From Ashes to Easter

Forgive Us

Renew Us

Lead Us

Lutheran Church of the Reformation

Lent 2020
From Ashes to Easter
The Meditations of our Hearts

By Members & Friends of this Community

LUTHERAN CHURCH OF THE REFORMATION

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Worship Times at
Lutheran Church of the Reformation

**Ash Wednesday**
February 26, 2020
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 5 - April 2) at 6:30 p.m.

**Holy Week Services**
Information can be found at www.ReformationDC.org

**Easter Morning**
April 12, 2020
8:30 a.m. & 11:00 a.m.
*Easter Morning Brunch at 10 a.m.*

*You are welcome here!*
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,  
Forgive me  
Renew me  
and Lead me  
In all that I do, in all that I say, in all that I am. Amen.*

**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.
February 26
Ash Wednesday
Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Matthew 6:21

We all want our work to be noticed. We want to know that someone has seen our struggle, our efforts, the time and energy we’ve put in to making something the best it can be. And there are times when that work is invisible, and it hurts that no one saw. These verses remind us that God sees, and God cares. In fact, God would prefer us to do our work because it is the right thing to do, not because of the reward or attention it brings us.

Today, Ash Wednesday, we go about with a bold cross on our foreheads, marking us as members of Christ’s community. We also begin our Lenten fast, seeking out God in a way that is meaningful to us through a change in our behavior. Here, Jesus implores us to do this with the goal of setting our own hearts right. It does not matter what our neighbor is doing, what our neighbor thinks, but rather we are to take care of our own hearts, for that is where God will meet us.

Jesus, we ask you to be with us on our Lenten journey. May our fast be focused on you, may our hearts turn to you. Bless us on our way that we may show your love to all whom we meet. Amen.

Gloria Kenyon
Bricks Without Straw

“.And the word of the Lord came unto Jonah.”

It is rather difficult to separate this chapter from the rest of the short book of Jonah. Throughout this book the word of God keeps coming to Jonah. We are not sure if this is in dreams or if Jonah is awake and hears God’s voice speaking to him. Jonah is resistant to carrying out God’s instructions, which is key to his being swallowed up by the great fish in Chapter 2, a story we all know from Sunday School. Here we see God’s word coming again. This time Jonah follows the instructions, but then is displeased when the people of Nineveh repent, fast, and put on sackcloth. Jonah’s initial reluctance to go to the city and then his anger at the city for having taken God’s message to heart reveal Jonah’s failure to understand his intended role. He is to serve God, not himself.

I fear that all too often we are like Jonah. What does it mean to be God’s hands? We do not usually have the word of God coming to us as directly as it did for Jonah, but we do have guidance in the words of Jesus. Do we let our ego get in the way or stick to our preferred way to serve when God has other needs? There is a lesson here for us, one that urges us to open our hearts to God so we may assist the path he intends for creation.

Creative God, let neither our ears nor our hearts be closed to the directions you would give us as your servants. Let our hands always be ready to serve creation as you intend it to unfold. Give us strength to serve you rightly. Amen.

Philip Moeller
Spiritual Gifts and God's Righteousness

(Originally printed in FATE 2003)

In these verses, Paul focuses on two main points: spiritual gifts and righteousness from God. First, Paul longs to see the people in Rome so that he may give them a spiritual gift. Only the Holy Spirit can give spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:11), but human beings can serve to confirm the Spirit’s work in others by announcing or acknowledging their spiritual gifts. Most likely, Paul wants to give gifts of grace such as words of insight and deeds of kindness. Then both he and the people will be encouraged by each other’s faith.

Secondly, Paul is eager to preach the gospel because it is the power of God to save everyone who believe and because the righteousness from God is revealed. There are times when we sin. How can we have the right relationship with God? In Jesus, God has taken the steps necessary to make the relationship right. In Jesus, God took upon the punishment we deserve when we sin. On the cross, Jesus’ life was given in exchange for ours. Through confession, sincere repentance, and by faith, we can accept the gift of God’s grace.

O Great and Awesome God, thank you for your indescribable gift of grace. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Flossie Heckman (1938-2018)
Cast Me Not Away

“Cast me not away from your presence and take not Your Holy Spirit from me.”
Psalm 51:11

Remember when you were a child and you did something you knew you weren’t supposed to do (stole a cookie from the jar; copied someone’s homework; broke your sibling’s favorite toy)? You know you’ve done wrong; the dread of discovery looms overhead. As David wrote, “I know my transgressions and my sin is ever before me (v. 3).” That dread may have led to more sin, lying or passing blame, as you tried to escape punishment. You may have avoided your parents, staying quiet and out of sight.

But, for me at least, the moment of truth was inevitable. Seemingly God-like in her perceptiveness, my mom could always tell when something was up and soon I’d tearfully admit to my latest wrongdoing. I remember in those times the complicated feeling of wanting to escape from my mom and punishment while simultaneously wanting her, needing her, to comfort me.

It can be similar as adults confessing our sins to God. We may try to hide what we’ve done from God. We may talk with God less or avoid Godly interactions, hoping no one will find out that we’ve sinned, that we’ve been human! Eventually, though, we will face God and feel that push and pull. We want to run from God’s scrutiny while, like David, plead, “Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me (v. 11).” Luckily, our God is one of “steadfast love” and “abundant mercy.” God forgives us time and again and does not take the Holy Spirit from us but rather renews and strengthens It so that the Spirit can guide us on the right paths.

Lord, help us to turn to You with our transgressions so we can receive Your forgiveness, be renewed in the Holy Spirit, and be led on the righteous paths you have planned for us. Amen.

Briana Widner
March 1 Sunday Matthew 4:1-11

Satan Smackdown!

“Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.” Matthew 4:10

Jesus is ravenous in today’s lesson. He has just spent 40 days in the wilderness without any food. He would probably eat his disciples at this point but fortunately for everyone concerned, Jesus is alone. And then he isn’t. The tempter arrives on the scene, spots a weak point, and suggests to Jesus that he turn stones into bread so he can eat. Interestingly, Jesus doesn’t counter by responding directly to the suggestion that he eat, but by saying essentially that bread isn’t the most important thing in life. God’s word is.

The tempter, now named as the devil, tries something else. “Okay, Jesus, prove to me, the world, and maybe even yourself that you are the Son of God.” Jesus answers this temptation more directly. The devil reached into Scripture to come up with his temptation, and Jesus counters by reaching into Scripture himself, saying, “Nope. I’m not going to do stupid things in order to make God save me.”

Finally, the devil says that he will give Jesus the whole world if Jesus will just acknowledge the devil as the real ruler. Now comes the smack as Jesus replies with the ultimate putdown. “Satan, you are just not worth my time. Be somewhere else. I’ve got a real Lord to worship.”

We may not meet the devil in person tempting us to stray, but we certainly face our own temptations. Maybe the best way to deal with them is to smack them down and say with Jesus, “Temptation, I have wasted too much time on you. I’m going to put my time to better use by worshipping God.”

Forgiving God, temptations arrive daily, from both without and within. Open our eyes and give us wisdom to see that they are not worth our time. Turn us back to face You and move us to spend our time in Your service. Amen.

Craig Hass
1 Kings 19:1-12

A Low Whisper

11 And he said, “Go out and stand on the mount before the Lord.” And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind tore the mountains and broke in pieces the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. And after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. 12 And after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire the sound of a low whisper. A low whisper, some versions even translate it “a sound of sheer silence”. Elijah found himself at Mount Horeb the same mountain where God had appeared to Moses and had given him the Ten Commandments. He had a lot going on in his life having just defeated Baal’s prophets and then been forced to run for his life as a result. He was led to Mount Horeb by an angel who fed him the whole way. At this point, Elijah must have been expecting some big gesture from God to show him what was next. And big gestures came, but God wasn’t in them. God was in a whisper, in a sound of sheer silence. How did Elijah know to wait and to listen when he was seeking God so desperately?

I’ve heard God in whispers. They’ve been the clearest messages I’ve received from him, but I still find it hard to listen. I want big gestures and for things to be spelled out for me in my time. Instead God works through a feeling of calm or a song coming on at the right time. You never know when God is going to speak to you or where he is going to lead you. All you can do is listen and be ready to respond. That’s my goal for Lent this year, to slow down and just listen, and to see where it leads.

Lord God, thank you for your whispers. Our lives are hectic and our society loud. We seek you, but we often don’t have the patience to wait for your response. Help us during this Lenten season to find time to pause and reflect, to practice listening, so we know when you’re speaking in a sound of sheer silence.

Matt Aviles
March 3

**Hebrews 4:14-5:10**

*Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. 4:16*

**Forgive Us**

Lord, forgive us for our sins. Especially our sin of omission. When reflecting on my sins, I can go down the list of all the common things one would seek forgiveness, but sin of omission is one that I tend to overlook. I am sure I am not alone. Please forgive me for this.

