

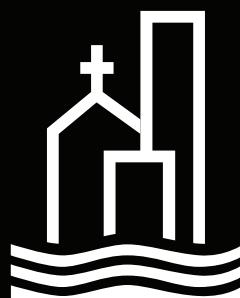


# *Lenten Devotional 2026*

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

Use this devotional resource in the way that best enhances your Lenten thoughts and practices:

- » **Read a printed copy.**
- » **Read and listen online.** Visit [www.pts.edu/devotional](http://www.pts.edu/devotional).
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PITTSBURGH  
THEOLOGICAL  
SEMINARY

## WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2026

*The Rev. James Wimberly III '19/24*

### SCRIPTURE

#### Amos 5:6-15

6 Seek the LORD and live,  
or he will break out against the house of Joseph like fire,  
and it will devour Bethel, with no one to quench it.  
7 Ah, you that turn justice to wormwood,  
and bring righteousness to the ground!

8 The one who made the Pleiades and Orion,  
and turns deep darkness into the morning,  
and darkens the day into night,  
who calls for the waters of the sea,  
and pours them out on the surface of the earth,  
the LORD is his name,  
9 who makes destruction flash out against the strong,  
so that destruction comes upon the fortress.

10 They hate the one who reproves in the gate,  
and they abhor the one who speaks the truth.

11 Therefore because you trample on the poor  
and take from them levies of grain,  
you have built houses of hewn stone,  
but you shall not live in them;

you have planted pleasant vineyards,  
but you shall not drink their wine.

12 For I know how many are your transgressions,  
and how great are your sins —  
you who afflict the righteous, who take a bribe,  
and push aside the needy in the gate.

13 Therefore the prudent will keep silent in such a time;  
for it is an evil time.

14 Seek good and not evil,  
that you may live;  
and so the LORD, the God of hosts, will be with you,  
just as you have said.

15 Hate evil and love good,  
and establish justice in the gate;  
it may be that the LORD, the God of hosts,  
will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.

### DEVOTIONAL

#### *Hope: Certain or Uncertain*

Amos served as a prophet in the Northern Kingdom during the prosperous reign of Jeroboam II. Unfortunately, Israel's hope was directly bound to their prosperity, so much so that it led them into a state of moral and spiritual depravity. As a result, the prophet Amos admonished them to turn from their depraved condition, return to the LORD, worship him, and

put their hope in the LORD. He warned them that if they did not return to the LORD, judgment would be the result. For it is wise to return to the path of righteousness, rather than to test the waters of consequence in rebellion.

Hope is an often-overlooked aspect of our Christian lives. Hope comes in various contexts. There is the hope of wishing, which is a state of uncertainty, relying on a measure of chance. Then there is the hope of knowing: a state of certainty, a confident expectation, and source of motivation. Israel placed its hope in prosperity rather than certainty; when economic prosperity faded, their hope diminished as well.

Those of us whose hope is in Jesus Christ have a sure hope of knowing that he is our Lord and Savior, not a hope built on earthly riches. We can learn a lot from this passage. The conditions then are terribly similar to those today. The rich are getting richer and the poor poorer. The judicial system is used to further benefit the rich.

As we observe Ash Wednesday and enter the Lenten season, let us prepare to commemorate Christ's love-unto-death. It is an opportunity to heed the appeal of the prophet Amos to repent, seek the Lord, return to him, and worship him only. Is your hope built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness?

### PRAYER

Father, thank you for being a loving God, full of grace and mercy. Thank you for being a longsuffering and patient God. Thank you for the greatest expression of love toward us: that You gave Your only begotten Son for us. You loved us so much that, even while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Thank you for setting up a system so that if we sin, we can confess our sin, acknowledge our wrongdoing, and ask for Your forgiveness. So, as we observe Ash Wednesday and enter this Lenten season, let us do so in self-examination, deep reflection, a heart of repentance, and a heart to love You, serve You, and worship You more. In Jesus' name, amen.

## THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2026

*Brian Devereaux '24*

### SCRIPTURE

#### John 17:1-8

1 After Jesus had spoken these words, he looked up to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, 2 since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. 3 And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. 4 I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that

you gave me to do. 5 So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed.

6 "I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. 7 Now they know that everything you have given me is from you, 8 for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you, and they have believed that you sent me.

## DEVOTIONAL

### *That Your Children May Glorify You*

Jesus opens His prayer stating that "the hour has come" (v.1); so, family, let that be a message to us: start now! Let our dying to self and flesh—whether by abstaining, fasting, or any other way we endure the wilderness with Jesus this Lenten season—be a participation in glorifying the Father with the Messiah this very hour. I would encourage us, the Body of the Messiah, to join with Him in praying for the glorification of the Father through our lives.

Our prayers for the glorification of the Father must be joined with action this Lenten season; for in the same way, as Jesus prays that the Father be glorified (v.2), He also glorifies the Father in completing His work (v. 4). N.T. Wright describes glorification this way: "Being 'glorified' means, simultaneously, being filled with God's own personal presence and power by the Spirit, and being enabled to exercise the vocation of . . . image-bearing human beings."<sup>1</sup>

This glorification that we need to participate in this Lenten season is the opening concern of Jesus' prayer here. The Son completely glorified the Father on earth, and we have an opportunity to show a world bound in pain the healing balm of the Father's glory. Jesus states that He brings the Father's glory by giving life in the age to come, and, "This is life in the age to come: that they may know You, the only true God, and the One who you sent, Jesus the Messiah" (v.3). We can extend knowledge of the Father to our world through the churches' common practices of Lent. This Lent, you can intimately know the Father through participating in the finished work of the Messiah—through fasting and abstaining alongside the community of faith. Let this intimate knowledge spring to life in the self-sacrificial love of others all around you, so that we all may glorify Him!

<sup>1</sup> N.T. Wright, *Into The Heart Of Romans: A Deep Dive Into Paul's Greatest Letter* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2023), 15.

## PRAYER

Good, loving God—Father, Son, Holy Spirit—I pray that the saints would join together this Lenten season to glorify Your name—the name that was glorified fully in the life, death,

and resurrection of your Son. Guide us in our practices of abstinence, fasting, and solitude as we prepare to celebrate the resurrection from the dead. We pray, King Jesus. Amen.

## FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 2026

*Dr. Elayne Arrington '21*

## SCRIPTURES

### **John 17:9-19**

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

## DEVOTIONAL

When I think of the 17<sup>th</sup> chapter of John, I am reminded of the fall of 1957, when I was 17 years old and a new student at the University of Pittsburgh. I was stricken during the Asian flu pandemic, and I collapsed on the floor of the ladies' room at Clapp Hall. I don't remember how I got home, but I remember that I had a raging fever and that a doctor came to the house. Some time later, I woke up, and I went to my mother's bedroom to tell her that I was feeling better. The door was almost, but not quite, closed. I saw my mother on her knees. I heard my mother praying. I heard my mother offering to give her life for mine if I could just recover. I left quietly, but the scene that I saw and the words that I heard were never erased from my mind. I recall them vividly more than sixty years later.

