship there are sixteen hymns that begin with the word “praise,” and many more that include praise as an integral part—including the Lenten hymn 320: “The glory of these forty days we celebrate with songs of praise.”

Challenge yourself to learn one you do not know, and even if you don’t sing, you can say the words as a morning or evening prayer.

Be with us through this season, Lord, and all our earthly days, that when the final Easter dawns, we join in heaven’s praise. (Hymn 319, verse 4)

Helen Stauderman

March 21

Thursday

Daniel 3:19-30

Calibrating Your Faith Compass

Nebuchadnezzar said, “Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants who trusted in him. They disobeyed the king’s command and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God.”

I often fall into the trap of thinking that I have a strong moral compass with my faith and other beliefs well-formed to guide me at all times. But then real-life situations leave me weighing the pros and cons.

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego seemed to have a very clear vision of God’s will for their lives—clear enough that they disobeyed King Nebuchadnezzar and faced the consequences. They made the right choice, and God protected them.

With so many competing demands on our time, energy, resources, love and loyalty, how can we know when God is calling us to do something? In a gray-toned world where our choices are rarely black-and-white, how can we discern what is truly right and good? How do we know that the risk we are taking is God’s will for us, and can we expect him to deliver us from the fiery furnace of consequences? I don’t know about you, but I’d like to be sure that I’m not hurling myself into the flames for nothing!

One way we can prepare ourselves to hear and answer God’s call is by developing, deepening and tending our relationship with God. This better enables us to make decisions from a place of reflection and deep knowing rather than split-second reaction to the situation at hand.

Almighty God, help me to nurture my relationship with you so that I can hear your voice clearly. Give me courage to act on your will, and deliver me when that path leads me into trouble. Amen.

Caitlin Jacobs

Wake Up, Sleepy-Head!

I admit, when I read my assigned passage in my usual Bible translation I didn't quite know what to make of it. Of the six verses, the only one that really spoke to me was the last: *"Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches."* A statement like that is open to any number of broad interpretations.

Looking for inspiration, I turned to the more modern translation in The Message. And I saw this:

"I see right through your work. You have a reputation for vigor and zest, but you're dead, stone-dead.

"Up on your feet! Take a deep breath! Maybe there's life in you yet. But I wouldn't know it by looking at your busywork; nothing of God's work has been completed..."

"If you pull the covers back over your head and sleep on, oblivious to God, I'll return when you least expect it, break into your life like a thief in the night.

We're all very good at staying busy. But are we busy with the right things? Or do we need the Spirit to come and rouse us awake, rip the covers from over our drowsy heads and remind us of our divine purpose?

While it sounds like a threat – *"I'll break into your life like a thief in the night"* – I actually find it comforting. The Holy Spirit won't let us be comfortable in our complacency. Eventually we will find ourselves awakened, invigorated, and ready to hear.

Lord, thank you for opening our eyes and our ears. May we see the world's needs and hear your gentle call.

Emily Sollie

March 23

Saturday

Psalm 63:1-8

Singing Praises to God

In a book entitled *Reading the Psalms with Luther*, the author wrote: “The 63rd psalm is a psalm of prayer in which David, when he had to flee into the wilderness from Saul, desired to be in the sanctuary and hear God’s word. He laments that he cannot come there now. He remembers that he looked upon God beholding His power and glory..”

David used physical thirst as a metaphor for spiritual longing. Both are caused by a keenly felt need. Both, if not quenched, can lead to death, one physical, the other spiritual. David’s spiritual thirst was satisfied by God’s presence in the sanctuary, by singing praise to God and by reflecting on God.

Can you imagine, not being able to come to church where together our souls thirst for God, where pastors, choir, and congregation can praise God with singing lips, and the richest of foods can satisfy our souls?

Rev. Bertram Gilbert wrote in his book, *Remembering God*: “Hymns are not musical accompaniments to a worship service but poems of praise sung by those who love the Lord.” Don’t you love to sing your heart out to God? Me too.

We praise, sing to and thank you, Lord, because you judge and rule with righteousness and truth. Thank you for being gracious to us and forgiving our sins when we repent and seek your guidance. Thank you for lifting us up out of despair. Continue to fill our hearts with love for you and for one another. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Flossie Heckman

March 24

Sunday

Luke 13:1-9

Sin in necessary

No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will perish just as they did. Luke 13:5

The Lord showed himself more glorious in my sight than I had ever seen him before, and I saw that nothing stood in my way but sin.

I saw that this is generally true of all of us. It seemed to me that if sin had not existed, we would all have been pure, like our Lord, as our Lord made us. Thus I often wondered why, by the great foreseeing wisdom of God, the beginning of sin had not been prevented, for then, I thought, all would have been well.

But Jesus, who in this vision informed me of all I needed to know, answered in these words, saying, "Sin is necessary, but all shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well."

*God, All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well.
Amen.*

Julian of Norwich (1342-1416)

[Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, ed. M. L. de Mastro (Garden City, NY: Image, 1977), 123-24.]

March 25

Monday

Jeremiah 11:1-17

Disastrous Love

I will bring on them a disaster they cannot escape. Although they cry out to me, I will not listen to them. The towns of Judah and the people of Jerusalem will go and cry out to the gods to whom they burn incense, but they will not help them at all when disaster strikes. Jeremiah 11:11-12

Broken people in a broken land
cry out to one who will not listen
and to all the others who will not help

--not the toys and riches, for they cannot satisfy
--not the machines, for they have no heart
--not the algorithms, for they have no idea
--not the genes, for they have no use for us
--not even the prophet,
for he knows we will hear and hear and not understand.

Only the grieving planter
who recalls us as a thriving olive tree
with beautiful fruit--

a raging firestorm
breaks all our branches
and reduces us to ashes

yet our planter remembers us as beloved

broods over us for a time
and time after time
joins us among the ashes

breathes our embers into life again
bursting with the memory and the prospect
of all things made new.

O giver of life, abide with us in our broken lives, our fractured community, our fragile kinship with all the dwellers of our endangered planet. Kindle in us a new sense of belonging in your great universe, till we rise again with you to a new awe before the glory of your presence and new vigor in sharing your love in all our worlds.

Ted Steege

Obey the Law

“For it is not those who bear the law who are righteous in God’s sight but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous.”

This passage refers to Mosaic law, and “those who sin apart from the law” refers to Gentiles. It’s saying that persons unaware of the law should not be punished for violating that law. As an undergrad student I took a cross country bus trip to visit universities I was considering for my graduate studies. At Texas A&M University I violated so many rules by just walking around whistling and wearing a hat in their Memorial Student Union, sitting on a particular grassy spot (another memorial), and offering to help the military cadets to fold a flag properly (“go ‘way kid”). Of course my hippy pony tail and backpack may not have endeared me to the strong military ROTC presence there back in 1975. But even so I wasn’t punished, just guided to more appropriate behavior for that culture and time. I came back to TAMU for my doctorate, and kept my hat off in the Student Union. (Still whistled softly though.)