**Renew us**

I have had ups and downs in my life. Things didn’t always turn out the way I had expected, yet every day, with HIS grace and with the love and support of my family and friends, I am able to start over. The lack of faith I had in myself yesterday doesn’t have to carry over into today. I can learn from yesterday, live today and plan for tomorrow. At the end of the day, if I fall short, I can and I will start over.

**Lead us**

With God’s grace, I have found the strength and courage to openly share my faith with my children, neighbors, co-workers and strangers. I don’t consider myself an evangelist, but my self-confidence and trust that HE will give me the words when sharing a prayer for a dying friend and another co-worker who is suffering has been surprising and very meaningful to me.

*Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. (Hebrews 4:16)*

Del Voss
March  4           Wednesday           Psalm 32

Whoa, David! What did you do, Buddy?!

_Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered._
_Blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit._
_I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,” and you forgave the iniquity of my sin._
_I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you._

Psalm 32, versus 1, 2, 5, and 8

In Psalm 32, David reflects that when he kept silent about his sins, he was physically ill with the weight of guilt for his sins. Once David confessed his sins to the Lord, the Lord forgave his sins and the Lord guides David to be righteous. David rejoiced: Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.

What did David do that resulted in him being ill with guilt – how many commandments went down? I’m guessing that it had something to do with Bathsheba and Uriah. I stumbled upon a discussion of sin in quora.com. Al Neworth says that all sins are covered (like 600+ noted in the Bible), by two of the Big 10: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy strength and with all thy mind.” (Then you will not commit idolatry, take His name in vain, or seek to break His laws.) And “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” (Then you’re not going to commit murder, lie about your neighbor, steal, or commit adultery.) Al says that God’s laws are intended to reveal that even the minutiae of each person’s life invariably break God’s law in some way at least once a day.

We can’t know the blessing of the Lord’s forgiveness until we have known the guilt of sin. I don’t know all that comprises my “daily sinning,” but I do know to confess my sin to the Lord daily, that I am forgiven, and I trust that God will guide me forward to do better.

_Lord, hear my prayer of confession, for the things that I did, and the things that I left undone. Amen._

Karen Carlson
March  5        Thursday        Isaiah 51:1-3

Forgive us, Renew us, Lead us

“Listen to me, you that pursue righteousness, you that seek the Lord. Look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug. 2 Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you; for he was but one when I called him, but I blessed him and made him many. 3 For the Lord will comfort Zion; he will comfort all her waste places, and will make her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the voice of song”.

In this text the Lord is immediately sending a command to his people, “Listen to me”. Chapter 51 gives this command three different times, which alludes to God’s people ignoring him. God is asking his people to look to what he has provided in the past to them now, if they will listen. God is providing assurance in a way to us through this passage by calling Abraham alone. God is showing that he can call a single person to do his work and in return show many his enduring love and compassion. Being reminded that each person in the kingdom of God is given the opportunity to be forgiven, renewed and led with no ulterior motives like Abraham and Sarah through their faith. We can all benefit from the work of God in other fellow Christian brothers and sisters, when we see and hear God’s good works and news through others like which was heard through Abraham and Sarah. In this specific text our faith grows and becomes a stronger fortress that we relish in and continue to give praise and thanks to God.

Dear Lord God, during this time of Lent I encourage all of us as followers of the Cross to take an extra moment to Listen and reflect on your words, teaching and fellowship you show each of us every day. A constant reminder of your sacrifice given to us so that we all can live in eternal Joy and Love with you. “Remembering you are dust and to dust you shall return” Amen

Jon Dahl
March 6 Friday Romans 3:21-31

Justified by Faith

For we hold that a person is justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the law.
Romans 3:28

Reading the letters from Paul, I love to observe the process of Paul himself as he develops his own understanding of who God is, what God is up to, what it all means. What does it mean that the crucified and risen Christ, foolish as the story might seem, is central to our faith?

Paul did not have the Gospels to inform him. There was no such thing as the Apostles’ Creed. Instead, Paul had his knowledge of the Hebrew scriptures, that stunning experience on the road to Damascus, the first-hand accounts of some of the apostles, and now the phenomenon that this foolish story of the cross had galvanized countless people all over Asia Minor and the Mediterranean, including cosmopolitan Rome.

Here, Paul is considering the meaning of faith, so central to the teachings of Martin Luther. The word “faith” appears eight times in this passage. Sometimes the word can mean either our own faith, or the faithfulness of Christ.

The idea of faith used to be a problem for me. Jesus often declared that someone’s faith has made them whole. “I will never have enough faith for that,” I thought, until I understood that I had enough faith, and that faith itself is a gift from God. Who am I to disparage it?

Through faith in Christ, Paul says, I am justified. Not just “forgiven” but “justified,” which is much more powerful. I am made right with God. Lined right up with God. Weak as I am, and feeble my faith – I am just fine with God, always have been and always will be.

Gracious Lord, thank you for your gift of faith. Amen

Eva Steege
March 7 Saturday Psalm 121

Our soul stands in God

On a terrifying day in 14th century England, Jesus appeared to a young woman on her deathbed. In a series of mystical visions that shook Julian of Norwich to her core, she saw in body and spirit the suffering and triumphant Christ, who assured her of God’s protection. It might reassure the doubting Thomas in us all to experience first-hand a radiant Christ in heaven, seated by the right hand of the Father. Why can’t I have the assurance Julian has? we ask. Why can’t I have “proof” of the divine power and might that we sing about every Sunday? These are the same pained questions that the Disciples themselves struggled with 2,000 years ago.

But we don’t need to see God in the flesh to know that He is our keeper, as Psalm 121 tells us, that He leads us into forgiveness and renewal. As long as “I lift my eyes up to the hills,” I know that God is watching over me. As long as I know in my soul that He “will neither slumber nor sleep” even as I cry out, even as I mourn, I know that he will not let my “foot be moved.” All I have to do is let Him do His work, forevermore.

After she recovered, Julian of Norwich locked herself in a church cell for decades to search for the deeper meaning of what God revealed to her. Her first-hand experience of Christ was spectacular and special, but she says it revealed nothing new: “Our soul sits in God in true rest, and our soul stands in God in sure strength, and our soul is naturally rooted in God in endless love.”

O God, help us let You live within each of us and protect us. Amen.

Will Anderson
March 8 Sunday John 3:1-17

Where do we go from here?

One day, one night, a juror came to Jesus and he wanted to know what he could do to be saved. Jesus didn't get bogged down on the kind of isolated approach of what you shouldn't do. Jesus didn't say, “Now Nicodemus, you must stop lying.” He didn't say, “Nicodemus, now you must not commit adultery.” He didn't say, “Now Nicodemus, you must stop cheating if you are doing that.” He didn't say, “Nicodemus, you must stop drinking liquor if you are doing that excessively.” He said something altogether different, because Jesus realized something basic: that if a man will lie, he will steal. And if a man will steal, he will kill. So instead of just getting bogged down on one thing, Jesus looked at him and said, “Nicodemus, you must be born again.”

America, you must be born again! In other words, Your whole structure must be changed. A nation that will keep people in slavery for 244 years will “thingify” them and make them things. And therefore, they will exploit them and poor people generally economically. And a nation that will exploit economically will have to have foreign investments and everything else, and it will have to use its military might to protect them. All of these problems are tied together.

And I must confess, my friends, that the road ahead will not always be smooth. There will still be rocky places of frustration and meandering points of bewilderment. There will be inevitable setbacks here and there. And there will be those moments when the buoyancy of hope will be transformed into the fatigue of despair. Our dreams will sometimes be shattered and our ethereal hopes blasted. But difficult and painful as it is, we must walk on in the days ahead with an audacious faith in the future….

When our days become dreary with low-hovering clouds of despair, and when our nights become darker than a thousand midnights, let us remember that there is a creative force in this universe working to pull down the gigantic mountains of evil, a power that is able to make a way out of no way and transform dark yesterdays into bright tomorrows. Let us realize that the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.

God, forgive us, renew us, and lead us to have audacious faith in the future. Amen

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
March 9        Monday        Numbers 21:4-9

Fiery Serpents

"Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness?"

The Book of Numbers tells us that when Moses led the people of Israel out of Egypt, they subsisted in the wilderness with little food and water. This went on for forty years, and unhappily the people complained bitterly.

In response, the Lord sent serpents, whose bite caused inflammation or, in some cases, even death. When the Israelites despaired, the Lord had Moses create a serpent of bronze that the people could look upon and be cured.

Putting these fiery serpents into a contemporary context, I think of cancer. In the past several years, I have lost three close friends to that dreaded disease: my best friend from undergraduate school at Luther College, my best friend from graduate school at the University of Virginia, and my best friend at the Department of Commerce in Washington. I have often felt as though God were punishing me.

But this passage from Numbers makes it clear that the Lord is always with me. He will always find a way to rescue, to comfort, and to save me.