Similarly, the things that he saw and heard on Jesus' last earthly night were never erased from the mind of the beloved disciple, John. After more than sixty years, he vividly recalled that on Jesus' last night with "those whom God had given

him”—after he had preached his last sermon to them, after he had presided over his last supper with them, after he had given them his last bequest—he looked up to heaven and said “Father,” offering this last prayer for them. His prayer contains the imperative: “protect them … so that they may be one, as we are one.” So, Jesus’ last prayer was that there would be harmonious unity of his disciples that resembled the unity of the Godhead. That unity is what I remember most about this prayer. It reminds me of the hymn, “Blessed be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love. The fellowship of kindred minds is like to that above.”

## PRAYER

Father, it is my prayer that we will all be one: that as your disciples, we will experience a unity of spirit and purpose that celebrates our individual differences and our variety of gifts, and that you will sanctify us so that we may be set apart for divine use.

## SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2026

*Dr. Daniel Frayer-Griggs '08*

## SCRIPTURE

### John 17:20-26

20 “I ask not only on behalf of these but also on behalf of those who believe in me through their word, 21 that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. 22 The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, 23 I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. 24 Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.

25 “Righteous Father, the world does not know you, but I know you, and these know that you have sent me. 26 I made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them and I in them.”

## DEVOTIONAL

Jesus’ prayer to his Father in John 17 is the culmination of the Farewell Discourse, a section of the Gospel that began in chapter 13 and describes some of the most intimate moments Jesus shares with his disciples. Perhaps foremost among them is Jesus’ washing of his disciples’ feet, an act so vulnerable it makes Peter squirm. Jesus’ prayer extends this intimacy outward. In the verses immediately preceding

our passage, Jesus has prayed for himself (vv. 1–5) and for his disciples (vv. 6–19). Here, as he faces betrayal and abandonment and contemplates his own death, Jesus looks beyond himself and his immediate circle and turns his attention to others: “I ask not only on behalf of these but also on behalf of those who believe in me through their word” (v. 20). Jesus prays for those believers who were not among his followers during his ministry, those who depend on the witness of others. That includes us.

And what is Jesus’ prayer for us? That we all may be one. It’s tempting to think of this oneness as sameness, but that’s not language Jesus uses here. When he prays, “As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us,” he describes a relationship so intimate that it requires the language of mutual indwelling. Importantly, however, this mutuality doesn’t collapse into sameness. There remains an “I” and a “you,” a “they” and an “us.” Such relationships honor the other as *other*, or as Martin Buber puts it, “love is responsibility of an *I* for a *Thou*.” This way of being with one another requires trust, vulnerability, and a recognition of our own dependence on God and one another. Conformity sounds a whole lot easier. In this season of Lent, let’s reconsider what it means to be one—not erasing the other but entrusting ourselves to God and one another.

## PRAYER

Gracious God, draw us into a oneness defined by mutuality and trust rather than fear and sameness. Teach us to remain vulnerable with one another, recognizing our mutual dependence, so we might know and share your love. Amen.

## SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2026

*The Rev. Dr. April Roebuck '14/'19*

## SCRIPTURE

### Hebrews 2:10-18

10 It was fitting that God, for whom and through whom all things exist, in bringing many children to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through sufferings. 11 For the one who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one Father. For this reason Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters, 12 saying,

“I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters; in the midst of the congregation I will praise you.”

13 And again,  
“I will put my trust in him.”  
And again,  
“Here am I and the children whom God has given me.”  
14 Since, therefore, the children share flesh and blood, he

himself likewise shared the same things, so that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, 15 and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death. 16 For it is clear that he did not come to help angels but the descendants of Abraham. 17 Therefore he had to become like his brothers and sisters in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the people. 18 Because he himself was tested by what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested.

## DEVOTIONAL

"Trouble don't last always." Over the years, I've often heard that phrase from the elders in my life. A sentiment of hope, or even faith, that sufferings are temporary. Trouble is temporary, but in a difficult season, it can feel anything but temporary. It's easy to be consumed by what you're facing and question when it will end. Troubled times may even call for desperate measures. Troubled times may even tempt our character.

Jesus knows something about being tempted. I think the elders were referring to Jesus when they came up with that adage. For 40 days and 40 nights, Jesus was tempted by the enemy, and Jesus overcame. 40 days and 40 nights is a long time to suffer, but breakthrough is possible. 40 days and 40 nights is a long time to be tempted, but a way out is possible.

Jesus demonstrates a focus on the Kingdom. He demonstrates perseverance. He demonstrates that trouble in fact doesn't last always as he defeats the enemy's schemes once again, and this is just a foreshadowing of the triumphant defeat at the cross. This is why Jesus is the pioneer and perfecter of our faith; Jesus paved the way for us. We serve a God who knows what it's like to navigate a human experience. I am so glad that Jesus reminds us that, no matter what we have done in our lifetime, Jesus is the missing piece Who makes us holy and invites us into His royal family. Go through what you're facing, and remember that trouble don't last always.

## PRAYER

Lord, grant me perseverance, patience, endurance, and grace to get through this season. You have overcome the world, and there is nothing that I cannot get through with Your help. Jesus, help me to hold on and to hold out just as You have. In Your name I pray, amen.

## MONDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2026

*The Rev. Dr. James W. Kirk '08/20*

### SCRIPTURE

#### Mark 1:1-13

1 The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ.

2 As it is written in the prophet Isaiah

"See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you  
who will prepare your way,

3 the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:  
'Prepare the way of the Lord;  
make his paths straight,' "

4 so John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness,  
proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 5 And the whole Judean region and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him and were baptized by him in the River Jordan, confessing their sins. 6 Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. 7 He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the strap of his sandals. 8 I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

9 In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 10 And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove upon him. 11 And a voice came from the heavens, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

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

## DEVOTIONAL

In today's reading, the Gospel's writer, Mark, begins quickly and does not waste any time letting us know who Jesus is, what He did on earth, and why He came. Like the Gospel of John, Mark's Gospel does not begin with the birth of Jesus. He begins with the preparation for Jesus by John the Baptist. And as our season of Lent has begun, we are reflecting, waiting, humbling ourselves, and re-centering our lives.

I began to think about this season of preparation as I was driving in the rain. I am sure many of us have windshield wipers that have an intermittent setting to ensure that our focus remains on the road during light rain or mist. On this day, my wipers just would not keep my windshield completely clear, and my focus drifted to the wipers themselves. I had

to slam on my brakes to avoid running into the back of a car that had stopped in front of me! After I had calmed my nerves down, I re-focused on the road ahead and did continue my journey.

John the Baptist prepares the way in the wilderness for Jesus to begin His journey here on earth, to fulfill His purpose for coming. For 40 days, Jesus travels into the wilderness to be tempted. Our Lenten journeys continue for 40 days as we prepare to continue our faith lives and perhaps to sharpen our focus. It is so easy to lose our focus—whether it's driving or just living day to day.

During Lent, a lot of us can begin to think about those things in our lives that need to change. Maybe some things are out of control so that we tend to lose our focus on Christ. We want to turn away from 'those sins' or give up 'those things,' and we forget that we are turning toward Christ! Christ has taught us that even we can walk thru temptation with His strength by keeping our focus. Instead of focusing on the wipers, stay focused on the bigger picture in front of us . . . the cross! Keep your focus. Stay 'cross-eyed'!