But what about more serious transgressions? There must be a grey area here. Even if we don’t have “the law,” we should know what is right. Jay-walking (possibly interfering with emergency responders)? Tossing a lit cigarette out the window (possibly starting a forest fire)? Parking in front of a fire hydrant for just a minute while you run into a store (possibly delaying firefighters dealing with a house fire)? Not treating everyone with kindness and respect? Not welcoming and caring for refugees? Watch the headlines for more examples. By now you are thinking about your own transgressions, how you got away with something (or didn’t). What about our leaders’ transgressions? Should we just let their transgressions go or do we have a duty to God to guide them to more appropriate behavior?

Follow God’s law, of course. We all know that. And clearly it’s far better to learn and obey the letter of the government’s law than to risk paying the price of something that you didn’t think was that bad, because it’s not up to you to judge. Those judging you may have rules of which you are unaware...or perhaps God Himself will be judging you. Follow the rules. Believe me, the consequences could be bigly.

Dear Lord, help me do right. Give me a nudge when I stray. I’m trying to behave. Really. And if there’s any way I can help you, give me a clue about that too. I think that’s why I’m here. In Jesus name, Amen.

Awaiting our Awakening

*“...Surely your plan for us is written on our hearts
Surely your angels stand ready to guide us on our way!
Surely there is nothing to fear, for you abide within us;
Awaiting our awakening”*

I have always felt that if I could just stay out of the way, I would be led to my highest goodness. I have been fortunate in life. My generally positive life experiences have led me to believe that life is good. I look at how children grow, how wounds heal how even deep hurts heal with time. I do believe that life forces are positive. But there is a nag. Am I really living to my highest potential, my greatest calling, God's plan written on my heart? Am I using the talents I have been given? I am still nagged by doubts perhaps that get in the way of the angel guides. I am still awaiting my awakening, I guess. Maybe there have been moments of being awakened. I feel the hope and beauty in life in this psalm. I feel responsibility to be open to God's nudges. I feel I need to pay attention to what resonates within my heart. I feel compelled to be quiet and listen, listen, listen.

Oh loving presence, please help me listen deeply. Let me be open to You. Let me share with courage when it is for the highest good. Let me live into being awakened to and in your love.

Elizabeth Tuckermanty

March 28

Thursday

Joshua 4:1-13

A Memorable Pile of Stones

Washington, D.C. is a city of illustrious monuments that remind us of events and people that changed U.S. history.

But monuments have been around a long, long time going back to Old Testament. This passage is a classic Bible story that has a 12-stone monument built at God's request.

Apparently, God is into symbolism.

The story in a nutshell: The Israelites, living in a barren land, waited years for a better life. When the time came to cross the Jordan River into Canaan, the river was rushing at a clip too dangerous to cross.

But, God's miracle rolled back the water and created a path for the Israelites to cross the river into a rich new land.

Then, after all the people crossed, God instructed Joshua to find 12 men, one from each tribe, to find a stone and build a monument.

Why?

In verse 7, God answers, saying He wants the story of the parting of the Jordan to be remembered for generations.

The pile of stones is symbolic of how He rescued Israel from barren land. It shows faithfulness to his people.

He does the same for us, not necessarily with a literal river crossing. But, if we trust God, He will allow fearful hearts (barren lands) to have peace (fruitful lands).

What a monumental lesson.

FATHER, forgive us when we don't recognize Your love for us. Help us to recognize signs of Your gracious faithfulness. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Mel Antonen

Living with Faith and Courage

When I read 2 Corinthians 5:6-16, I feel God's presence strengthening my faith through the sacrifice of his Son. I am prepared to move through life bolstered by the "good courage" (v.8) that emanates from the conviction that "he died for all, that they that live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto him who for their sakes died and rose again" (v.15). This expectation implies that we should focus our lives to open doors of opportunity for others; to nourish their well being with respect, kindness, and a fair share of our resources; and to praise God for the diversity that they bring to enrich our lives, enabling us to learn from difference.

Whether we are alive in our bodies or have left our bodies to appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, "we make it our aim ... to be well-pleasing unto him" (v. 9). Life proceeds in this way from birth to death when we believe that Jesus the Christ "died for all." Death then becomes the natural, expected consequence of life.

When I consider the chaos in today's world, I find hope in looking for small cracks in the veneer of civilization where I can make a little difference, knowing that I am an actor in God's plan where "all must be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ" (v.10). Whether we interact with each other in this world, or whether we stand before God's judgment seat, "the love of Christ constraineth us" (v.14) to do his will and follow his path.

Lord God, we are grateful for the life and death of your Son. Strengthen our faith and grant us the desire and wisdom to stay on track, as your Son alone was able to do during his time on Earth. Make us actors on your behalf, enabling us to open doors of opportunity for others. Guide us as we raise our voices to implement changes needed to make our world a more just and peaceful home for all humankind. Help us understand not only our shared humanity, but also each and every person's unique gifts. In Jesus' name we pray to strengthen our faith, to enable us to sow hope, and to love our neighbors as you have loved us. Amen.

Nancy Lloyd Pfahl

March 30

Saturday

Psalm 32

God Loves Us No Matter What

Few texts embody our FATE theme (Opening Doors, Nourishing Souls, Praising God) as beautifully as Psalm 32.

Verse 1, "Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered."

It is easy to be embarrassed and ashamed of our sins, especially if we tell them to someone, and even if that someone is God. But, the reality is, God loves us no matter what. The Lord is always ready to forgive and wants to. This means we should be excited to confess our sins and be forgiven. The Lord wants to have that open communication with us so we can live in the glory. Whether we want to believe it or not, God wants us to live without guilt and be the best people we can be.

David writes in Verse 5, "Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the LORD'-- and you forgave the guilt of my sin."

Let us rejoice in God's everlasting love, open our hearts to Jesus, let our sins be forgiven and live in the Light of the Lord.

Lord God, I am ashamed of my sins. I do them time and time again, even though I know how much they hurt you and those around me. Please forgive me and teach me to be a better person. I know your love is everlasting and always flowing to me and I will do my best to never turn my back to you or harden my heart. Amen.

Dan O'Brien

March 31

Sunday

Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

The Parable of the Entitled Sons

And he said to him, "Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours." (v. 31)

The parable of the prodigal son is a Bible story I have known since childhood. As a child, I understood the message that God's celebrates when the lost return to him. But the message of repentance has been harder to absorb. It has taken closer readings and a re-examination of the story for me to re-learn Jesus' teaching.

As an adult I have identified with the elder son in the parable, who comes home from a long day of work to find his father has thrown a party for his run-away, profligate brother. I have commiserated with the elder son's anger, protesting, "No fair!" The sinful attitude of entitlement by the elder son eluded me because I tried to understand the father's generosity through the lens of human fairness.