Dear Lord, I realize that there are times when we have to contend with fiery serpents in our lives. Help us recognize that You will always be there to rescue, comfort, and save us. Amen.

Susan Blackman (1942-2020)

Editor's note: Susan died about two weeks after this devotion was submitted. She always requested an Old Testament passage so that she could create a passage with her husband Paul, who was Jewish. God, we give you thanks for the life and ministry of our dear sister Susan and we release her to your mighty keeping and light eternal. Amen.
Faith Above All

Who is most worthy of God’s love and forgiveness? Who is fit to be called righteous? Is it the energetic social worker who guides the poor to life-sustaining services? The low-paid teacher who pours her heart into the nurturing of children? The smiling pastor who remains undaunted in the face of any tragedy? The environmental warrior who recycles old bikes for carless commuters? The exhausted nurse who rushes from patient to patient to offer comfort?

Or perhaps it could be the jerk marching past the homeless toward his SUV, glued to his phone, oblivious to the desperate faces in his wake. In Romans, St. Paul reminds us that it is faith and not obedience to God’s law that earns someone the blessing of God’s forgiveness.

“It was not through law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith.”

This is a relief and a comfort to sinners like me. It’s also a reminder of how God ignores the distinctions that seem to matter so much to us humans. When we think we can look around and determine who belongs within God’s family and who does not, we forget that God is foremost concerned with faithfulness, not works of righteousness. But often, as per His beautiful plan, it is those who are faithful and who feel indebted for God’s blessing who go on to try to live righteously.

Dear God,

It is an awesome demonstration of your love that you can overlook so many of my sins, shortcomings, and undone deeds and still offer a promise of salvation. May the blessing you give so freely in turn lead me—renewed—to live with righteousness. I pledge my faith in you forever.

Chad Lorenz
March 11  Wednesday  Psalm 128

Blessed are you who reverence
the Beloved, who walk in Love’s way!
You radiate an inner joy
and peace where’er you go;
Compassion draws you to
The gates of those in need.

There are a few people you encounter in life who walk in “love’s way.”
They radiate an “inner joy and peace.” They are interested in people and
are interesting to people. They can find things in common with everyone
they meet and have good conversations. Their hearts and behavior radiate
acceptance, not judgment. They allow people to be themselves and
celebrate them for their individuality! They are truly full of reverence for
the Beloved.

I am lucky to have such people in my social circle. They have devoted
themselves to creating welcoming homes to over 40 refugee families who
come to our country with nothing. We all get together to cook, to sing, to
write and to meditate. We welcome little ones into our circle and celebrate
them as well. How lucky I am!

As I settle down in my quiet time to pray, I ask for God to temper my less
desirable traits. I ask for help in doing that which is for the highest good
of all. I look for ways to give of myself, as I have been wonderfully blest
with such a richness in friends and family. I feel God’s touch as I am
nudged away from selfishness and toward being a more giving person and
in these prayers, I feel hope and renewal.

Dear Beloved,
Help me to be a person who walks in love’s way. Help me to feel the peace that passes
all understanding! Help me be patient and accepting of all people. Help me reverence the
Beloved.

Amen

Liz Tuckermannty
Grumble, Grumble, Grumble

“If only we had died by the Lord’s hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death.” -- whole Israelite community

“Wow. Pouting and running away actually worked. I must say, that may not be a lesson you want to reinforce with me.” -- Sheldon Cooper

Is “the squeaky wheel gets the grease” the model God really wants to go on? As our sitcom character notes, this might not be the right lesson to take home.

Yes, God listens to our prayers. God listens to our grumbles. God listens to our songs of praise (and rejoices even when we are out of tune or awkwardly switch between harmony and melody). God hears our pleas whatever form they take and this is not an encouragement for more grumbling. Rather, it might be a sign that God is waiting to listen, even in a less preferred form of communication.

God so greatly wants to be in conversation with us on a frequent, regular basis that God will listen in any form. The last time a co-worker grumbled to me, I could not wait to get out of the conversation, yet God seems wanting to hang on our every word.

We are blessed that God forgave the Israelites for grumbling, and forgives us for our grumbling. We are blessed that God listens and provides. It will not always be manna from heaven, it will not always be literally what we request.

God renewed the Israelites with manna and quail. God renews us in various ways. For me, an hour in church can be a sanctuary from the whirlwind of life around me. Yet I rarely take more time out of my week to be in conversation with God. My Lenten discipline will be to spend more time in conversation with God – and not in the form of grumbling.

God, that you for always being willing to listen to us. Remind us (again and again) to be in conversation with you. Amen.

Andy Weaver
Our Long Table

“In Him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.”

“When you have more than you need, build a bigger table not a higher fence.” This is a reminder to share our abundance, and if you're reading into it from a political point of view, a statement against a border wall. Paul’s letter to the Ephesians was an effort to address controversy and divides in the nascent Christian community just as large as our society’s current divides. Though his letter was to a small faith community, the cultural, legal, and racial divides were just as stark as any we face today. That’s why Paul’s address to the Gentiles starts by saying, “Yes, you are included.” Christ’s peace extends to you because Jesus’s broken body shredded the law, destroyed barriers, and took down walls. To the Jewish Christ-followers: “You are building something new.” They and the disciples and teachers that came before them were building on Christ’s foundation. The community builds something new from the broken-down walls by welcoming Christ’s peace. They create a dwelling for God.

Are we creating a dwelling for God in our Christian communities? Are we breaking down walls? Are we building a bigger table or just making more and longer fencing? Does God dwell in our “building?” The more authentic connections we make with each other in our congregation, the more inviting to others we become. The more authentically we express the accepting, reconciling love of Jesus in the world, the grander and more inviting the table.

We pray that artificial barriers are broken today through Christ’s peace. Help us to love our neighbors and to always invite the “other” to dwell with us in you. Amen.

Ivy Finkenstadt
Hearing the Call to Rest

*Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts . . . . Psalm 95:8a*

I love this psalm. It invites us to sing for joy and shout aloud to the One who brings life and love to the whole universe.

But then the psalmist warns us, when we hear the voice of God, not to “harden our hearts” as we did in the wilderness, when our ancestors allowed a life-threatening crisis to blind them to the continuing presence of the Holy One who has done such great things for us.

I hear the voice of God in the cry of the oppressed, and even in the plight of our planet, where the actions of our own species threaten the very basis of life. I hear the call of God to help get the good creation back. But things seem to get worse, and I sometimes wonder if God called us forth from chaos simply to die of the hunger for justice. I could go on and on.

But “Stop! Just stop!” In our existential crisis, have we once again forgotten the love of God that has brought us here and given us all that we have and are?

I listen once more. We are not called to save the world but invited to sing with joy and shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation. Our promised destination is not some dream of ours, but eternal rest with God, beginning now and strengthening us for the journey.

Recall St. Augustine’s prayer to the Beloved: *You made us for Yourself, and our heart is restless till we rest in You.*

Ted Steege
Living Water

So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people, “Come, see…” John 4:28-29

There is so much we do not know about the Samaritan woman at the well. We don’t know her name, nor her age. Was she a careless young seductress, or was she a weary matron who had survived five husbands? Our imaginations run wild; but focusing on the woman’s marital status distracts us from her rich spiritual encounter with Jesus beside Jacob’s well.

The woman heard Jesus’ offer of living water, the spring of water welling up to eternal life. Was he talking about some magical liquid? She parlayed, “Give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw.” And then a shift took place in their conversation, changing from wary negotiation to trust and belief. Jesus spoke to her of worshiping the Father in spirit and truth. He revealed to the woman that he is the Messiah, the Christ. And the woman believed him. Then she left her water jar.

Why would a woman living in an arid land leave her water jar? Was she careless or forgetful? Leaving such a valuable and necessary household item meant taking the risk of it being stolen or broken; in any case, she’d have to walk back again to the well to retrieve it.

I think the nameless woman left her water jar as an act of generosity and hospitality to Jesus and his followers. Leaving her water jar meant that they could drink while they rested. Moreover, she needed no jar to carry living water. She ran to testify to the people of the town, and they came out to hear him.

The woman at the well should be counted among Jesus’ first apostles. In this parallel story to the fishermen who left their boats, the woman abandoned her water jar. Having heard Jesus’ invitation to living water, she immediately went to share the good news.

Lord God, we echo the words of the Samaritan woman at the well, asking you for living water so that we may not thirst. Strengthen our belief and inspire us to share the good news. Amen.

Valerie Platz
Three Little Questions

When I was little, my mom would ask me three questions every night when she tucked me into bed. They were the same questions her dad, my grandfather, a Lutheran pastor, would ask her. “Whose child are you?” “God’s child.” “When did you become God’s child?” “When I was baptized.” “Why did God make you his child?” “To be his helper.”

My mom doesn’t tuck me in anymore, but every now and then I think about those three little questions, especially the last one. To be his helper. What does that mean? What does that look like? I’m still not sure of the answer.