## PRAYER

God of our lives, we thank You for helping us to re-center our lives each day. Today, continue to walk with us and clear our vision to see where we are turning toward You. As we turn away from those things that separate us from You, help us to see where we are going and how You are leading us. Take care of us as we take care of others. Amen.

## TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2026

*Addison Schmitt Morgan '24*

## SCRIPTURE

### Psalm 91

1 You who live in the shelter of the Most High,  
who abide in the shadow of the Almighty,  
2 will say to the Lord, "My refuge and my fortress;  
my God, in whom I trust."  
3 For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler  
and from the deadly pestilence;  
4 he will cover you with his pinions,  
and under his wings you will find refuge;  
his faithfulness is a shield and buckler.  
5 You will not fear the terror of the night,  
or the arrow that flies by day,  
6 or the pestilence that stalks in darkness,  
or the destruction that wastes at noonday.  
7 A thousand may fall at your side,  
ten thousand at your right hand,  
but it will not come near you.

8 You will only look with your eyes  
and see the punishment of the wicked.  
9 Because you have made the Lord your refuge,  
the Most High your dwelling place,  
10 no evil shall befall you,  
no scourge come near your tent.  
11 For he will command his angels concerning you  
to guard you in all your ways.  
12 On their hands they will bear you up,  
so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.  
13 You will tread on the lion and the adder,  
the young lion and the serpent you will trample under foot.  
14 Those who love me, I will deliver;  
I will protect those who know my name.  
15 When they call to me, I will answer them;  
I will be with them in trouble,  
I will rescue them and honor them.  
16 With long life I will satisfy them,  
and show them my salvation.

## DEVOTIONAL

"He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble."

"Where is God in this? I pray all the time, I took him to church every Sunday. I usually feel God near but I don't right now." These were the words of a grandmother who had just lost her young grandchild suddenly. Right after she said this she began to pray, reciting verses from Psalm 91. I was sitting in one of those awful hospital family meeting rooms in our pediatric emergency department where good news is hardly ever relayed and where I find myself more often than I'd like. As one of many chaplains in a level 1 trauma center, my colleagues and I often find ourselves sitting with someone on the worst day of their life. We accompany people along uncertain journeys that often yield questions whose answers also have little certainty. We sit with people when God feels far away.

We are in the wilderness—there is uncertainty. We may have questions whose answers feel like they too have little certainty. God may feel distant. Psalm 91 is often used in my place of work with our Judeo-Christian population, and while this psalm may not be finding you on the worst day of your life (at least, I pray it isn't), it can serve as a reminder on any day of God's most steadfast promises. No wonder people turn to it on terrible days. "He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble." For this grandmother, this psalm became an anchor in an unimaginable moment. In the times when God feels most distant, psalms like Psalm 91 can ground us back in the realities that God can always be called upon and that God is always near. May it always be so.

## PRAYER

Holy God,  
We fear the terror of the night and the arrow that flies by day.  
Remind us that we can always call on you.  
Help us to trust that you will always answer.  
Amen.

## WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2026

*The Rev. Emily Miller '07*

## SCRIPTURE

### Psalm 51

1 Have mercy on me, O God,  
according to your steadfast love;  
according to your abundant mercy,  
blot out my transgressions.  
2 Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,  
and cleanse me from my sin.  
3 For I know my transgressions,  
and my sin is ever before me.  
4 Against you, you alone, have I sinned  
and done what is evil in your sight,  
so that you are justified in your sentence  
and blameless when you pass judgment.  
5 Indeed, I was born guilty,  
a sinner when my mother conceived me.  
6 You desire truth in the inward being;  
therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.  
7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;  
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.  
8 Let me hear joy and gladness;  
let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.  
9 Hide your face from my sins,  
and blot out all my iniquities.  
10 Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
and put a new and right spirit within me.  
11 Do not cast me away from your presence,  
and do not take your holy spirit from me.  
12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation,  
and sustain in me a willing spirit.  
13 Then I will teach transgressors your ways,  
and sinners will return to you.  
14 Deliver me from bloodshed, O God,  
O God of my salvation,  
and my tongue will sing aloud of your deliverance.  
15 O Lord, open my lips,  
and my mouth will declare your praise.  
16 For you have no delight in sacrifice;  
if I were to give a burnt offering, you would not be pleased.  
17 The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit;  
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

18 Do good to Zion in your good pleasure;  
rebuild the walls of Jerusalem;  
19 then you will delight in right sacrifices,  
in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings;  
then bulls will be offered on your altar.

## DEVOTIONAL

Every year, at the beginning of Lent, I think of the title of a song made famous by popular singer Justin Timberlake. It's odd that I would think of JT during Lent, but hear me out. One of JT's most memorable songs was called "I'm bringing sexy back." It's a fun song, to be sure, but as a society, we really don't need more "sexy" coming back. If I could change the song title to be more appropriate for Lent, I'd call it "I'm bringing humble back" or, if you like, "I'm bringing humility back." We need humility far more than we need sexy. Psalm 51 is one of the foundational scriptures for Lent. We typically bring it out on Ash Wednesday as we remind ourselves that "we are dust and to dust we shall return." It is a very humbling psalm.

We recall that it was written by King David after he was confronted with his adulterous sin by the prophet Nathan. The first line is a plea to God for help: "Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love." But the true humble confession comes in verse three, where David admits, "For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me." Only a humble person understands in their heart that we all sin, especially when we elevate ourselves above others.

Just imagine with me for a moment: what if the leaders of our churches, our corporations, and our government understood this humility? Imagine if senior pastors realized that it is not them who the people come to see, but people come to be with the Lord. Imagine if corporate executives understood that their true duty is to the people who purchase their product or service, and to the earth that supports their business. Imagine if our leaders in Harrisburg or Washington comprehended that their power is given only for a moment in time and that afterward, they will be back in the populace like everyone else.

This Lent, let's make the number one hit in our lives "We're bringing humble back," as we accept our role as disciples of Christ and servants of His people.

## PRAYER

Gracious God, make us more humble, we pray. May we seek You this Lent, to expose our selfish ways and point us to the cross with humility. Help us to see ourselves as no better than others, but as participants in the push to bring Your kingdom to this world. In Christ we pray, amen.

## THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2026

The Rev. Dr. Karen Anderson '97

### SCRIPTURE

#### Psalm 102

1 Hear my prayer, O Lord;  
let my cry come to you.  
2 Do not hide your face from me  
in the day of my distress.  
Incline your ear to me;  
answer me speedily in the day when I call.  
3 For my days pass away like smoke,  
and my bones burn like a furnace.  
4 My heart is stricken and withered like grass;  
I am too wasted to eat my bread.  
5 Because of my loud groaning,  
my bones cling to my skin.  
6 I am like a desert owl of the wilderness,  
like a little owl of the waste places.  
7 I lie awake;  
I am like a lonely bird on the housetop.  
8 All day long my enemies taunt me;  
those who deride me use my name for a curse.  
9 Indeed, I eat ashes like bread  
and mingle tears with my drink,  
10 because of your indignation and anger,  
for you have lifted me up and thrown me aside.  
11 My days are like a lengthening shadow;  
I wither away like grass.  
12 But you, O Lord, are enthroned forever;  
your name endures to all generations.  
13 You will rise up and have compassion on Zion,  
for it is time to favor it;  
the appointed time has come.  
14 For your servants hold its stones dear  
and have pity on its dust.  
15 The nations will fear the name of the Lord  
and all the kings of the earth your glory.  
16 For the Lord will build up Zion;  
he will appear in his glory.  
17 He will regard the prayer of the destitute  
and will not despise their prayer.  
18 Let this be recorded for a generation to come,  
so that a people yet unborn may praise the Lord:  
19 that he looked down from his holy height,  
from heaven the Lord looked at the earth,  
20 to hear the groans of the prisoners,  
to set free those who were doomed to die,  
21 so that the name of the Lord may be declared in Zion  
and his praise in Jerusalem,  
22 when peoples gather together,  
and kingdoms, to serve the Lord.  
23 He has broken my strength in midcourse;  
he has shortened my days.