Both sons felt entitled to their inheritance. The younger son demanded his share, then squandered it. When he "came to himself," he repented, humbling himself before his father. The older son felt entitled to his inheritance by virtue of his working hard and following all his father's rules. He did not repent; he spoke to his father in anger and with resentment.

The father responds lovingly to his elder son. I wonder, if Jesus had told a sequel story, would the elder son also have a moment when he "came to" and repented?

With this parable, Jesus teaches of God's grace and generosity. The father in the parable celebrates the return of his lost younger son, and reassures his elder son, "all that I have is yours." He loves them both. God's ways are not like human ways and our human construct of fairness doesn't apply to God's love. God extends his love and grace to us whether we are like the younger son or like the elder.

Our Father in Heaven, teach us to repent of our attitudes of entitlement and to rest assured in your grace and generosity. Help us to humble ourselves, acknowledging our dependence upon you for our living here and now and our inheritance hereafter. Amen.

Valerie Anna Platz

April 1

Monday

Leviticus 23:26-41

ASMR

*...It shall be a holy convocation for you: ...you shall do no work during that entire day; for it is a day of atonement.... It shall be to you a sabbath of complete rest....
...The first day shall be a holy convocation; you shall not work at your occupations. ...it is a solemn assembly; you shall not work at your occupations. ...a complete rest on the first day, and a complete rest on the eighth day.*

Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response (ASMR) is an experience characterized by static-like or tingling sensation on skin in response to simple stimuli like those in Super Bowl 2019 Michelob ULTRA Pure Gold commercial. Perhaps for the prophet, gone to ground at Horeb, it was his response to sheer silence following wind, earthquake and fire, before a voice asked “What are you doing here, Elijah?”

What am I doing when I do no work? I worry that I should be working. Complete rest feels unearned. However, these verses remind me to regard complete rest as a holy convocation. For reflection, refocus, renewal. For commitment, gratitude, outreach. For remembering an unbreakable covenant with creation, humankind included. For remembering the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen His glory. For remembering in all things, I am more than conqueror through Him who loved us. For remembering that I am dust and to dust I shall return.

*You sang in a stable, you cried from a hill, then you whispered in silence when the whole world was still;
and down in the city you called once again, when you blew through your people on the rush of the wind.*

Spirit of Gentleness, Evangelical Lutheran Worship 2006, Hymn 396

Judith Mangubat

April 2

Tuesday

Revelation 19:9-10

When I Say I am a Christian

Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. Revelation 10b

When I say, "I am a Christian"
I'm not shouting, "I've been saved!"
I'm whispering, "I get lost some-
times
That's why I chose this way"

When I say, "I am a Christian"
I don't speak with human pride
I'm confessing that I stumble –
needing God to be my guide

When I say, "I am a Christian"
I'm not trying to be strong
I'm professing that I'm weak
and pray for strength to carry on

When I say, "I am a Christian"
I'm not bragging of success
I'm admitting that I've failed
and cannot ever pay the debt

When I say, "I am a Christian"
I don't think I know it all
I submit to my confusion
asking humbly to be taught

When I say, "I am a Christian"
I'm not claiming to be perfect
My flaws are far too visible
but God believes I'm worth it

When I say, "I am a Christian"
I still feel the sting of pain
I have my share of heartache
which is why I seek God's name

When I say, "I am a Christian"
I do not wish to judge
I have no authority
I only know I'm loved

God, Help me to say, "I am a Christian."

Carol Wimmer

April 3

Wednesday

Psalm 53

Opening Hearts

Pastor Lisa led the intergenerational lesson with a mix of students aged under-3 to over-53. The lesson focused on the strife and struggle of God's people under changing governance systems – from God-centered to self-centered leadership and back again. As I contemplate today's reading in light of her lesson, I am connecting the arduous struggle and hope the original singers of Psalm 53 express, to our own political discord of today. Of the 'other' party – don't we secretly think – 'they are corrupt, and their ways are vile: there is no one who does good.' If this is true it is also true of us, as we also are the 'other party.' This dividing belief does no good festering inside anyone.

Rather, like the psalmists, let us turn together to sing our struggle out loud, to put it on the 'felt board' to work toward God's salvation. 'Oh, that salvation for Israel would come out of Zion!' There is a requirement for time and effort here. As humans, we need help getting outside of our self-centered state of being. Will you take the time to open your heart to seek God, to listen, to understand, to sing, and listen some more?

Pastor Lisa's class was under an hour; our range of ages unified us to hear the lesson, sing, act the story and bake cookies. The oldest in Pastor Lisa's class that day learned from the youngest, their open hearts shouted out with simple and brilliant clarity.

Almighty God, King of Kings, Forgive us this day of our sins and divisive actions. Guide us in the world and open our hearts, ears, eyes and minds to others. Let us sing our sorrow and our faith out loud that we may work out the discord and move toward God-centered actions.

Pam Commerford

April 4

Thursday

Isaiah 43:1-7

Fear Not...I have called you by name...you are precious in my eyes... and I love you.

Throughout the centuries the text in Isaiah has been a source of inspiration. The beauty of the word use and the images the text evokes have stimulated both musicians and artists. In this Chapter, God is promising his protection for his people because they are precious to him. Even though they walk through fire they shall not be burned. If need be he would ransom whole countries for the safety of his people. In addition to this simple core message the text uses traditional linguist formulas of the time to enshrine the commitment of God. Still we need not get lost in this extra wording, the core message is the love of God for us.

I always like a text such as this and bring it into my own view of the world and current times. I would invite you to do the same. This is a time when we all seem threatened by many things. In addition to the incredible of rate of change, from technology to cultural values, we face national and global issues that want to defy solution. Global warming, natural disasters, and the plight of refugees are examples of complications that extend across borders and jurisdictions. We also face a deep political morass and conflicting political leadership. It is too late to search for the reasons, we all know that we cannot turn back the clock and that somehow we must find solutions to the a wide range of critical problems.

When the weight of all these problems begins to press on me, I try to assure myself with such texts as this one that God loves us and is with us to give comfort even before the problems are solved. I need this reassurance. I have taken to singing each day in order to ease my anxiety. "Lord, Let My Heart be Good Soil," is a song I often sing. Non-singers might use poetry, drawing from the psalms and other such texts as Isaiah. Take time with such private consideration. Hold on to it dearly and pray.

Creator God, give us strength to find hope and peace in contemplating the love you have for us. Grant that we can make it possible for all of your children to receive this love.

Philip W. Moeller, Ph.D.

April 5

Friday

Philippians 2:19-24

Shedding Self-Interest

Timothy and Epaphroditus

"I have no one else like him, who will show genuine concern for your welfare."

In this reading Paul is commending Timothy to the followers of Christ in Philippi because Timothy's character has been tested and he has shown himself to be a humble servant of the Lord. Timothy exemplifies the character of the gospel: sincere concern for others, "one who thinks like Christ." Paul's letter is designed to remind Christ's followers that serving the Lord requires humility; putting your neighbor first is important and opposite of what we experience in our daily lives.