But I think I get a little closer when I read a story like the one of Rebekah. Abraham’s servant has been travelling far and wide in search of a wife for Isaac. He’s hot and tired and thirsty until finally he says a prayer asking God to show him Isaac’s future wife so his journey can end.

God answers his prayer. Rebekah comes to the well where he’s waiting and, without question, brings water to him and his camels and invites him into her home to stay the night – a complete stranger!

So what does this tell us about what it means to be God’s helper? Maybe it means helping strangers when they need it without asking why. Maybe it means inviting others into the most intimate parts of our lives. Maybe it means trying to be a little bit more like Rebekah.

LORD,
Help us be your answer to the prayers of others. As we go along this Lenten journey, make us disciples to do your work in the world. Remind us that we are your children, forgiven and loved, and help us share that unconditional love with others.
Amen.

Erich Lange
Cloud, Sea, All, Same

For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ.

Cloud, sea, all, same. These four words jump out at me as I read my assigned passage. Moses parting the waters is such a famous scene. I think of the familiar pictures in children's bibles, the numerous stained-glass windows that tell the story in churches and cathedrals and Charlton Heston majestically parting the waters in The Ten Commandments. All show the magnitude of the event - the huge sea walls and the dark formidable sky. But this time as I re-read the verse the words that really catch my attention are the words all and same. They were all baptized, they all ate and drank from the same spiritual drink.

I find myself feeling blessed by the strength of the passage – not just the miracle of escape under the clouds and between the parted seawater, but by the promise and miracle that we are all welcomed at God's table. We are all welcome – that is the true miracle of faith that is hard to depict in art and like all miracles pretty hard to realize.

I find myself praying for the strength, self-awareness, acceptance, forgiveness and courage to play whatever small role I can play in bearing to the witness to this true miracle - all are welcome.

God, give me strength, self-awareness, acceptance, forgiveness, and courage to play whatever small role I can in bearing the witness to the true miracle: all are welcome. Amen

Alesia Frerichs
Led to sing

Sing for joy to God our strength;  
shout aloud to the God of Jacob!

When I read Life Together by Dietrich Bonhoeffer I disagreed with his assessment of assembly singing. According to Bonhoeffer, congregational singing should be conducted absolutely uniformly. He chastised some for “swaggering, swelling, blaring” and others for being timid non-singers who avoid singing out of “some mood.” As a person who loves to sing, and who feels the prayer of love and praise in song, I resent a critique that I’m only interested in the “glory” of my own voice. His petty complaint is less than generous to the great variety of singing that the Psalmist commends.

In contrast, Martin Luther exhorted Reformers to practice textured and tonal assembly singing as a foundational worship practice.

At every opportunity Luther and his colleagues were concerned to get the whole congregation—not just part of it—involved in the singing, teaching them of the need to sing the scriptural Word, giving them the texts and melodies to sing, and supplying the musical means by which an antiphony of unison and harmony graced their services of worship.

[Robin A. Leaver (2017) The Whole Church Sings: Congregational Singing in Luther's Wittenberg]

This leads me to Psalm 81, which for all it says about justice, history, and power, mostly starts by saying SING. SING the psalms, SING because God commanded it and made a covenant around it. Let your Lenten practice include singing this psalm to any little tune you might make up and clapping your hands to any beat that you desire.

Give me joy in exuberant singing of your word God our sustainer, that I might know you with all my being!

Sarah Stauderman
What about the Bleating Sheep?

God’s requirement of Saul to destroy the Amalekites is a hard one for my 21st century ears to hear. Looking for meaning, I find a commentary by 17th century scholar Matthew Henry dense, but helpful: “Samuel, in God’s name, solemnly requires Saul to be obedient to the command of God, and plainly intimates that he was now about to put him upon a trial.”

Saul does what God commanded, ridding the world of the evil Amalekites—really?

Actually, he destroys all but their leader and keeps their oxen and sheep for himself. Then he smarmily praises Samuel, saying “Blessed be thou of the Lord, for thou sendest me upon a good errand, in which I have had great success.”

Samuel answers, “What means then the bleating of the sheep?”

Turns out Saul’s partial obedience to God is not obedience at all, and it’s made worse by his stealing the sheep and oxen and boasting of his victory.

Meanwhile, Samuel laments that Saul has forfeited God’s favor, and he spends a whole night crying and interceding for him.

Henry says, “God repented that he had given Saul the kingdom and the honour and power that belonged to it, but he never repented that he had given any man wisdom and grace.” And the 17th century scholar adds: “Note, it is no new thing for the protestations of hypocrites to be contradicted and disproved by the most plain and undeniable evidence.”

Suddenly it all sounds very 21st century.

And while it would be easy to point fingers at those hypocrites, I find myself looking at my own fingertips when I realize how far I am from doing justice, loving kindness, and walking humbly with God.

_Dear Lord, thank you for the witness of the bleating sheep; teach us to do your loving will._ Amen

Kathryn Tobias
Living with Faith and Courage

This Lenten season is another time for us to think about our life with God and why we believe that Christ is our Lord and Savior and why we know that when we sincerely ask Jesus to forgive our sins, they will be forgiven.

As a believer of Christ, Paul writes in EPHESIANS 5 about us being imitators of God and that we should live a life of love. Also, he tells us what we should be doing and what we should not be doing in our daily lives. In other words, being imitators of God, we should be moral, not lie, not cheat or deceive anyone, not utter obscenities or coarse jokes.

In Matthew 5-15, Jesus in his Sermon on the Mount tells us that we should live above reproach indicating that our actions reflect our faith. We have seen many examples, unfortunately, of people in high places, particularly in politics, who have shown their greedy, immoral, dark side. At the same time, we have seen people stand up for their religious convictions. By their actions, they have lived their faith and shown they are even willing to be persecuted for it. As believers, we must support each other and pray that those who live in darkness will find the light of Jesus Christ. It is never too late to be forgiven.

According to Paul, we should be filled with thanksgiving and praise God daily—silently, worshiping by singing hymns. I often repeat during the day the doxology or a condensed version of the 103rd Psalm as my way of praising God hoping to Live in the light of the Lord.

Lord Jesus, help us to do the right thing in all we do this day and always Amen.

Wayne Krumwiede
March 21  Saturday  Psalm 23

Psalm 23: A Conversation

The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures;
He leads me beside still waters;
He leads me in right paths for his name’s sake.
Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I fear no evil; for you are with me;
your rod and your staff—they comfort me.
You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD my whole life long.

Gloria: What does this make you think of?
Ben: It makes me think about church.

Gloria: What does it make you think about God?
Ben: God is good.

Gloria: What are your safe places?
Ben: Home, where I can have my books.

Gloria: Do you ever feel afraid?
Ben: Sometimes. But when I’m at school my teachers keep me company and God is with my teachers.

Gloria: Does God ever keep you company?
Ben: Yeah
Gloria: When was a time God kept you company?
Ben: When I was a little baby and when I play with my friends.

We ask that God helps keep us all company.

Ben Kenyon
I was Ignorant, but Now I Know

1 His disciples asked him, Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?
3 “Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” said Jesus, “but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him.”
39 Jesus said, “For judgement I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind.”
41 Jesus said, “If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains.”

What if we substituted the man’s physical blindness for the more abstract concept of ignorance? If we think about ignorance (be that ignorance of God’s existence, a social justice issue, or someone’s pain) as the lack of information or experience with something, I find it easier to understand this passage in a modern context. No one can be blamed for ignorance if they themselves are open to receiving grace, open to learning, open to connection. The “blind” man who is enlightened can now “see” and those with the power, knowledge and “sight” discredit him.

How often do we as Christians get wrapped up in our sheltered existence to the point that we don’t go out of our way to share God’s love or rejoice in seeing it lived out? How often do we get frustrated with our political leaders who have access to all the knowledge about an issue but don’t implement change or justice? How often do we judge and shut out someone who is unkind to us without taking a moment to understand their journey? We all have a responsibility to expand upon the grace that God has given us. Once enlightened, God gives us the courage to stand up for what we know to be true. The “blind” man, unlike his parents, has the courage to continually address the powerful and disbelieving Pharisees, to tell them of the amazing grace which he has received despite the risk of being ostracized.

Dear God, thank you for opening our hearts and minds to learn more about your creation so that we can confidently stand up for what we believe. Give us the courage to counter those who are powerful and aid us in disrupting the status quo once you equip us with your love, insight, and grace.

Meghan Quirk
Confession of Sins

“For our offenses are many in your sight, and our sins testify against us. Our offenses are ever with us, and we acknowledge our iniquities”

Sin separates us from the fellowship, blessing and benefits of God’s love. It is easy to blame our problems on everything except our iniquities. We would rather deny God than face the truth: the problem is with us. In this scripture reading, the post-exilic Israelites no longer felt the face of the Lord shining on them because of their sinful lifestyle; a result of their behavior, their community deteriorated. Their sinful actions shrouded them in despair, “We look for light, but there is darkness!”