24 "O my God," I say, "do not take me away  
at the midpoint of my life,  
you whose years endure  
throughout all generations."

25 Long ago you laid the foundation of the earth,  
and the heavens are the work of your hands.  
26 They will perish, but you endure;  
they will all wear out like a garment.

You change them like clothing, and they pass away,  
27 but you are the same, and your years have no end.  
28 The children of your servants shall live secure;  
their offspring shall be established in your presence.

### DEVOTIONAL

When my daughter died very unexpectedly in February 2024 from unknown causes, I began a journey no mother ever wants to take. It has been incredibly difficult spiritually as well as emotionally. I find myself crying out to God much like the writer of this Psalm. The grief is debilitating at times. I want answers to questions like: Does it do any good to pray, God, when Your will is that someone is going to die? Why? Why? Why? These are questions without answers other than "accept it" and "God is God and you are not."

At Lent last year, I found myself thinking for the first time about Jesus' mother, Mary. She too was a grieving mother. Maybe she asked similar questions: "God, couldn't You save Your Son and work out Your plan some other way?" Jesus knew the suffering His mother would face as she grieved His death, and that may be why He asked John to take care of her. He loved her and knew the pain she was facing.

I believe Jesus loves me and has compassion for my pain. I believe Jesus can handle my anger, frustration, and doubt. And because of what He did on the cross, I believe in something I call "the resurrection principle," where God takes the heartbreak and tragedy in our lives and brings blessings out of them. I saw this when I was widowed at 40. Now, I am seeing blessings with Jennifer's death. It means our grief and suffering are not useless.

God had a plan and a purpose for my daughter's life just as God did for Jesus'. I may never understand it, but God is God, and I am not. And God is a good God.

### PRAYER

Lord, comfort us through the power of Your Holy Spirit when we suffer loss, disappointment, frustration, and doubt and do not understand. We do know Your love. Help us remember the times You have worked things out for our good. Help us hold on till the joy of resurrection comes.

## FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2026

Dr. Rachel Pennington '24

### SCRIPTURE

#### Mark 2:13-22

13 Jesus went out again beside the sea; the whole crowd gathered around him, and he taught them. 14 As he was walking along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax-collection station, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he got up and followed him.

15 And as he sat at dinner in Levi's house, many tax collectors and sinners were also sitting with Jesus and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. 16 When the scribes of the Pharisees saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, they said to his disciples, "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?" 17 When Jesus heard this, he said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician but those who are sick; I have not come to call the righteous but sinners."

18 Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting, and people came and said to him, "Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?" 19 Jesus said to them, "The wedding attendants cannot fast while the bridegroom is with them, can they? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. 20 The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast on that day.

21 "No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old cloak; otherwise, the patch pulls away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear is made. 22 Similarly, no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost, and so are the skins, but one puts new wine into fresh wineskins."

### DEVOTIONAL

Confession: I am a professional baker and cook. This means that I filter most things through the lens of eating, drinking, and being merry.

The directive to eat, drink, and be merry has been mishandled as nihilistic—we will all die, all is vanity, so let's enjoy it while we can. Instead, Ecclesiastes admonishes us to see food, wine, and merriment not as a means but as an end. There is something deeply spiritual in the consumption and enjoyment of that which satisfies the soul, particularly when shared together in community. Our existence is not vain, but it is fragile, stuck in a swinging pendulum of misfortune and bliss. In the midst of this, eating and drinking and being merry is a grounding force.

Jesus echoes this interpretation. He collects punks and undesirables with the simple directive "Follow Me." Follow Him to what?

To food!

Not to a service or prayer, but to consume and commune. The scribes and Pharisees, in their outrage, do not understand this intertwining of the sacred and profane. They also do not understand why Jesus isn't promoting the act of fasting. His response is that there is a time for everything. This time is to celebrate, to eat, drink, and be merry together, for the Bridegroom is with them at this moment. There will come a day for fasting and mourning, but today is about consecrated consumption.

As the owner of a pie shop that became a literal sanctuary in the wake of the 2017 events in Charlottesville, I saw how pie and espresso transformed into a eucharistic expression of the Body and blood of a community. The act of eating healed the brokenness in the wake of tragedy.

When Jesus says "Follow Me," I like to think he also says, "Let's Eat."

### PRAYER

Just as You imbue all things with Your Spirit, including that which we consume, may we see that we follow You when we celebrate in our community by the holy directive of eating, drinking, and being merry.

## SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2026

Nathan Salamacha '23

### SCRIPTURE

#### Mark 2:23-3:6

23 One Sabbath he was going through the grain fields, and as they made their way his disciples began to pluck heads of grain. 24 The Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?" 25 And he said to them, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need of food, 26 how he entered the house of God when Abiathar was high priest and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and he gave some to his companions?" 27 Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for humankind and not humankind for the Sabbath, 28 so the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath." 1 Again he entered the synagogue, and a man was there who had a withered hand. 2 They were watching him to see whether he would cure him on the Sabbath, so that they

might accuse him. 3 And he said to the man who had the withered hand, "Come forward." 4 Then he said to them, "Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save life or to kill?" But they were silent. 5 He looked around at them with anger; he was grieved at their hardness of heart and said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was restored. 6 The Pharisees went out and immediately conspired with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him.

## DEVOTIONAL

As a person in full-time ministry and as someone who was a lay leader before this vocation, I feel that the idea of sabbath can be difficult for many Christians to engage with. For some, taking a time to rest from the work of the other six days of the week seems like a waste. Our culture has taught us that if we are not constantly on the grind, if we are not always trying to get ahead, we are falling behind our friends, families, and rivals. Taking a single day off can feel like a death sentence when we are enraptured by this mindset. Then there is the flipside of this attitude. Some Christians guard their sabbath time to such an extent that they do not leave space for God to breathe into their lives on that day. Much like the Pharisees, we focus on the restrictions found in the commandment of Deuteronomy chapter five, in which we are to "not do any work," but we forget that the commandment starts with God calling us to "Observe the sabbath day and keep it holy."

Sabbath is about reserving space for the holiness of God to dwell amongst us, for putting our everyday busyness on pause so we can intentionally fellowship with God's people as we communally encounter our Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer. Jesus calls out the Pharisees for ignoring this important part of God's holy commandment: to hold this day as holy. Our God is a God who cares for the poor, the hungry, the forgotten. That is exactly what Christ, and his disciples, did in this passage. They ate and their hunger was satisfied; then they went and healed a man who had been ignored by his community for his physical difference. This is the restorative gospel work of sabbath.