As we go about each day, it is important to see Timothy as a model and a reminder of how we should treat one another. Though it sounds simple, putting others before myself does not come easily. However, if I seek the company of those who exemplify sincere and genuine concern for others, I can emulate their behavior. I can work each day at putting others before myself.

During this Lenten journey, may we care for others in our community out of sincere and genuine concern and with the Holy Spirit guiding us may we shed our desire to act in our own interest. Amen.

Julie Hasler

April 6

Saturday

Psalm 126

Mouths Filled with Laughter

The first two lines of Psalm 126, "*When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dreamed. Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy,*" brings images of pure delight, and lightens my spirit just thinking on those images. Yes, this feels like my true nature. When the Lord is my focus, joy is my state of being.

I'd love to feel that way all day long. However, the littlest of events can draw my focus away from God. Some are large and overwhelming, bringing pain. But whether the seeming cause is small or overwhelming, I can bring back the songs of joy by returning my attention to the Lord.

Dear Father, thank you for the laughter and joy with which you created us. Help us remember that anything less is a temporary state of being. Even when the sadness seems endless, or one thing after another falls apart, we can return to joy when we hold you as our center. Amen

Julie Scofield

April 7

Sunday

John 12:1-8

The Pouring Out of Devotion

Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them clean with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. v. 3

Mary of Bethany recognizes Jesus' mission: he has come to die. Perceiving the new thing God is doing, she embraces his death and pours out her devotion to Jesus in an extravagant act. The prophet beseeches the Israelites to forget the old pattern of salvation—the dry way through the Red Sea. Now God will make a new way, a wet way, in a dry, barren, and death-filled place.

On this Sunday in Lent, salvation lies not behind us but before us, through the death and resurrection of Jesus. Mary's action in the face of death is bold. She anoints a corpse, and in so doing honors Jesus' vulnerability and his life. She models love for the other disciples and for us.

"I am doing a new thing." Thus God admonishes us as we enter the last week of Lent: prepare yourselves, for something you have not imagined is about to happen. The day that is coming will not be like any former day. It will come fresh and dazzling as a bright sunrise after a lifetime of drizzle and gloom. The new thing that is almost upon us will relativize everything—even our best preparations.

For God is bringing us out of the isolation created by sin, into a communion of the forgiven. No matter how many times we experience it, no matter now many times we celebrate the repentance, Eucharist, and Easter, the forgiving embrace of God always comes upon us as brand new, totally unexpected, awesome in its revelation of ourselves and all others as beloved children of God.

God of Wisdom, help me to follow Mary's model of love. Amen.

Mary Frohlich, RSCJ

April 8

Monday

Isaiah 40:1-15

The Wholeness Wheel Labyrinth

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Set up the tabernacle..."

Trace Your Way Along the Path. *Prayerfully consider how or what God is instructing you to prepare in different areas of your life.*

Rest in the Center. *Ask God to fill you with a sense of peace and purpose.*

Follow the Path as it Returns Outward. *Notice your thoughts and feelings as you listen for the Spirit's nudges*



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Along my Lenten journey, O God, show me the way to do your will in all areas of my life. Amen.

April 9

Tuesday

1 John 2:18-28

An Excerpt from ‘A Personal Reflective Essay’

27b But as his anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, abide in him. 28 And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he is revealed we may have confidence and not be put to shame before him at his coming.

Faith is new creation. Furthermore, it is apparent that preaching is to be broadly understood. Lives of service, sacraments, sermons, care for creation: all of these are preaching, all of these point to and respond to God’s grace-filled presence and kingdom which comes to us as gift. The Eucharist is a fitting example. The Eucharist is a foretaste, a real taste now, of the great banquet feast which is to come and to which the Eucharist also points; this anticipation is true throughout the life of the church and the church’s members.

The mission of the church, then, is, as it were, to be the church, much as the mission and work of Jesus Christ was to be God in the world. This mission of the church is to set at liberty those who are oppressed, preach good news to the poor, live as new creation, accept and celebrate the manifold gifts of God, name and challenge evil and sin in their personal, corporate and structural manifestations, feed the hungry, comfort the mourning, heal the sick. It sounds grandiose but it is really not. It is just living life as it was intended, in trust and faith, not being a SOMEBODY who is always ‘better than,’ not being a nobody who is always ‘nothing but,’ but being a Somebody who is ‘one of,’ one of the people who, along with everyone else, has received God’s gracious gift of Somebody-ness and been made a member of the kingdom.

Gracious God, help me live into being a somebody who is ‘one of,’ receiving your gracious gift of somebody-ness this day and every day, as a member of your kingdom.

Joel Workin (1961-1995)

April 10

Wednesday

Psalm 20

Faith Stated Briefly

The Bible that I possess for devotional use and study is composed of 1,290 pages. Which of those many words should I read? The red covered book that we use on Sunday for worship at the Church of the Reformation contains the many words of 893 hymns. How many shall we sing? And, yes, indeed, our God does intend that we keep All 10 of the Commandments!

So then, our Christian faith is summed up in the use of many words which, taken together become THE WORD OF GOD!

Specifically this day we are asked to focus on some of those words from Psalm 20 in the Old Testament which begin with "THE LORD ANSWERS YOU IN THE DAY OR TIME OF TROUBLE!" Then a bit later it says, "MAY HE GRANT YOU, YOUR HEART'S DESIRE!" 18 words in total.

Now, what if we pause right there, making our reading a brief one? Still, is not this biblical assurance by itself enough to sustain us through the day that we are now in, as well as those yet to come? It is wise and perhaps necessary for us to be brief within ourselves as we recall that God is with us in our times of trouble and that God will indeed "FULFILL OUR PLANS" as stated in Psalm 20. You see, God's Words can truly be taken with us without their requiring from us either a great deal of time or space. Then, we also realize, that we can return to them frequently and meaningfully.

*I invite you to take your Bible in hand and read from it as deeply as you wish. And then also, please consider **brief portions** which might be embraced and remembered, even memorized, such as "God will be with you in your troubles and will share with you as you seek to fulfill your plans." And, so may this also become our prayer. Amen!*

Roger Dahlin

April 11

Thursday

Isaiah 53:10-12

God's Promises for His Children

"After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied." – Isaiah 53:11

The significance is not lost on me that this passage I received to reflect on is assigned to a date which happens to be the first birthday of our daughter. Verse 10 of this selection reminds us right away of the discomfort and guilt we may associate with our humanness being so sinful that God needed to, and in His love chose to, sacrifice His only son. Does this "crush[ing]" blow make you shiver a little, too? We often question God why there is suffering in the world, but do we question the sentenced suffering of Christ who was in the world, but not of it? I often find myself taking Christ's sacrifice for granted, sort of imagining that his pain wasn't pain the in same sense because he is holy.

Yet, I find comfort in the notice that Christ, relieved from his suffering, would see that his work was good, like God on the 7th day, and feel fulfilled by it. It takes the edge off for us. Of course, this passage also reiterates what we hear, and need to hear, time and time again – that Christ gave his life for us. God has promised reassurance and joy for both His heavenly child and all of his earthly children.