Without justice and righteousness guiding our actions, there is no viable, faith-filled community life.

The hope expressed in Isaiah is that we can ask God to forgive us, to renew us, and to lead us, but we must obey and act in accordance with His will for our lives. Each day, we have a new opportunity for God to use us to work His purposes through us in our relationships with family, friends, co-workers, and in the larger faith community.

During this Lenten journey, may we strive to act intentionally and with accountability, righteously and judiciously, so we may live a viable, joyful life in community as people of God. Amen.

Julie Hasler
"God has transferred us into the kingdom of the beloved Son in whom we have redemption." Colossians 1:9-14

As far as I know, the apostle Paul had never been to the town of Colossae. However, he had heard of the Christian community that had taken root there. Apparently he wanted to make contact with them -- to support them? to encourage them? to instruct them? Yes, yes, yes, and probably more reasons as well. Since Paul was in prison he couldn't go to Colossae, and so he wrote this letter to them which includes this one phrase that declares the identity of those to whom he writes -- "that God has transferred us into the kingdom of the beloved Son, in which we have redemption."

This year the guide that we have to lead us on our journey from Ashes to Easter is the plea for God to forgive us, renew us, lead us. This journey is grounded in these powerful words of St. Paul to the Christians of Colossae. For us as well, these are words of hope, support, encouragement, instruction. But most of all, St. Paul includes the statement of our identity. For us also, "God has transferred us into the kingdom of the beloved Son in whom we have redemption."

Thank you, God, for the new life we have in our Lord Jesus.

Al Swingle
March 25 Wednesday Psalm 146

“[...] The lord lifts up those who are bowed down. [...]” Psalm 146, v. 8.

It is tempting to let the feeling of hopelessness take over. This can be a quiet, private process. It is much harder to wrestle with despair, to ask for help, and to look toward progress. That can be a messy, vulnerable, public process. But we should press on, toward progress, with God as our guide.

We are facing a demoralized, and demoralizing government. It casts a pall over every good thing we do. I have spent the last year in a front row seat splitting time between a Senate office and a Presidential campaign. None of this past year has been easy for me personally, for our country, and most of all, for people who are marginalized by our demoralized government. On the worst days, our work feels pointless -- why try. Why speak up? But we do it because it matters to the people we reach. So, every morning, we show up as representatives of hope for a better future, asking: what do we do? How do we help?

I am grateful to God for the many blessings in my life: my children (who provide me with a spectacularly distracting and worthwhile other identity as mother), my husband, our home. I hope for a less chaotic, more joyful future for us all, as I ask that we pray as we forge ahead into these difficult days:

Dear Lord, please be with us now. You lift us up in hope when we despair.

Kristin Mollet
Mortal, eat this scroll that I give you and fill your stomach with it. Then I ate it; and in my mouth it was as sweet as honey. Ezekiel 3:3

“Once a little boy sent me a charming card with a little drawing on it. I loved it. I answer all my children’s letters—sometimes very hastily—but this one I lingered over. I sent him a card and I drew a picture of a Wild Thing on it. I wrote, “Dear Jim: I loved your card.” Then I got a letter back from his mother and she said, “Jim loved your card so much he ate it.” That to me was one of the highest compliments I’ve ever received. He didn’t care that it was an original Maurice Sendak drawing or anything. He saw it, he loved it, he ate it.”

Eat this bread, drink this cup
Come to me and never be hungry

Eat this bread, drink this cup
Trust in me and you will not thirst

God of goodness, help us to feast on your word. Amen

Maurice Sendak (Author: 1928-2012)
Hope in Judgement Day

The nations raged,
but your wrath has come,
and the time for judging the dead,
for rewarding your servants, the prophets
and saints and all who fear your name,
both small and great,
and for destroying those who destroy the earth.’
Revelation 11:18

On its face, this verse could be unsettling. But at a time such as this, it can also inspire hope.

Sometimes I feel helpless under immoral and power-hungry leaders who betray the least among us and seemingly willful blindness that erodes our democracy; in the face of war, oppression and turmoil in so many places; knowing that we are destroying the very creation God gave us to live from and care for.

Ultimately, God’s day will come. As followers of Jesus, we can rejoice.

In the meantime, we must work to bring the kingdom here and now on earth. We can care for our neighbors, fight for justice and care for creation. We must be Jesus’ hands and feet as we await his second coming.

Almighty God, have mercy on us. Forgive our hopelessness and helplessness, renew our faith and strength, and lead us to do your will as we await your final day of triumph over evil. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Caitlin Jacobs
Lenten Mad Libs

_Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord._

Out of the *(uneasy situation)*
chasm – constraint – conformity – disappointment – incompatibility –
disrepair – charnel

I *(speech verb)*
supplie – exhort – bargain – remonstrate – wheedle – mutter

_If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand?_

If you should mark *(collective events)*
abrasions – lacerations – damages – distortions – entanglements

_But there is forgiveness with you…_

But there is *(positive result)*
confirmation – elevation – transformation – sanctification

_My soul waits for the Lord…_

My soul *(active verb)*
hums

_It is he who will redeem…_

It is he who will *(transitive verb)*
repatriate – strengthen – realign – gather – enhance

_Aus tiefer Not schrei ich zu dir,
Herr Gott, erbör mein Rufen.
Dein gnädig Ohren kehr zu mir
Und meiner Bitt sie öffnen.
Denn so du willst das sehen an,
Was Sünd und Unrecht ist getan,
Wer kann, Herr, vor dir bleiben?_

_Martin Luther_
March 29  Sunday  John 11:1-45

Can We Believe?

40 Then Jesus said, “Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?” 41 So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me. 42 I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me.”

The story of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead challenges our human understanding that death is the end and reminds us to believe so we can see the glory of God and the life everlasting. As part of the Lenten journey where we consider Jesus’ sacrifice and resurrection, this story is particularly meaningful as we struggle with our own doubts, pain, and possibly short supply of belief.

We are asked by Jesus to believe so we can see the glory of God. Belief is not always easy - but it is what we are asked to do. Jesus reminds us in these verses that our journey does not have to be a solitary one - we should support each other to nurture our beliefs and to become better at recognizing how God and Holy Spirit move around us in less apparent ways than the resurrection of Lazarus.

Dear Lord, may the Holy Spirit work through me and my siblings in Christ to deepen our belief in your glory and grace.

Andrew Robb
During a famine, Elijah stays with a widow, who was down to the last of her flour and oil to make bread for herself and her son. God ensured that the flour and oil lasted to feed them. Imagine their anger when her son took ill and stopped breathing - surely God had not brought them through a famine for that! Elijah challenged God, who restored the boy to health.

What lesson does this teach us? That God cares for the faithful, or that we need an Elijah to bargain on our behalf? This is not so easy.

Nor is it today. About 20 years ago, my family suffered a tragedy when my cousin’s young son died from complications from treatment for aplastic anemia. We had a prayer network that spanned continents. They pursued an experimental stem cell treatment using cord blood they had banked when their son was born, and it worked! He was weaned off a ventilator and was days from being discharged when he suffered a lung hemorrhage and died within minutes. Had God brought us so far in our faith journeys for this?! Were we not faithful enough? Did we need an Elijah to intercede on our behalf?

My cousin and his wife later gave us an example of their faith. This experimental treatment showed the value of cord blood, which is richer in stem cells than any other source. They started a foundation that promotes cord blood harvesting for banking or use in medical research. Their continued faith in God made them his instruments to save countless other lives.

Sometimes we feel that God abandons us, but God never really does. God might not save us from tragedy, but is with us as we find our way to the other side.

Lord, please give us the strength to trust in you as you lead us through grief or tragedy. Amen

Diane Kohn
For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God—not the result of works, so that no one may boast.

By God’s grace, we’ve gone from dead to forgiven, renewed, and called to act. Grace is a tricky thing, in order to accept it, we must acknowledge that we have no control, which is hard. However, the passage pivots to something we can control… we are God’s handiwork to do good works.

How will you take the grace you’ve already received and transform it into action today?

Dear God, please allow me to humbly accept your grace and put “God’s Work, Our Hands” into action today.

Kim Benoit
The Wholeness Wheel Labyrinth

Hear my prayer, O Lord; give ear to my supplications in your faithfulness; answer me in your righteousness.

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.

Along my Lenten journey, O God, hear my prayer in your faithfulness. Amen.

Portico Benefit Service
April 2 Thursday 1 Samuel 16:11-13

Ecce Homo

And the Lord said, “Arise, anoint him; for this is he.” 1 Samuel 16:12

What is it like to be chosen? We have all been chosen for something, but do we ever wonder whether God has been the force behind the choosing?

The stories of Samuel (who was also chosen) and David are among those we learn in Sunday School, but they are only two of the “chosen” stories in the Bible. How about Saul? Miriam? Jeremiah? Noah? Elijah? Mary? Jesus? How many others do you know?