## PRAYER

God, as we go throughout this season of Lent, a time where we focus more on Your holiness, let us reserve space for Your Sabbath work. Let us pause our everyday work so we can care for the poor, feed the hungry, and include the forgotten into Your holy community.

## SUNDAY, MARCH 1, 2026

Major Dr. Corinne Cameron '23

## SCRIPTURE

### Psalm 84

1 How lovely is your dwelling place,  
O Lord of hosts!  
2 My soul longs, indeed it faints,  
for the courts of the Lord;  
my heart and my flesh sing for joy  
to the living God.  
3 Even the sparrow finds a home  
and the swallow a nest for herself,  
where she may lay her young,  
at your altars, O Lord of hosts,  
my King and my God.  
4 Happy are those who live in your house,  
ever singing your praise. Selah  
5 Happy are those whose strength is in you,  
in whose heart are the highways to Zion.  
6 As they go through the valley of Baca,  
they make it a place of springs;  
the early rain also covers it with pools.  
7 They go from strength to strength;  
the God of gods will be seen in Zion.  
8 O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer;  
give ear, O God of Jacob! Selah  
9 Behold our shield, O God;  
look on the face of your anointed.  
10 For a day in your courts is better  
than a thousand elsewhere.  
I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God  
than live in the tents of wickedness.  
11 For the Lord God is a sun and shield;  
he bestows favor and honor.  
No good thing does the Lord withhold  
from those who walk uprightly.  
12 O Lord of hosts,  
happy is everyone who trusts in you.

## DEVOTIONAL

*Dwelling in God's Presence*

The other day, I went to put garbage in an outside trash can. When I opened the lid, I received a fright. Two little eyes were shining up at me as a raccoon had tried to find shelter from the cold. I lowered the lid and left the raccoon alone. Then I realized that even though the raccoon had climbed in, there was no way it would be able to climb out. So, gingerly, I laid the bin on its side, opened the lid, and watched the raccoon wobble away.

The little raccoon had found a dwelling. While in the immediate sense it seemed safe and secure, in fact, it would have caused it harm. We are sometimes like that raccoon. Spiritually we seek comfort, protection from storms, warmth, and shelter—but not always in spaces that will feed our souls. Sometimes we choose spaces that may drain—or even harm—our souls.

Our Psalmist for today is a displaced worship leader, longing for the joy they used to experience in God's house. They sing: *I would rather be a gatekeeper in the house of my God, than live the good life in the homes of the wicked* (v. 10). The displaced worship leader, living in exile in Babylon, is longing for the close presence of God.

Longing for the closeness of God's presence is a feeling we can understand. Jesus, in His incarnation, became the tangible presence of God, and throughout the gospels invites us into a space of dwelling. Yet, in our humanness, we try to create our own spaces, resisting this indwelling presence. We too want to live 'the good life.'

Lent invites confession—and repentance. As we read this Psalm, let us consider the times when we craft our own spiritual dwellings, rather than dwelling in the presence of God.

## PRAYER

Incarnate Lord, so often I am like the little raccoon, seeking comfort and strength in unhealthy spaces. In a posture of repentance, help me surrender my self-made structures and turn toward the spacious dwelling I may find in you. Amen.

## MONDAY, MARCH 2, 2026

*The Rev. Rebecca L. Young '21*

## SCRIPTURE

### Psalm 6

1 O Lord, do not rebuke me in your anger or discipline me in your wrath.  
2 Be gracious to me, O Lord, for I am languishing; O Lord, heal me, for my bones are shaking with terror.  
3 My soul also is struck with terror, while you, O Lord—how long?  
4 Turn, O Lord, save my life; deliver me for the sake of your steadfast love.  
5 For in death there is no remembrance of you; in Sheol who can give you praise?  
6 I am weary with my moaning; every night I flood my bed with tears; I drench my couch with my weeping.  
7 My eyes waste away because of grief; they grow weak because of all my foes.

8 Depart from me, all you workers of evil, for the Lord has heard the sound of my weeping.

9 The Lord has heard my supplication; the Lord accepts my prayer.

10 All my enemies shall be ashamed and struck with terror; they shall turn back and in a moment be put to shame.

## DEVOTIONAL

The NRSV translation gives this psalm a title: Prayer for Recovery from Grave Illness. However, there is little in the verses to indicate the weeping is exclusively due to sickness. In our times as well as in David's era, there is much to weep about.

As a hospital chaplain I often meet people of faith who share that they are ashamed of their tears over their illness. "Others have it worse," they say, or, "I have faith in God, so I shouldn't be crying." Some people share that they believe or were taught to believe by family members that tears are a sign of weakness. And yet, there is much to weep about.

Lent is a time of lament and weeping. And our God is no stranger to tears. This psalm is a reminder that grief is part of our faith, too. From the psalmist to Jesus himself, weeping is sometimes how God's people express themselves. The Psalms remind us that when we cannot find the words for the depths of sorrow and suffering, we are consoled by a Spirit that intercedes with sighs too deep for words. From personal illness to systemic injustice, there is much to weep about.

This psalm describes deep grief—tear-soaked seats and eyes sore from crying—but it also affirms that God hears us when we cry out: "The Lord has heard my supplication; the Lord accepts my prayer." So let us not be afraid to cry.

## PRAYER

God of joy and sorrow, in this season of lament and repentance, we cry out to You with heavy tears.

Hear the grief of all those suffering, especially those whose sadness is known only to You.

Bring comfort to all those who weep, and guide us to comfort those among us who suffer.

Give us courage to trust You with all our deepest feelings and sorrows, and hear us when we cry out to You from the depths.

We ask this in the name of your Son, who has walked and wept among us, and leads us out of sorrow into joy and eternal life. Amen.

## TUESDAY, MARCH 3, 2026

Lynn Cox '14

### SCRIPTURE

#### Psalm 146

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

### DEVOTIONAL

Verse three of this joyous and profound song of praise speaks to me in Lent. "Do not put your trust in princes, in mortals, in whom there is no help." What a word for our time! On my first reading, I'm confident that this is an admonition to those whose politics and values I abhor. I further suspect the "princes" and "mortals" I have in mind are also those whose way God will bring to ruin in verse nine. Perhaps, but Psalm 146 praises God's eternal authority and character, not my moral judgment.

In Lent, the Spirit asks, "Who are the mortals you are trusting for help, for salvation?" Now there is a question. Am I following or searching for a political savior, an individual or group I can trust to reverse the wrongs I perceive? Am I banking on a medical savior, the physician who will make sense of my husband's debilitating symptoms and quickly restore him to health? In how many circumstances does my confidence in finding the "right" person exceed my faith in God to be present to feed, free, heal, uphold, do justice—to love?

Psalm 146 begins and ends with "Hallelujah!"

Acknowledging our true source of help and hope, we join our voices with the psalmist in verses 5-10, as well as with Hannah (1 Sam 2:1-10) and Mary (Luke 1:46-55). Together we proclaim by faith God's plan to do so much more than we can imagine for our lives or our world. Present among his people, God creates a new, upside-down reality in which his power works on behalf of the weak, the innocent, and the righteous. The psalmist praises God for messianic signs of a future reality; we have seen these fulfilled in the life and ministry of Jesus, God made visible. All the more reason to offer our life-long hallelujahs.