Dear God, thank you for your suffering. Please help us to reflect on and grow from our shortcomings so that we, too, can see the light of life and be satisfied. Strengthen us and enable us to identify what we can promise and do for our children and God's children.

Katie Morrison

April 12

Friday

Hebrews 2:10-18

How to Talk About Jesus

“he too shared in their humanity”

I don't often speak of Jesus, the man who lived over 2000 years ago. I suspect that many Lutherans would agree that it is more comfortable to show the Christian self by *doing things* rather than *talking about* Jesus. If I do speak about my religious beliefs, it will be coded with a polite, perfectly acceptable explanation like “I went to church and bagged food for the food pantry.” Because the kind of Christian I am bags food, and doesn't speak of spiritual transformation through Jesus the holy son of God. Especially the trope of “personal savior” is uncomfortable for me and given that you bet I'm not going to talk about Jesus. People will just have to figure out that I'm so moved by some powerful force it makes me put ramen noodles into a bag.

But in thinking about why I am so reluctant to talk about Jesus, this passage from the book of Hebrews helps me recognize something that I haven't considered fully. Who is Jesus? A “pioneer” or a trailblazer for certain, but also a *brother*, a *hero*, a *human*, a *sufferer*. This Lent I am intentionally seeking ways to talk about Jesus that starts with some things that I do know and find very comforting about him: like, Jesus told people that if they would love God and love their neighbor they would do just fine. This is pretty simple and doesn't get me into theological tangles. I ask, can you find the version of Jesus that you feel comfortable talking about? Find the Jesus that you can relate to the most and then talk about him.

Brother Jesus, be with me during my meditations about your time on earth. Help me to speak about you so that others can know how you provide the road map for life. Amen.

Sarah Stauderman

April 13

Saturday

Psalm 31:6-9

Trusting God

In the Old Testament people were required to sacrifice birds or animals to cleanse them of their sins. That was before God sent his son to be the sacrificial lamb for us sinners.

This psalm is part of a lament by David (could be Jeremiah) concerning the problems he had and we all have from time to time. It seems that, at times, whatever we do is all wrong. We get frustrated, we worry, we despair, and think of another bad situation. Sometimes we think it is almost the end of the world. This psalm also reminds me about the story of **Job**. Job with all his health problems he never gave up. He continued to pray and praise God. But he lost everything. Yet he was faithful and trusted God. Because of his trust in God, God saved him and restored his health, property and more.

The Psalm continues: *But I trust in you O Lord; I say, "You are my God." My times are in your hands; deliver me from my enemies and from those who pursue me. Let your face shine on your servant; save me in your unfailing love.*

During this Lenten season we take time to think about Jesus and what he taught us while he was alive and about his suffering for our sins. Just imagine the suffering he went through in comparison to David and Job. God rescued David and Job from their earthly problems. If we put our trust in God, he will be there for us too. In the Old Testament people were required to sacrifice birds or animals to cleanse them of their sins. That was before God sent his son to be the sacrificial lamb for us sinners.

In Jesus' case, after Jesus shed his blood for all our sins, God raised him from the dead. This act of God should help us in our understanding and in believing why Jesus is our Lord and Savior.

Lord Jesus, my time is in your hands. Send me your holy spirit to help me trust you and follow you better each day of my life. Amen.

Wayne Krumwiede

April 14

Palm Sunday

Luke 23:13-31

The Cross

As they led Jesus away, they seized a man, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming from the country, and they laid the cross on him, and made him carry it behind Jesus. v. 26

The cross is the tree of my eternal salvation nourishing and delighting me. I take root in its roots, and I am wholly delighted by its fruits. This is my nourishment when I am hungry, my fountain when I am thirsty, my covering when I am stripped, for my leaves are no longer fig leaves but the breath of life. This is my safeguard when I fear God and my support when I falter.

This is the ladder of Jacob, the way of angels, at the summit of which the Lord is truly established. This is my tree, wide as the firmament, which extends from earth to the heavens. It is the pillar of the universe, the support of the whole world, holding together the variety of human nature, and riveted by the invisible bolts of the Spirit, so that it may remain fastened to the divinity and impossible to detach.

Anonymous, third-century homily

God, most holy and humble, plant in your church Christ's spirit of humility. Remove any barriers preventing us from seeing his saving work on the cross. Amen.

[“The Pasch History,” in *The Paschal Mystery: Ancient Liturgies and Patristic Texts*, ed. A. Hamman, O.F.M. (Staten Island, NY: Alba, 1969), pp. 64-65.]

April 15

Monday

John 12:1-11

Always Have the Poor?

“Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?” -Judas the Jerk

Don't get me wrong, I know Judas had a part to play in the life of Jesus, but I never thought I would be on his side. “Yeah, Jesus, why don't we sell this super expensive perfume and give the money to the poor?!” I can see myself saying these words because I have said these words. Not exactly to Jesus himself but when I come up against expensive stuff at church. You know what I'm talking about. It wasn't that long ago that I darkened the doors at Reformation when we were planting the seeds for the Anniversary Campaign. Oh my goodness those numbers were HIGH! Just think of what that money could do for the poor! Words that could have come out of the mouth of Judas.

But Jesus doesn't agree. He's not telling us to ignore poverty, just read the rest of the Gospels and you'll know that's not the truth. It seems that he's saying we need to be reasonable. The money that you're going to get for this perfume, building improvements, new staff members, etc., that is not going to solve the problem of poverty. We can't spend our way to justice, we have to work for it. We have to fix broken systems, stand up to income inequality and support each other's basic human rights. However, I'm going to be bold to say that Jesus was wrong on one point: we will always have him because we find Christ in the face of the other.

Our prayer is that we be active in fighting poverty and not just throwing money at the problem. God help us to do your will by spreading your love.

Katie Osweiler

April 16

Tuesday

John 12:20-26

We Want to See Jesus

This is a Bible story that is easily translated into our modern time and place experience. So imagine these people are walking down East Capitol St. and they see Reformation Church. They say, "We want to see ...". What is it they want to see? A Lutheran church? Perhaps. A food pantry? Perhaps. A place of worship and Christian love? Perhaps.

What if they said, "We want to see Jesus?" Pause! What if? As I dig into this story I begin to realize that this is not just a query from the outsider, and these in the story *were* outsiders. But it's also my quest as well. *I* want to see Jesus. Perhaps you are like me. There are many important things we do as church -- worship, prayer, fellowship, study, care for others -- especially those in obvious need. But at the very core of who we are and what we are about is that central question, *We want to see Jesus*. In fact, all the other things we do grow out of that central thrust.

So what do we see when we see Jesus? In the story these strangers are taken to Jesus and He has something very specific to say. He explains who He is and what He is about with an object lesson -- a grain of wheat. Only when it is buried (planted) and dies does it sprout forth into a plant and reproduce itself many times over. Jesus is talking about giving, costly giving, as the path to fruitfulness and faithfulness.