These people understood that God had called and chosen them; some did not want to listen or did not agree that what they had been chosen to do was valuable or good; some were frightened. Some, like David, forgot who had chosen them; some rejoiced and willingly did God’s will. Some did not understand exactly what they had been called to; others obeyed without question.

As we discern our own ‘called and chosen’ which of those scenarios describes us? How do we, as sinners, answer God’s call?

David’s story gives us hope, for when confronted with his sins he was able to ask forgiveness. We remember his repentance as we read his psalms and we can ask for renewal. We can listen anew for God’s call to each of us and choose to be led by the commandment: to do justice, to love kindness, to walk humbly with God.

Create a pure heart in me, O God, and give me a new and steadfast spirit; do not drive me from thy presence or take thy holy spirit from me; create in me the joy of thy deliverance and grant me a willing spirit to uphold me.

Helen Stauderman
In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

It amazes me how Paul can write with such love and positivity while he is in jail. Faced with death, he writes to encourage those who are scared and worried, yet faithful. This letter from Paul and Timothy gave great strength to the Philippians who must have felt like the world was against them. They experienced danger around every corner for following Jesus without knowing what fruit would come of their actions.

All of us feel this way from time to time. But thankfully, if we trust in God, and trust that we are made to be better people by God’s love, we will have the strength to press on. We must rejoice and be glad, and do good work.

Thank you, Lord God, for trusting me with your love, even when I feel unworthy of it. I am here to do your work, and I am ready.

Dan O’Brien
Flat Tire Days

Psalm 31:9 Be merciful to me, Lord, for I am in distress; my eyes grow weak with sorrow, my soul and body with grief.

It was a cold, rainy, dreary Monday. Life was overwhelming me, but I dragged myself to the car to go to karate anyway. Karate—good for the ailing soul—would surely make me feel better. I started feeling a pulsating beat which I didn’t recall being in the song playing. THUMP THUMP THUMP. Turning off the radio and still feeling the beat, I realized with despair I was driving on a very flat tire.

I’m wearing my white karate uniform, it’s rush hour, and it’s pouring out. I really didn’t want to change the tire—I wasn’t even sure I could. Instead, I drove as carefully and as slowly as possible across Capitol Hill to the tire place. “Be merciful to me, fellow driver, for I am in distress.” I prayed and kept silently begging other drivers for patience. THUMP…THUMP I stopped as gingerly as possible at each stop sign, feeling terrible, dreading each THUMP and knowing that Capitol Hill commuters can be unforgiving. Unbelievably, a van followed me most of the precarious and slow drive—never honking or trying to speed past me—like the van driver knew how wretched I felt, like God was their co-pilot.

The Psalmist is having a pretty hard time too and trusts in God and asks for the Lord’s mercy. We encounter people every day that could be silently asking for mercy. Could we be God’s vessels of mercy? Could we be more compassionate, more patient, more kind? We don’t know what troubles weigh on the hearts of people we encounter every day—what they may be going through.

• “Be merciful to me, fellow Metro rider, for I am commuting to a job I think I’m going to lose.”
• “Be merciful to me, person in-line-at-Giant, for my mother is dying from cancer.”
• “Be merciful to me, mom, dad, brother, sister, friend, stranger, neighbor… For I live. For I err. For I breathe.”

Dear God, let your face shine on your servant, save me in your unfailing love,* and help me be a better vessel of your mercy to others.
*Psalm 31:16

Jane Tobler
Imagine yourself in the procession. Look for your face among the crowd as we celebrate Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Now continue the journey into a worship service full of paradox as we listen to the readings. Here is where palms meet passion. Here triumph gives way to torture, and celebration turns to crucifixion.

Sometimes when we hear the Passion narrative, we distance ourselves from the actions of the crowd or Pontius Pilate. Part of the power of this story is that it allows us to see our own reflections. We are present in that angry crowd. We are there with the mocking soldiers, even those who nailed Jesus to the cross. You and I are there.

Palm/Passion Sunday gives us a clear view of our duplicitous nature. Certainly we can choose to look away and ignore the hypocrite in the mirror. Yet it won’t change that we are both saints and sinners. The more we see our reflections in the passion narrative, the more we see how we crucified Christ then and how we crucify him afresh today. When refugees are forgotten and discarded, Christ is crucified. When our neighbors are oppressed, ignored or exploited, Christ is crucified.

Think about the times this week alone when anger, jealousy, selfishness or hate crept into our hearts. Think about the times when we chose, like Pilate, to please the crowd instead of pleasing God. Have you ever thought about God’s amazing love for us—despite our sinfulness—and just cried. Indeed, God’s word is like a mirror. It allows us to see ourselves in the hopeful crowd shouting, “Hosanna in the highest!” as well as in the murderous mob crying, “Crucify him!”

It may not sound like it, but this is good news. When we can see ourselves at the Mount of Olives waving palms, cheering, “Jesus, save us!” we see how much we need him. Likewise, when we can see ourselves in Judas’ betrayal, in the distant disciples and in the soldiers who beat, mocked and crucified him, then we know how much we need Jesus.

As we peek ahead and see the glimmer of the glory of Easter, our reflection is there too. Walking this path with Jesus through palms and passion brings us to a deeper understanding of Easter. Jesus, the prince of paradox. Jesus, the hosanna of Palm Sunday. Jesus, the humiliation of Good Friday and Jesus, the hallelujah of Easter morning!

Jesus, be with me in the paradox. Amen.

Rev. Angela T. Khabeb
From Death to Life…..TWICE!

“Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus was whom Jesus had raised from the dead.” The Gospel of John 12: 1

Today’s Bible text joins together two people, both of whom experienced a sequence which was “life, then death, then resurrection to new life.”

First there is Lazarus who was raised from the dead by Jesus, And then there is Jesus who was himself raised from his own death-on-a-cross to a new and eternal life. This God initially accomplishes for his Son at Easter and then shares graciously with all of us who will accept and receive it.

“That is just too much to believe,” say many people living in our highly rationalized day. “It is too much! Such is simply beyond our own experiences, with the possible exception of those few people who speak quite sincerely of coming back from or surviving what is termed, ‘near death.’”

True, it does indeed require a great deal of faith to accept the claims of others which we are not able ourselves to personally substantiate.

To those who would take that position, I would respectfully say, “If God as the Creator and the Source of all life is able to bring it into being initially, would it not be possible and perhaps even likely that that same power could be focused on a human person a second time as well as the first? His, message is that, as Lazarus was raised to new life after his death, that same gift is offered to us following the completion of our own Earth Lives.

Interestingly, in verse seven of our text today, Jesus does refer to his own burial and, therefore, by logical implication, his death which would then precede it, as well as his resurrection which would follow it.

Therefore, because we Lenten People know today that there is AN EASTER AWATING US, we will not fear our deaths but rather will joyfully anticipate our own and others’ resurrections whenever they arrive!

Lord God…For our created life…For our resurrected life…We give our thanks and praise. Amen.

Rev. Roger L. Dahlin
I'm Not Worthy

I can't count the number of times I've read or listened to today's scripture. Now I realize that I didn't explore today's reading in any real depth before. Today is Tuesday of Holy Week. Palm Sunday has been celebrated and Jesus (and his Disciples) are on His final journey from Galilee to Jerusalem...to the cross. On this day, Jesus predicts his own death. For whatever reason, in past years, I couldn't think beyond Jesus' suffering and sacrifice. How was Jesus able to continue when he knew what would happen to him in just a few days? The answer to this is found in Jesus' own words:

John 12:27:”...Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name!”

Yes, THE FATHER SENT HIS SON TO SAVE US. The Son knew what his fate would be and embraced it. Jesus' commitment was not in doubt. In the past, I didn't focus on a core part of the message, which is that Jesus' death presents us with choices in our lives as well. His death was like a fork in the road. Which road will we take? Will we sacrifice our dreams for Him? How can we serve him? What can we offer in exchange for the gift of eternal life? The answer for me so far is I haven't offered much in terms of bold actions. I do try day-to-day to be a decent person. Help others. Contribute to the common good. These things seem rather puny in comparison and I don't feel worthy of the sacrifice—especially a gift so willingly given to us. None of these things seem enough. There must be more I can do to be worthy of this gift. My search continues.

Heavenly Father, thank you for the light and hope and redemption your Son brought to our world. Help us as we continue trying to find ways to best serve You and especially those in our world who most need help and love.

Kay King
After he had said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, “Very truly I tell you, one of you is going to betray me.”

The story of Judas is a disheartening one. Judas is a loyal disciple. But right after Jesus washes his and the other disciples' feet, we learn that Judas is bound to commit a deadly betrayal. His story is an unsettling reminder that even the best among us are not immune to causing great harm.

As I was looking for the good news in this story, I found insight from an unlikely source: Lady Gaga, who wrote the 2011 hit "Judas." This is how she described the meaning of the song in an interview:

"I believe that it's the darkness in your life that ultimately shines and illuminates the greater light that you have upon you. Someone once said to me, 'If you have no shadows then you're not standing in the light.' So the song is about washing the feet of both good and evil..."