### PRAYER

Lord, You keep faith forever and are our one true help and hope. Make us attentive to Your loving presence and direction in all circumstances. Give us faith to entrust to You every cause and person we hold dear. Secure our hearts to follow no prince, no savior before You.

## WEDNESDAY, MARCH 4, 2026

*The Rev. Sara Lawson '18*

### SCRIPTURE

#### Psalm 51

1 Have mercy on me, O God,  
according to your steadfast love;  
according to your abundant mercy  
blot out my transgressions.  
2 Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,  
and cleanse me from my sin.  
3 For I know my transgressions,  
and my sin is ever before me.  
4 Against you, you alone, have I sinned,  
and done what is evil in your sight,  
so that you are justified in your sentence  
and blameless when you pass judgment.  
5 Indeed, I was born guilty,  
a sinner when my mother conceived me.  
6 You desire truth in the inward being;  
therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.  
7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;  
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.  
8 Let me hear joy and gladness;  
let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.  
9 Hide your face from my sins,  
and blot out all my iniquities.  
10 Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
and put a new and right spirit within me.  
11 Do not cast me away from your presence,  
and do not take your holy spirit from me.

12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation,  
and sustain in me a willing spirit.  
13 Then I will teach transgressors your ways,  
and sinners will return to you.  
14 Deliver me from bloodshed, O God,  
O God of my salvation,  
and my tongue will sing aloud of your deliverance.  
15 O Lord, open my lips,  
and my mouth will declare your praise.  
16 For you have no delight in sacrifice;  
if I were to give a burnt offering, you would not be pleased.  
17 The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit;  
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.  
18 Do good to Zion in your good pleasure;  
rebuild the walls of Jerusalem,  
19 then you will delight in right sacrifices,  
in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings;  
then bulls will be offered on your altar.

## DEVOTIONAL

Psalm 51 begins with a plea for mercy. This cry is echoed throughout the prophets, in the ministry of Jesus, and quite memorably through the simple prayer of the tax collector in Luke, "God, have mercy on me a sinner" (18:13). How often do we begin our prayers with an acknowledgement of helplessness? Often, it is only at our lowest points that we can come to God knowing that our lives and all we have are in His hands. We make excuses and justify our actions: "She had a hard life." "He was abused." "They were poor." "We deserve ..." And the excuses go on. But David makes no excuses.

He acknowledges three ways he has sinned: he has transgressed (rebelled against God); he has acted out of iniquity (or a perverted way of thinking); and he has missed the mark (falling short of the life God had desired for him). In no place does he even consider blaming God for his bad choices, for his own actions.

Several years ago, when I was reading Psalm 51 and reflecting on David's story, I remember being struck by the similarities in wording between the psalm and the account of Cain in Genesis 4—as well as the vast contrast between the two men. Both are confronted with their sins, but while Cain denies what he has done, David confesses, owning his faults and pleading for mercy.

Sin is not currently in vogue. We use other words, excuse our ungodly behaviors, and find less humbling ways to show our devotion, like giving up something trivial for Lent. At least, that is my temptation. But naming our sin allows us to throw ourselves at the mercy of a God who loves us so much that He sent His Son to die for us and restore our relationship with Him.

## PRAYER

Lord Jesus, have mercy on me a sinner. Create in me a clean heart. Cast me not away from Your presence. And may I dwell in Your house and among Your people and gaze upon Your beauty all the days of my life. Amen.

## THURSDAY, MARCH 5, 2026

*The Rev. Dr. Michael W. Galica '25*

## SCRIPTURE

### Mark 4:21-34

21 He said to them, "Is a lamp brought in to be put under the bushel basket or under the bed and not on the lampstand? 22 For there is nothing hidden, except to be disclosed; nor is anything secret, except to come to light. 23 If you have ears to hear, then hear!" 24 And he said to them, "Pay attention to what you hear; the measure you give will be the measure you get, and it will be added to you. 25 For to those who have, more will be given, and from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away."

26 He also said, "The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground 27 and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. 28 The earth produces of itself first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. 29 But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle because the harvest has come."

30 He also said, "With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? 31 It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth, 32 yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade."

33 With many such parables he spoke the word to them as they were able to hear it; 34 he did not speak to them except in parables, but he explained everything in private to his disciples.

## DEVOTIONAL

One of my spouse's favorite movies is *The Magic of Ordinary Days* from 2005. This Hallmark movie tells the story of Livy (played by Keri Russell) after her arranged marriage to a farmer named Ray (Skeet Ulrich). It follows their relationship as they live their rather ordinary lives in rural Colorado during World War II, though they get up to a few adventures to keep the viewer interested and develop their relationship. As the title suggests, through the "magic" of those ordinary days

they eventually come to know and understand one another, fall in love, and live happily ever after together.

Today's Scripture reading from Mark's gospel describes a different set of ordinary things: a lamp, someone scattering seed, and a mustard seed. A lamp is ordinary. It's a tool that brightens dark places. Seeds are also ordinary. They turn into plants, even if for non-gardeners like me, the process is a bit confusing. Yet these are the examples Jesus gives when He describes the reign of God to His disciples—an ordinary lamp and ordinary seeds.

Our Lenten adventure invites us to look at things differently, to see with Spirit-filled eyes. We are often tempted to look for the reign of God in extraordinary places. We want to look for God's reign in places of power, places of strength, places that are extraordinary. Yes, the reign of God is there, but the words of Jesus also point us in a different direction: toward the ordinary. We bear witness to the reign of God in the "everyday" of our Christian life—not just the "big" or "special" moments, but in all the ways we live out our identity as the Body of Christ. Jesus' words invite us to bear witness to God's reign in the ordinary, everyday paths our lives take.

## PRAYER

Holy God, as a lamp reveals what is hidden, open our eyes to see Your reign in this Lenten, and every, season. Empower us by Your Spirit to proclaim Your reign in our ordinary and our everyday and to follow the example of Jesus Christ, in Whose name we pray. Amen.

## FRIDAY, MARCH 6, 2026

*The Rev. Rebecca Konegen '22*

## SCRIPTURE

### Psalm 130

1 Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord.  
2 Lord, hear my voice!  
Let your ears be attentive  
to the voice of my supplications!  
3 If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities,  
Lord, who could stand?  
4 But there is forgiveness with you,  
so that you may be revered.  
5 I wait for the Lord; my soul waits,  
and in his word I hope;  
6 my soul waits for the Lord  
more than those who watch for the morning,  
more than those who watch for the morning.  
7 O Israel, hope in the Lord!  
For with the Lord there is steadfast love,

and with him is great power to redeem.

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

## DEVOTIONAL

"Out of the depths I cry"—surely no one reading this has not experienced the depths in some sense or another. In English, when we consider the depths, we might think of a well or a canyon, or even of a pit or a grave, but commentators focus here on the depths of waters. There is a sense of drowning here, then—a sense of being overwhelmed by one's troubles and even of misery "unto death."