As we have entered into this Holy Week in which we celebrate the last days of our Lord's life before His death and resurrection, He makes it clear that it is not just He who receives life out of death. This is the path for us who seek to follow Him as well.

In the words of the Message Bible, "...anyone who holds onto life just as it destroys that life, but if you let it go, reckless in your love, you'll have it forever, real and eternal."

Lord Jesus, we look to you as you lead us along the way to the cross.

Al Swingle

April 17

Wednesday

John 13:21-32

“Just Get it Over With.”

“Jesus answered, ‘It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish.’ Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him. So Jesus told him, ‘What you are about to do, do quickly.’”

If you grew up going to church during Lent like I did, you’ve probably heard this text a few times, and it’s easy to get caught up with the first part of this passage, where Jesus identifies Judas as his betrayer, and, perplexingly, seems to set the events in motion himself (like I usually did). But as I read it this time, it was this line that caught my eye: “What you are about to do, do quickly.”

It’s a very human moment, with Jesus, knowing what’s going to happen – what has to happen – how terrible it’s going to be, and the fact that it all starts with a friend’s betrayal. He just wants to get it over with. It’s a relatable sentiment, one that reminds us that because he was fully human, with all the emotions that come with the flesh and the blood, the terrible price Jesus paid for our sake tormented him, and not just physically.

It’s impossible to fully grasp the enormity of that price. I don’t think we’re meant to, and I don’t think that’s the point. But I do think that moments in scripture like this one, the ones that give us some small glimpse of that enormity, are meant not to help us cherish the grace we’ve been given, so that we might not squander it or take it for granted.

Lord, help us to remember how incredible the gift of your mercy truly is, so that we might live our lives joyful in the knowledge of your grace, and help share that grace with those around us.

Matt Fuehrmeyer

April 18

Maundy Thursday John 13:1-17, 31b-35

A New Commandment

Today is Maundy Thursday in the church calendar, the first of the three days in Holy Week marking Christ's betrayal, passion, crucifixion and resurrection. The word Maundy derives from the Latin word *mandatum*, meaning mandate. This refers to Jesus' commandment to his disciples on the day before his death, "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another."

Jesus gave this command after conducting two seemingly contradictory rituals. First, He and the Twelve celebrated the Passover Seder meal, following the ancient tradition of remembering and reciting the mighty acts that Jehovah had done to save His people. Then after the meal, the Divine Perfect Son of God humbled himself to wash his disciples' feet, which were dirty from walking in sandals on the dusty roads of their ministry. It was a lowly task that only a slave or servant of a household would do!

This was an astounding, intentional demonstration of sacrificial service expressing God's love for God's people. This outward cleansing was an inward cleansing—Grace. The service given was agape love—an attitude that leads to a caring or even saving action toward others. It was a prefiguring of the crucifixion to come the following day.

Jesus' commandment to love one another is transformational to those who will obey. Divinely inspired agape love offered between individuals or operating in the community, practiced in society, held forth in government, even carried out in international relations is the foundation for real lasting peace. God's peace. God's Way. God's Truth. There is nothing higher or better. Praise the Lord!

Loving Savior, give us strength and compassion to obey your commandment to love and serve others without expectation of recognition or reward. Amen.

Juliette Jones

April 19

Good Friday

John 18:1-19:42

The details of Jesus

I hope you find some 'alone time' on this Friday to read John's account of Jesus' passion - from his arrest to his burial - in its entirety. You may hear it in a place of worship today, you may know the highlights of the story, you may even remember the lesson from Sunday School, yet when you take time with this text by yourself, you notice the details.

For me, some of those details include: *....right ear,and bound him, Now Barabbas was a bandit, the tunic was seamless, disciple whom he loved, branch of hyssop, linen cloth.*

This is an event, a day, a moment in history that we might not want to know all of the details. As disciples, the one we follow, the one we know to be full of truth and mercy, is actively being executed. Can't we just simply understand the gist of the story and quickly move to a happier, more hope-filled place?

And yet, if we do that, we miss the point entirely. In fact, we miss the details of how we got here in the first place. We risk losing a human God, full of emotion and life, full of pain and sorrow and death. We risk a God that knows our details, our pain and our sorrow and our death.

God knows the details of our life because God incarnate, Jesus, knew the details of the world that crucified him. As we wait for Easter, let us think of the ways that God helps us to see the details of our world that Jesus knew so intimately. Let us be transformed and changed by the details of Jesus' life -- and his death. Let us live into the reality of Jesus' crucifixion with anticipation and hope, not shying away from the details.

Mother God, hold our details close to your heart. Give us your mighty strength and endurance as we deeply consider the reality of this day. Comfort us in our pain and sorrow, enliven our hearts and minds. Amen.

Pastor Ben Hogue

April 20

Easter Vigil

John 20:1-14

Tears of Grief

“Mary stood outside of [Jesus’] tomb weeping” (John 20:11a New International Reader’s Version).

I wonder what Mary Magdalene was thinking as she set off for Jesus’ tomb in the dark. No doubt she was still overwhelmed by grief as she walked. Maybe she set out for the tomb before it was light because her crying made it impossible for her to sleep, and she wanted to be near Jesus’ body.

As she walked to the burial site, maybe she thought about how Jesus freed her from her demons and gave her a whole new life. She loved him more than anyone else in the world, and now he was gone. When Jesus died she lost all her joy and her reason for living. She probably wondered how she could go on living without him.

Those of you who have lost a spouse, or a child, or a parent, or a close friend know how Mary felt. Maybe, like Mary, you also stayed at the graveside or in the person’s room weeping, because you did not know what else to do. Death has a way of turning our world upside down and consuming us, so that we cannot see the life, hope and goodness that surrounds us. Mary did not recognize her Lord, standing right behind her. We also struggle to recognize our Lord’s presence in the dark night of our grief, but Jesus is there with us, as he was there with Mary.

O God, you have called us on life’s journey, to experience unforeseeable blessings and sometimes unimaginable pain and grief. Give us faith to go through doors that open before us, not knowing where our journey will lead us, but that you are with us supporting and guiding us each step of the way; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Pastor Lisa Hufford

April 21

Easter Sunday

John 20:14-18

What are you looking for?

Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned to him and said, "Rabbouni." John 20:16

On Easter morning, we hear the risen Jesus call Mary Magdalene by name and send her to be the first to proclaim the good news. This turning point in their lives takes place in the midst of Mary's grief and in a garden beside an empty tomb.

As the scene opens, Mary Magdalene is weeping outside the tomb. She looks in and sees two angels sitting where Jesus' body had been. Without flinching, Mary questions them about Jesus' body. They don't answer. She turns and sees Jesus, but thinks he's a gardener.