I think Lady Gaga's onto something. As hard as it is, we need to acknowledge both the good and bad within us and around us. Perhaps the story of Judas calls us to do this -- to examine and acknowledge our own acts of betrayal in order to fully appreciate God's grace this Easter season.

God, Please forgive me when I betray you. Lead me onward, helping me to wash the feet of both good and evil. Amen.

Jenna Jablonski
Called to Serve

At first glance there’s nothing out of the ordinary in today’s passage. Jesus simply washes the feet of his beloved disciples. However, the reality is that Jesus washing the feet of his disciples subversively challenges and disrupts the socially accepted parameters of the master-servant relationship of the times. It’s a reversal of roles that leaves many perplexed and maybe even bothered. So much so that Simon Peter asks, “Are you [REALLY] going to wash [MY] feet?” Jesus responds, “I have set an example that you should do as I have done for you. Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him.” Ultimately, Jesus uses this act to teach his disciples the true meaning of service and who is called to serve whom.

Since his election as Bishop of Rome, Pope Francis has followed Jesus in his subversive action by breaking with the tradition of the Church. Rather than only washing the feet of faithful Roman Catholic men and boys he has washed the feet of refugees, Muslim migrants, prisoners, women, and those who are differently-abled alike. Every year there are those who are scandalized by his actions but every year Pope Francis opts to teach the Church and the world the true meaning of servanthood.

Today, we too are called to do the same. It’s easy to serve and “wash the feet” of our kin, those to whom we find affinity, those who sit next to us in the pew on Sunday morning. But maybe, just maybe, God is inviting us in this Lenten season to serve those who are the ‘other’ in our lives. The one’s for whom it might be a little more difficult to joyfully ‘wash their feet.’ As we reflect on this passage and on our lives, whose feet is God inviting us to ‘wash’ today? Who are we being called to serve? And are we serving others simply to make ourselves feel good, maybe because we think it’s the ‘right’ thing to do, or do we serve with the understanding that as disciples of Jesus we have been called to a life of service in love to one another just as God has loved us?

Holy God you have called us to a life of service and love. Forgive us for not always loving and serving the ‘other’ in our lives. Renew us through the example of those who model and show us the true meaning of servanthood. Lead us to a life of service that reflects your eternal and perfect love in the world. Amen.

Rev. Chaim (CJ) Rodríguez Abramowitz
You’ve Got Mail

Dear Believer or Seeker,

Peace be to you and the understanding that I am with you today while humanity hangs its head in shame and sorrow that its sins put me on the cross.

This day, Believer, you grieve my crucifixion, and you, Seeker, wonder at my relevance to you. But you can wipe away your tears and spiritual disconnection. Verily, I reassure you that I came from the heavenly Father to defeat sin and death and bring everlasting life to you through my sacrifice.

By my sacrifice, you are forgiven. Repent and rejoice! The Father and I have forgotten your sin forever, for the Father and I are one.

And you are part of our unity, for I am your gate into God’s presence where you can feel connected, comforted and loved.

I know that you are hungry and thirsty for real meaning and purpose in life. I will give you spiritual bread and living water to nourish your soul. You will feel new clarity and direction within you.

And when troubles come, I am your refuge and strength. When life seems dark and lonely, I will light your way, because I am the light of the world.

You might say you already know or have heard of these things I teach. But this is the perfect day of remembrance of what God has done for you in sending me to reveal your part in God’s holy and eternal plan.

So, lift up your heart today and remember that nothing in all creation can separate you from God’s love and my love for you.

Tomorrow, turn your eyes to a new day to celebrate your eternal life!

My peace I leave with you,
Jesus Christ

Beloved Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom. Amen.

Juliette Jones
Dawning Light

Today’s reading takes place after Jesus’ resurrection but before he appears to any of his disciples. It is still dark and it’s hard to see anything. Mary Magdalene is the first disciple who returns to Jesus’s tomb before dawn. She sees that the tomb has been opened. Then she runs to tell the other disciples. (Please note that this version is different from the gospels of Matthew and Luke when Mary was accompanied by other women and they went into the tomb.)

Then Simon Peter and another disciple run back to the tomb. The other disciple runs fastest and gets to the empty tomb first, but doesn’t go in. Is the disciple afraid, confused, or deferring to Peter’s leadership? Peter goes into the tomb and assesses the situation. Then other disciple also goes in, “sees and believes,” but what does he believe? Because the scripture then says: “but they did not yet understand that Jesus must rise from the dead.” Then Peter and the other disciple went home.

Mary Magdalene remained outside the tomb and she is crying. While she is crying she looks into the tomb and sees two angels. They ask her why she is crying. “They have taken away my Lord and I don’t know where they have taken him,” she replies. Then she turns around and sees Jesus, but she thinks he’s the gardener.

Even the closest followers of Jesus—Mary, Peter, and the other disciple—do not immediately grasp the complete picture of Jesus’ resurrection. It’s hard to see in the dark. It’s difficult to see through the tears. I also notice the flashes of determination, loyalty, and courage these three disciples still have in their grief and confusion. They care for Jesus and for one another even as the new dawn is yet to appear.

Dear God, when we are unclear about your presence in our lives, give us the same courage, care, and loyalty that Mary, Simon Peter and the other disciples displayed to Jesus and to one another. Keep us together as a community of faith especially when the bonds are feeling weakest. Amen.

Pastor Mike Wilker
The Mess of Easter

‘Why are you weeping? For whom are you looking?’ Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, ‘Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.’

Mary Magdalene’s Easter morning did not have fancy pastel dresses, baskets with chocolate eggs, or a gift giving bunny -- it had flesh and dirt and tears and confusion. It had death. What’s more, through her tears Mary mistook her beloved teacher and friend, the resurrected Christ, for a stranger.

I resonate deeply with Mary’s misunderstanding...her grief...her frustration with this gardener. She was devastated, standing next to a tomb, and she her life was a mess. Yet there she was and she couldn’t hide it. How could she?

I’m good at hiding my messes from others, from God, and sometimes even from myself. Yet, God’s been there -- in the flesh and in the mess -- so She’s well aware of what I’ve got going in my life. Jesus didn’t run from the mess of Easter morning, he stayed in it, declaring hope and joy in the resurrection and giving Mary the opportunity to be the first Christian preacher ever! “I have seen the Lord!” she proclaimed!

This Easter, as I sing my Alleluia’s and eat my pastel candy corn, I find comfort in the fact that in my mess, God sees me and knows my name. The God of Easter, who brought life out of death, doesn’t need me to be impressive or perfect -- God needs me to be me. God won’t make me any less messy, but God will make me whole and give me new life daily. Whole, alive, and new do not add up to perfect, they add up to a forgiven and beloved, messy, child of God.

Alleluia! Christ is Risen!

Mother God, you have carried me along my Lenten journey. Thank you for keeping me safe in your womb and giving me new life in the resurrection of Jesus. Sustain these Easter days, O God, as I live with the truth and grace you give. Bless this mess. Amen.

Pastor Ben Hogue
ABOUT OUR AUTHORS

February 26  GLORIA KENYON  is a lover of knitting, subversive cross stitch, and Nationals baseball. She works at the Smithsonian American Art Museum and Renwick Gallery and lives in Silver Spring with her husband Greg, son Ben, and their dog Max.

February 27  PHILIP MOELLER, the son of a Lutheran Pastor, graduated from St. Olaf College and has both an M.A. and a Ph.D. in International Relations and Development. He has specialized in issues of governance, public ownership, ethics, social and environmental impact assessment, and inclusivity with various organizations including 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.

February 28  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.

February 29  BRIANNA WIDNER recently moved to Washington, D.C. from Olympia, WA with her husband, Jacob Widner. She has greatly enjoyed starting to build a new Christ family at the Lutheran Church of the Reformation, especially around environmental stewardship initiatives. While looking forward to a reflective Lenten season, she is eagerly counting down the days to spring and joining God in the gift of creation in her garden and soaking up the beaming sunshine!

March 1  CRAIG HAAS is starting his third time of serving on the church council, the first time being in the late 90s, and the second from 2008 to 2011. He figures he can fit council into his schedule once every ten years. He is also an early riser and attends the 8:30 service where he sings very loudly, if not very well.
March 2  MATT AVILES is a Northern Virginia native and life-long Lutheran who has been a member of Reformation for two years. He is a huge sports fan, particularly of the Caps and Duke basketball. He coached swimming for years and enjoys helping people of all ages improve in the water. Matt works in corporate finance and is interested in examining the intersection of faith and work.

March 3  DEL VOSS is the father of Adam and Daniel and husband to Chari. He works in publishing, but the titles of Father, Husband, Son, Brother, and Uncle are the ones that have meaning to him.