I still remember a comparison of the Hebrew creation stories with the ones of neighboring cultures from my first Old Testament class. In the stories of neighboring peoples, a violent battle takes place between the gods Marduk and Tiamat, and Marduk makes the earth and heavens from the fatally wounded body of Tiamat. In that creation story, the earth is created out of chaos and conflict. In contrast, in the Hebrew stories—our stories—God simply speaks, and there is light. God speaks again, and even the waters have boundaries.

But we see in other Scriptures that people often still see the waters as unpredictable and even terrible, and this is understandable: without weather forecasts or mechanical propulsion, one could never know what one would experience traveling those waters. A person might fear the depths as that place from which human beings were powerless to return. And so the psalmist cries out for rescue in these terms, because in situations this deep, one cannot rescue oneself. Only divine rescue can make a way.

While we have more control over traveling over actual water than the psalmist did—we do have mechanical propulsion now—there are still powers that crash over us, things beyond our control. We cannot even control all of the results of our own actions! The psalmist here openly considers the possibility that he has created his misery out of his own wrongdoing—"If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities . . . who could stand?"

But the psalmist also insists that in the midst of all of the storms, God gives grace—that there is forgiveness: "For with the Lord there is steadfast love, and with him is great power to redeem." The psalmist insists that the same God who created the world with a word is the One with whom there is always steadfast love and grace. Even in the depths, even in the clear acknowledgment of trouble beyond human power to resolve, the psalmist insists that God will "redeem Israel." And so even when rescue is not in sight, we can cry out with the psalmist, and know that God's love is faithful.

## PRAYER

Holy and gracious God, we give You thanks for the steadfastness of Your grace and Your lovingkindness. We give You thanks for Your presence in the storms and in the depths. We ask that You strengthen our trust in You, so that even in our lament, it is You to whom we turn. Amen.

## SATURDAY, MARCH 7, 2026

*The Rev. Dr. John Charnock '09*

## SCRIPTURE

### Psalm 43

1 Vindicate me, O God, and defend my cause against an ungodly people; from those who are deceitful and unjust, deliver me!

2 For you are the God in whom I take refuge; why have you cast me off?

Why must I walk about mournfully because of the oppression of the enemy?

3 O send out your light and your truth; let them lead me; let them bring me to your holy hill and to your dwelling.

4 Then I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy, and I will praise you with the harp, O God, my God.

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

## DEVOTIONAL

Anton Boisen is credited with coining the phrase “living human document” as a way to understand the story of a person’s life. For the past twenty years, I have utilized this insight as a chaplain providing spiritual care to hospital patients in northcentral Pennsylvania. Recently, I’ve come to appreciate Boisen’s phrase as not only applicable to the stories of living patients, but also to the Psalms of ancient Scripture.

The story of a living human document often proceeds through four chapters with the following titles: physical, social, psychological, and spiritual. In an acute care hospital, a patient’s physical condition is front and center. Out of necessity, most caregivers confine their efforts to the healing of a physical body (physical). Chaplains also read this chapter, but as introduction to the developing story of a patient’s important relationships (social), coping skills (psychological),

and sources of hope (spiritual). This has long been my preferred method for reading a living human document. And of late, this is becoming my lens for reading the Bible, and especially the Psalms.

The song of Psalm 43 may be chronologically old, but its singer is a living human document sharing inspiration for any discerning Lenten pilgrim. For example, the psalmist describes a physical condition of living under the oppression of others in a world devoid of justice (physical). Strong, supportive social relationships are replaced by deceitful and ungodly oppressors (social). As a result, the singer copes with feelings of isolation and inner turmoil (psychological). But through it all, the psalmist reexperiences a resilient faith in God, who shines through despairing darkness in a new dawn of hope (spiritual).

And so, I travel this Lenten journey giving thanks for the living human documents who have blessed me my whole life long. Whether patients in a contemporary hospital or ancient singers of Psalms, their stories enrich our stories. For that, let us be grateful.

## PRAYER

O God, creator of all things and every story, be with us on our Lenten journey. Grant us the company of caring companions. Equip us to traverse injustice and rise above oppression. Especially, strengthen our steps and give us hope that carries us faithfully to our journey’s end. Amen.

## SUNDAY, MARCH 8, 2026

*The Rev. Dr. Graeme Wilson '18*

## SCRIPTURE

### Psalm 84

1 How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts!

2 My soul longs, indeed it faints, for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God.

3 Even the sparrow finds a home and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, at your altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God.

4 Happy are those who live in your house, ever singing your praise. Selah

5 Happy are those whose strength is in you, in whose heart are the highways to Zion.[a]

6 As they go through the valley of Baca, they make it a place of springs;

the early rain also covers it with pools.  
7 They go from strength to strength;  
the God of gods will be seen in Zion.  
8 O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer;  
give ear, O God of Jacob! Selah  
9 Behold our shield, O God;  
look on the face of your anointed.  
10 For a day in your courts is better  
than a thousand elsewhere.  
I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God  
than live in the tents of wickedness.  
11 For the Lord God is a sun and shield;  
he bestows favor and honor.  
No good thing does the Lord withhold  
from those who walk uprightly.  
12 O Lord of hosts,  
happy is everyone who trusts in you.

## DEVOTIONAL

"Nostalgia isn't what it used to be!"

This famous aphorism, often wrongly attributed to Yogi Berra, reminds us that our warm, fuzzy memories of past times may not have always been matched by the reality. Our nostalgic memories generally tend towards the pleasant and comfortable, locating us in happier and more congenial times while perhaps glossing over unhappier times. Nostalgia creates an aching longing inside us for better times with fondly remembered loved ones—gatherings, holidays, special occasions.

The word 'nostalgia' itself comes from the Greek 'nostos' (return home or homecoming) and 'algos' (pain or suffering); so, nostalgia is literally a painful longing to return home, or, more simply, a homesickness.

Psalm 84 has a strong sense of nostalgia, a deep longing to return home to Zion, to the Jerusalem temple where the presence of the LORD can be experienced. "How lovely is thy dwelling place ... my soul longs, indeed it faints for the courts of the LORD." The yearning and anticipation of a return to that holy place are deeply felt. Home is where the heart is. The strong, magnetic pull towards home reminds me of the house martins (part of the swallow family). Every spring, year after year, these birds returned to their nests under the eaves of the manse of my first congregation in the west of Scotland, having journeyed over 5,000 miles from sub-Saharan Africa to get there! For reasons that still remain a mystery to wildlife experts, house martins will travel these vast distances to return to the exact same nest, year after year, to "lay their young" (v. 3). The magnetic pull to return home, to nest, is powerful.

As we journey through Lent, we are reminded of Jesus' powerful longing to return to Jerusalem to fulfill his calling and his destiny. A form of deep nostalgia, perhaps, but not a

nostalgia for playing it safe. A longing for things to be made right.

May we too know that sense of longing for things to be made right—a longing for justice and peace to be restored in the troubled areas of our world, and a longing for peace in our lives.

May we have a healthy nostalgia for what should be.

## PRAYER

Lord, as "even the sparrow finds a home," may we find a home in Your welcoming and protective care. Fill us with a sense of nostalgia—not for things to remain the same, but that we might ache for the world to return to the state of peace that You wish for it. Amen.