The gardener notices the woman's grief and asks, "What are you seeking?" These are also the first words Jesus speaks in John's gospel when two people begin to follow him (John 1:38). At these turning points—beginnings, endings, and new beginnings—Jesus asks his disciples to clarify what they are looking for. How do you respond to Jesus' question, "What are you seeking?" Mary was looking for something very specific and material—a corpse. Yet beyond the body I think she was seeking much more.

"Mary."

The gardener calls her by name—and she turns again to see her beloved teacher. "Rabbouni." She simply, profoundly declares their relationship and her place as his student.

Dear Jesus: Thank you for visiting me in my grief and confusion. Ask me again what I'm seeking. Help me see clearly. Call my true name and I will turn to see you. Teach me a message to share with our siblings—all of us children of my father and your father, my God and your God. Amen.

Pastor Michael Wilker

ABOUT OUR AUTHORS

March 6 KATHRYN TOBIAS, a member of Reformation since 1977, loves singing in the choir, reaching out to Lutheran Global Mission partners in Namibia, El Salvador, and the Middle East; assisting refugees through Good Neighbors Capitol Hill; helping young South Africans transform their lives through the Bokamoso Youth Foundation; leading InterPlay—a fun way to access “body wisdom;” and being a sibling, aunt, godmother, neighbor, and friend.

March 7 IVY FINKENSTADT has been a member of Reformation since 2009. She runs a solo law practice from her home in Cheverly, MD, where she also takes care of Maxwell and Graham, her sons and hangs out with husband Dan. Ivy is always up for practicing her Spanish, so come say, “Hola” at coffee hour!

March 8 ANDY WEAVER grew up in central Ohio, went to college in Unity, ME and ended up here in DC. Somewhere along the way he participated in the national jigsaw puzzle contest, and helped build a small section of the Continental Divide Trail. Andy currently serves on congregational council, which may be why he reflected on leadership in his devotional.

March 9 JENNA JABLONSKI spends most of her time editing articles and scrolling Twitter as the founder of Sister, an online media platform for women in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). She also works behind the scenes at Reformation as the database and communication administrator. She and her husband Dan O’Brien have been Reformation members since 2014.

March 10 VALARIE ASHLEY has been the Executive Director of Southeast Ministry since June 2009. She is married to her college sweetheart Thomas and they are owned by two amazing rescue dogs, Milo and Kristy.

March 11 DEL VOSS grew up on a corn and soybean farm in Iowa and somehow found his way out to this different world here in DC. For 23 years, Del helped Parry Carlson coordinate Reformation’s service project, Rebuilding Together. Del is married to Chari and is the father of Daniel and Adam.

March 12 GLORIA KENYON has been a member of Reformation since 2010 and is a regular at the 8:30 service with her son, Ben. They live in Silver Spring with husband/dad, Greg, and dog, Max. Gloria works at the Smithsonian American Art Museum and Renwick Gallery, coordinating public programs. She knits in the approximately 30 minutes of free time she has each week.

March 13 ALESIA FRERICHS lives in Alexandria Virginia with her husband Stephen. Alesia works for Lutheran Services in America, a national network of over 300 Lutheran Social Ministries across the country. Alesia serves on the board of InFaith Foundation and is a former board member of South East Ministry (SEM). Alesia and Stephen have been members of The Lutheran Church of Reformation for many years and have two grown sons Luke and Benjamin.

March 14 MATT AVILES is a Northern Virginia native and lifelong Lutheran who has been a member of Reformation for the past year. He is a huge sports fan who still can't believe the Caps finally won the Stanley Cup last year. He coached swimming for years and enjoys helping people of all ages improve in the water. Matt works in corporate financial planning and is interested in examining the intersection of faith and work.

March 15 SUSAN BLACKMAN was born in Washington, D.C., and raised in Dubuque, Iowa. She got a B.A. from Luther College, and an M.A. and Ph.D. in Foreign Affairs from the University of Virginia. For 30 years, she worked in the International Trade Administration of the Department of Commerce. What first attracted her to Reformation was its choir, in which she sang for many years. She is now happily recruiting Worship Leaders for the 11:00 service. She and her husband Paul live in Arlington.

March 16 CRAIG HAAS is an environmental scientist with the EPA and gets to travel around the country making sure large industrial plants don't do anything bad. That suits him fine because he is happiest when hurtling through the sky in a perforated aluminum tube at 35,000 feet. He's also an early riser, so attending the 8:30 service means he gets to sleep in on Sundays.

March 17 KRISTIN MOLLET is married to Brad Mollet, and mother to Naomi (4), Liam (2) and Jack (1). She was born in Nebraska, and graduated from Boston University with a degree in Art History. She currently works and lives on Capitol Hill. She's got a good heart, but that mouth...

March 18 LINDSAY HOCHBERG has been a member of Reformation for 5 years and currently serves on the Congregational Council and the Fellowship/Hospitality Committee. She hopes everyone has a wonderful and reflective Lenten season this year.

March 19 DIANE KOHN is a Foreign Service Officer currently in training for her next assignment as an Anti-Corruption Officer in Bucharest, Romania. She joined Reformation in 2001 and has served on the Church Council. She continues to sing in the choir whenever possible, including meeting up with the choir when they go on tour. She proudly posts pictures of Sparky the Dog and Moses the Cat on Facebook, and roots for the Washington Capitals and Detroit Tigers at every opportunity.

March 20 HELEN STAUDERMAN lives on Capitol Hill and visits Al at Silverado Memory Care in Alexandria as often as possible. She loves walking to church when the weather is nice!

March 21 CAITLIN JACOBS sings in the Reformation choir and is in her third year on Council. She's been attending Reformation since 2005. She is wife to Paul Staunton, cat-mom to Molly, and editor of a trade magazine.

March 22 EMILY SOLLIE has been a member of Reformation since 2004. She lives in Capitol Hill with her husband Jonathan Ernst and their son Jack-Henry, who will celebrate his first Easter just a few days after his first birthday.

March 23 FLOSSIE HECKMAN (1938-2018) was born in Kutztown, Pennsylvania, moved to Washington, DC in 1960 and worked at the Library of Congress. She was an active member of Reformation, working as the Food Pantry and Front Office Assistant and chair of the Altar Guild. She sang her praises to God as an alto in the choir and now sings in God's eternal choir, with SHOUTS of thanks and praise.

March 24 JULIAN OF NORWICH (1342-1416) was a great Christian mystic and writer of the Middle Ages. She wrote the earliest surviving book in the English language to be written by a woman, *Revelations of Divine Love*. She described herself modestly as 'a simple creature, unlettered'.

March 25 TED STEEGE lives in College Park, MD, with his spouse Eva, a transitional pastor at Our Redeemer in Washington. Born in New York, he served 8 years in parishes, 10 years in public policy in Wisconsin, and 8 years with a human rights organization in Washington.

March 26 LARRY HARTMANN is retired from 30 years of federal government service as a scientist, science manager, and interagency liaison with the Forest Service and National Park Service, and now lives in Washington D.C. He has attended the Reformation Church for six years, and helps out behind the scenes as the Editor of From Ashes to Easter and as a teller. He has an imaginary cat named Pete, because pets are not permitted in his apartment building.