March 4  KAREN CARLSON is married to Parry Carlson and is the mother of Skye. She resides in Alexandria.

March 5  JON DAHL recently moved from WI to the DC area at the end of August mainly for a change of scene. He grew up going to an ELCA Lutheran Church in his hometown of McFarland. During his childhood he was probably like most kids and didn’t like it when Sunday morning rolled around, because that meant he had to go sit quietly and still for an hour. As he got older and more mature, he was really drawn to Church and all the inner workings of all that went on to make Sunday morning such a special time and place for him and others. He stumbled upon Lutheran Church of the Reformation one Sunday and was very intrigued and welcomed by others in the Congregation. He feels blessed to be able to share his devotional with others and looks forward to reading and reflecting on others during this FATE time.

March 6  EVA STEEGE and her husband, Ted, were married at Reformation in 1995. She was ordained at Reformation in 2005 and served calls in Hartford, CT and South Hadley, MA. She is completing her fourth call as an interim pastor in the Metro DC Synod, at St. Stephen Lutheran Church, Silver Spring. The Steeges live in College Park and have four grown children and eight grandchildren.

March 7  WILL ANDERSON joined Reformation in 2019 and lives in Capitol Hill. He hopes that his faith grows every day.

March 8  REV. DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. was a Baptist minister and social activist, who led the Civil Rights Movement in the United States from the mid-1950s until his death by assassination in 1968. His sermons and writings can be found at The Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute at Stanford University.
March 9  SUSAN BLACKMAN (1942-2020) grew up in Iowa and lived on the East Coast since 1964. She had a lifelong interest in international affairs, especially in Asia, and did her Ph.D. dissertation on women's organizations in India. She enjoyed recruiting Assisting Ministers, Communion Assistants, and Readers for the 11 o'clock service. She and her husband Paul lived in Arlington for forty years. Editors note: Susan Blackman died about two weeks after her devotion was submitted. She often requested an Old Testament passage so that she could create a passage with her husband Paul, who is Jewish. God, we give you thanks for the life and ministry of our dear sister Susan and we release her to your mighty keeping and light eternal. Amen.

March 10  CHAD LORENZ has been a member of the Church of the Reformation since 2006. He lives in Northeast D.C. with his wife, Liza, and 5-year-old son, Devon. He is originally from Omaha, Nebraska.

March 11  ELIZABETH TUCKERMANTY is on the Spiritual Growth Committee, Altar Guild, and is a reader. She is involved in the small group “Seeking Serenity.” We spend time in silence together and welcome additional folks. Her favorite roles in life currently are being “Amma” to her three grandchildren and wife to Dale Manty.

March 12  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 the congregational council, which may be why he reflected on leadership in his devotional.

March 13  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 14  TED STEEGE, a retired teacher, preacher, and advocate for justice in public policy lives in College Park with his beloved spouse Eva. Members of Reformation since the last decade of the 20th century, they are worshipping now with St. Stephen in Silver Spring, where Eva serves as part-time transitional pastor.

March 15  VALERIE ANNA PLATZ has been a member of Church of the Reformation for over 30 years. She sings in the choir, participates in the Property Committee and recently, has been overseeing the organization of the church archives. Valerie lives in Arlington, Virginia. Her daughter, Elena, lives with her.
March 16  ERICH LANGE is a first-year student at Georgetown Law. Originally from the greater Cincinnati, Ohio area, Erich attended Wabash College in Crawfordsville, Indiana, where he played baseball and studied political science and German. After law school, Erich is tentatively planning on returning to Cincinnati to practice law in the public sector. Erich is a huge baseball fan, outdoorsman, and (for better or worse) political junkie.

March 17  ALESIA FRERICHS and her husband Stephen Frerichs have been members of The Lutheran Church of the Reformation for a LONG time. They have two adult sons Luke and Benjamin. Alesia works for Lutheran Services in America – the national network of over 300 Lutheran social ministries these organizations have an abiding presence in over 1,400 communities and 43 states.

March 18  SARAH STAUDERMAN sings all day long in the shower, on the bus, at work, walking around, and when composing her meditation. She lives on Capitol Hill with her husband Andrew Robb, son Frederic, and Wilbur the dog (also a singer) and Melli the cat (a yowler). She leads the altar guild.

March 19  KATHRYN TOBIAS, a member of Reformation since 1977, loves writing and watercolor, 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 20  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.

March 21  BEN KENYON is three years old and loves Nationals baseball, Jesus stories, babies, and his dog Max. He lives in Silver Spring with his parents.
March 22  MEGHAN QUIRK joined Reformation in May 2015 and can’t believe how quickly five years have flown by. Originally from Rochester, NY, Meghan now considers DC to be home, in part to the great Reformation community that has been a constant source of connection and growth. Meghan volunteers with the Spiritual Growth Committee and enjoys greeting congregants and new visitors as a member of the usher team!

March 23  JULIE HASLER is a long time member of Reformation (since about 1990) and recently completed her three-year term on the Council. 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.

March 24  AL SWINGLE is a retired ELCA pastor. His faith journey is grounded in the new life in Jesus that he shares with his biological family and his discipleship family here at Reformation.

March 25  KRISTIN MOLLET (36) lives and works on Capitol Hill with her husband Brad (40), Tank the dog (9), and human kids Naomi (5), Liam (3), and Jack (2). She is too tired to complain...much.

March 26  MAURICE SENDAK was an American illustrator and writer of children's books. He became widely known for his book Where the Wild Things Are, first published in 1963.

March 27  CAITLIN JACOBS sings in the Reformation choir and has been attending Reformation since 2005. She loves to cook and to travel. Caitlin is wife to Paul Staunton, cat-mom to Molly, and editor of a trade magazine.

March 28  JUDITH MANGUBAT works as a test planning engineer within U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

March 29  ANDREW ROBB has been a member of Reformation for many years. He has been active with the Food Pantry, Rebuilding Together, Baseball Lunch, and has served as Council President. He lives on Capitol Hill with Sarah and Fred and enjoys watching the Nationals and DC United with them.
March 30    DIANE KOHN is a Foreign Service Officer working 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 31    KIMBERLY FIGEL BENoit has been a member of Reformation since 2010. She enjoys chasing her children around the church, auditing, reading, and hiking.

April 1    PORTICO BENEFIT SERVICES provides retirement, health, and related benefits and services to enhance the well-being of those who serve through the ELCA and other faith-based organizations.

April 2    HELEN STAUDERMAN lives on Capitol Hill and has been a member of Reformation since 2016. Her husband Al lives in Silverado Memory Care in Alexandria, Virginia.

April 3    DAN O’BRIEN is working to create the peaceful, sustainable world he wants to see. He is blessed to share his life with his amazing wife, Jenna Jablonski, who urges him to be the best person he can be.

April 4    JANE TOBLER is a marketing and communications consultant who lives on Capitol Hill with her husband and two teenage sons who were baptized and confirmed at Reformation. An Ohio native, she wonders how many years you have to live in D.C. to say you’re “from” D.C. She loves her Reformation family and thinks Lutherans are awesome! (She also highly recommends Mac's Tire Service on H Street.)

April 5    ANGELA T. KHABEB is a pastor of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Minneapolis. She enjoys an active home life with her husband and three children. Khabebs’s article was originally published in the Living Lutheran magazine in 2018.

April 6    ROGER DAHLIN served as the Interim Senior Pastor at Reformation for a year and a half beginning in the year 2000. He is especially grateful today for the inspired writing of the many laypersons who make “From Ashes to Easter” such a joy to read and on which to meditate. RLD
April 7  KAY KING was confirmed at Reformation and has been a member for most of her life. She is among the early risers who attend the 8:30 service and is an usher and coffee host at that service.

April 8  JENNA JABLONSKI runs a media platform for women and non-binary people in STEM fields and spends much of the rest of her time at Reformation and the Capitol Hill Arts Workshop. She and her husband Dan O'Brien have been early-service goers since 2014.

April 9  THE REVERAND CHAIM (CJ) RODRÍGUEZ ABRAMOWITZ is an ordained minister in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada and a Doctor of Ministry student in the area of Hispanic/Latinx theology and ministry at Barry University in Miami, Fl. He is also a member of the Lutheran Church of the Reformation and currently discerning a call to rostered ministry in the ELCA. He strives to live by the prophetic words of Dr. Cornel West, “Never forget that justice is what love looks like in public.”

April 10  JULIETTE JONES and her husband Marvin have been members of Reformation for over 25 years, where their four children were baptized and confirmed.

April 11  PASTOR MICHAEL WILKER has served as Reformation’s lead since October 2011 and recently celebrated his 25th Ordination Anniversary. He enjoys sharing poetry, meals, and the good earth

April 12  PASTOR BEN HOGUE loves candy corn, his dog Bosco, cat Bogart, and fiancé Marshall. He has served Reformation since the fall of 2017 and would really love it if you shared with him what you think is DC’s best kept secret. He might even offer up his!