March 27 ELIZABETH TUCKERMANTY has been a member of Reformation since 1980. She is on the Spiritual Growth Committee, Altar Guild, a reader and an assisting minister occasionally. She is involved in the small group "Seeking Serenity." Her favorite roles in life currently are being "Amma" to her three grandchildren and wife to Dale Manty.

March 28 MEL ANTONEN, a member of Reformation since 1986, grew up going to a Lutheran church in Lake Norden, S.D., 13 miles from where Pastor Wanda McNeil served her last congregation. Mel and his wife, Lisa, a photographer, have a son, Emmett, 12, and live on the Hill.

March 29 NANCY LLOYD PFAHL, a member of Reformation for more than a decade, moved to Washington, DC from Chicago. She serves as a Reader, an alto in the choir, and a member of Music, Worship, and the Arts. In the past she enjoyed serving as a member of Council and Co-Chairperson of the 140th Anniversary Committee. Her career in higher education led her to become an international higher education consultant.

March 30 DAN O'BRIEN is just a person from New Paltz, New York who loves exploring the outdoors through activities like biking, sailing, skiing, hiking, walking, swimming, etc. with his friends and his amazing partner, Jenna Jablonski. He finds the best time to pray is while swimming laps, biking, or taking the metro to work.

March 31 VALERIE ANNA PLATZ has been a member of Church of the Reformation for over 30 years. She sings in the choir and participates in the Property Committee. Valerie lives in Arlington, Virginia. Her daughter, Elena, lives with her.

April 1 JUDITH MANGUBAT is a pet lover, reader, knitter, and a regular presence at 8:30 worship service. She is addicted to SciShow, WTOP, pizza, acrostics and crossword puzzles. She is also a test planning engineer in U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

April 2 CAROL WIMMER is a biblical researcher and scholar from Tulsa, Oklahoma. She hopes her research helps to reorient the focus of the collective human spirit. Ms. Wimmer writes from a visionary perspective which offers new spiritual insights for people of faith. She enjoys communing with nature.

April 3 PAM COMMERFORD is an ‘empty nester’ living in this great bubble we call the DMV. She moved a little closer to center this year, from Waldorf MD to Arlington VA and loves her new commute to church and work using public transportation.

April 4 PHILIP W. MOELLER, PhD., the son of a Lutheran Pastor, graduated from St. Olaf College and has both a M.A. and Ph.D. in International Relations and Development. He has specialized in institutional development as a key to sustainable international development, working with issues of governance, public ownership, ethics, social and environmental impact assessment, and inclusivity and serving the State Department, USAID, UNDP, the Asian Development Bank, and the World Bank. He has served on the Board of the Global Missions Division of the ELCA, and in 2017 was awarded a bronze medal for 50 years of International Service by Johns Hopkins University. He chairs the Worship, Music and Arts Committee at Reformation.

April 5 JULIE HASLER is a long time member of Reformation (since about 1990) and is serving on the Council in the third year of her term. She has been working in D.C. since 1989 and currently works in government affairs for a medical device manufacturing company. Julie is a member of the Capitol Hill Tennis Club and resides in Arlington, Virginia.

April 6 JULIE SCOFIELD is a Full-Time-Mom with three children: Hannah, Trevor and Justin. When not being Mom, Julie is an active volunteer with school, church and scouts.

April 7 SISTER MARY FROHLICH, RSCJ is a Religious of the Sacred Heart who has been on the faculty of Catholic Theological Union since 1993. She is a noted scholar of the Carmelite spirituality and an active participant in the development of Spirituality as a disciple and eco-spirituality. She enjoys gardening, hiking, and leading outdoor retreats.

April 8 PORTICO BENEFIT SERVICES provides retirement, healthy, and related benefit and services to enhance the well-being of those who serve through the ELCA and other faith-based organizations.

April 9 JOEL WORKIN (1961-1995) was born in Fargo, ND and received his Master of Divinity from Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary. A collection of Joel's articles and sermons, of which today's reflection came from, is entitled *Dear God, I'm Gay - Thank You!*

April 10 ROGER DAHLIN was privileged to serve as the Interim Senior Pastor at Reformation Church for one and one-half years precisely at the time that the new Millennium began in the year 2000. That makes him pretty old!

April 11 KATIE MORRISON and her husband Aaron have been worshipping at Reformation since Fall 2013. Katie is from Cary, NC and works as a content editor for an accreditation agency for private, postsecondary institutions. When she is not chasing after Isla, her mobile little one, and catching up on work (and sleep), she enjoys running, reading and endless Netflix-watching.

April 12 SARAH STAUDERMAN likes to play board and card games with her family, go on walks with Wilbur the dog, and help Reformation achieve its restoration and fundraising goals by sitting on campaign and construction committees. Sarah works at the Smithsonian's Hirshhorn Museum.

April 13 WAYNE KRUMWIEDE enlisted in the Army Air Corps in 1946 at age 17. He married Grace Keller in 1958 while at the Embassy in Belgrade, Yugoslavia. In 1966 received a Bachelor's degree in Business from the University of Maryland. He retired from the Air Force in 1968, then worked as a budget officer with the Coast Guard from 1970 to 1986 when he retired. Wayne has attended Reformation since 1999.

April 14 ADALBERT-GAUTIER HAMMAN (1910-2000) was a French Franciscan priest. His main achievement was the publication of nearly one hundred translations of patristic texts in French, in the collection known as *'Pères dans la Foi'*. His liturgical and social writings contributed to the mental climate of the second Vatican Council.

April 15 KATIE OSWEILER is a big fan of Reformation. She spent a few years on Capitol Hill before moving to Brussels, Belgium and while she's having a blast in Europe, she does miss you all dearly. She is currently serving an Episcopal Church in Belgium and is trying to figure out where to go next when her husband, Victor, retires from the military in 2020. The world is our stage...I know that's not the saying but I don't like oysters.

April 16 AL SWINGLE, a retired Lutheran pastor, perceives the Christian life as a journey along the path to greater faithfulness. He and his wife Nancy live on Capitol Hill and have been members of Reformation since 2005.

April 17 MATT FUEHRMEYER and his wife, Liz Baden, have been Reformation members since 2009. Liz works at the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development at NIH and Matt works at a communications firm. They live in Silver Spring with their daughter, Hannah.

April 18 JULIETTE JONES and her husband Marvin have been members of Reformation for over 25 years, where their four children were baptized and confirmed.

April 19 PASTOR BEN HOGUE was ordained in October of last year and is grateful to serve alongside the members of Reformation.

April 20 PASTOR LISA HUFFORD oversees children's education, caring ministry, and pastoral care for our congregation.

April 21 PASTOR MICHAEL WILKER has served as Reformation's lead since October 2011. He enjoys sharing poetry, meals, and the good earth.

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