## MONDAY, MARCH 9, 2026

*Bishop Darren J. Rogers '17*

## SCRIPTURE

### Mark 5:21-43

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

35 While he was still speaking, some people came from the synagogue leader's house to say, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?" 36 But overhearing

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

## DEVOTIONAL

Think about a time when you were completely focused and had all your attention on something that was particularly important, and right at the critical moment, when you were finishing the most critical step, out of nowhere ... an interruption! During the fourth quarter of a playoff game, your team is driving for a last-second win—and your spouse steps between you and the TV and asks for advice on their outfit.

The COVID-19 pandemic was the most monumental interruption to society in the last 100 years. Sometimes it might not look like God is present, as it was with Joseph, being sold into slavery by his brothers. Life thrown off course, plans interrupted, dreams put on hold! Yet there is a type of interruption that can occur that can potentially be life-changing by releasing God's virtue in your life. We get upset when something interrupts our expectation, but sometimes an interruption is exactly what the doctor ordered, so that the healing process can begin. Could it be that God wants to interrupt our pain and suffering to exchange it for new life and wholeness?

In Mark chapter five, there were two desperate people who needed help—and needed it now! Jairus had a sick child who lay dying at home, and he convinced Jesus to follow him home to heal her. But there was also a woman with a 12-year-long issue of blood who heard about Jesus and believed that if she could get close enough to touch the border of his clothes, she could be healed. This woman, considered unclean, had the audacity to get down on the ground and push her way through the crowd of people and touch the border of Jesus' garment, and she was immediately healed, delaying Jesus reaching Jairus' daughter.

Jesus immediately felt healing virtue leave his body.

"Who touched my clothes?"

His disciples said, "What are you talking about Jesus, everybody is touching you?"

"No, someone touched me!"

When Jesus finally makes it home with Jairus, they receive the news, "I'm sorry Jairus, she's gone!"

Jesus said, "The girl is not dead."

That seems like such a strange thing to say. She was dead! Everyone knew it, including Jesus. However, Jesus saw things very differently from everyone else. To those present, it was final and it was real! But Jesus saw it differently: the girl needed only to be awakened—something very easy for Jesus to do.

Could it be that we are just one desperate situation away from experiencing the life-changing virtue of Jesus—if we just reach out to touch him? I believe that now is the time for a divine interruption to take place in your life and in the Church. We need divine interruptions to disrupt our norms—there, the Spirit of God will interrupt our routine and release God's divine virtue in us.

## PRAYER

Father, thank you for Your love and healing virtue. You are never late; You are always on time. Help us to reach for the border of Your garment when we sense You near, and help us to trust You when we receive distressing and fearful news. We look to You for our strength and draw upon Your virtue to sustain us. We thank you for working with us, in us, and through us in our struggles. To You be all glory and honor. In Jesus' name, amen.

## TUESDAY, MARCH 10, 2026

*The Rev. Catherine (Kay) Day '97*

## SCRIPTURE

### Psalm 91

1 You who live in the shelter of the Most High,  
who abide in the shadow of the Almighty,  
2 will say to the Lord, "My refuge and my fortress;  
my God, in whom I trust."  
3 For he will deliver you from the snare of the hunter  
and from the deadly pestilence;  
4 he will cover you with his pinions,  
and under his wings you will find refuge;  
his faithfulness is a shield and defense.  
5 You will not fear the terror of the night  
or the arrow that flies by day  
6 or the pestilence that stalks in darkness

or the destruction that wastes at noonday.  
7 A thousand may fall at your side,  
ten thousand at your right hand,  
but it will not come near you.  
8 You will only look with your eyes  
and see the punishment of the wicked.  
9 Because you have made the Lord your refuge,  
the Most High your dwelling place,  
10 no evil shall befall you,  
no scourge come near your tent.  
11 For he will command his angels concerning you  
to guard you in all your ways.  
12 On their hands they will bear you up,  
so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.  
13 You will tread on the lion and the adder;  
the young lion and the serpent you will trample under foot.  
14 Those who love me, I will deliver;  
I will protect those who know my name.  
15 When they call to me, I will answer them;  
I will be with them in trouble;  
I will rescue them and honor them.  
16 With long life I will satisfy them  
and show them my salvation.

## DEVOTIONAL

As American adults, we are taught that we are to handle things on our own. We are to be independent and self-reliant. But the truth is that this is impossible, hard as we may try. Beyond that, it is not how God has intended us to live. Hardships will come. Difficulties and struggles are part of life. Opposition from foes happens. We sometimes feel attacked, either by opponents or by circumstances. What are we to do?

The answer comes in Psalm 91. God is the one to stand with us. Look at the images of the Psalm. The shelter of the Most High, the shadow of the Almighty, and a refuge and fortress (vv. 1-2) all provide pictures of being protected, of a defense against attack. The image in verse four is of a bird protecting her chicks, covering them with her feathers—a refuge under wings that hides the chicks. What a picture of care! But it is God who is doing this, who is the protective parent.

Attacks in life are real—the terror of night, the arrow that flies, pestilence that stalks, plague that destroys. Note when these happen—night, day, darkness, midday—all the time. We are repeatedly under attack from nature, from enemies, from events of life.

But verse nine offers a caution of who this protection is for. It is not a “blanket” protection. It is for those who call God their refuge, who make Him their dwelling—that is, those who seek and submit to God’s care. The joy (v. 14) is that God does this because we love Him. When we call on Him, He will answer abundantly.

The question for us is: in the midst of attacks, struggles, or danger, will we call on God and invite Him to be our shelter and our refuge?

## PRAYER

Holy God, You promise to guard and guide us if we humbly call on You. Faithful God, hear our cry for You to take us under Your wings and protect us from the attacks of life. Be our refuge and fortress. This we ask in Your Holy Name. Amen.

## WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11, 2026

Caroline Baker '23

## SCRIPTURE

### Genesis 45:16-28

16 When the report was heard in Pharaoh’s house, “Joseph’s brothers have come,” Pharaoh and his servants were pleased. 17 Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Say to your brothers, ‘Do this: load your animals and go back to the land of Canaan. 18 Take your father and your households and come to me, so that I may give you the best of the land of Egypt, and you may enjoy the fat of the land.’ 19 You are further charged to say, ‘Do this: take wagons from the land of Egypt for your little ones and for your wives, and bring your father, and come. 20 Give no thought to your possessions, for the best of all the land of Egypt is yours.’ ”

21 The sons of Israel did so. Joseph gave them wagons according to the instruction of Pharaoh, and he gave them provisions for the journey. 22 To each one of them he gave a set of garments, but to Benjamin he gave three hundred pieces of silver and five sets of garments. 23 To his father he sent the following: ten donkeys loaded with the good things of Egypt and ten female donkeys loaded with grain, bread, and provision for his father on the journey. 24 Then he sent his brothers on their way, and as they were leaving he said to them, “Do not quarrel along the way.”

25 So they went up out of Egypt and came to their father Jacob in the land of Canaan. 26 And they told him, “Joseph is still alive! He is even ruler over all the land of Egypt.” He was stunned; he could not believe them. 27 But when they told him all the words of Joseph that he had said to them, and when he saw the wagons that Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of their father Jacob revived. 28 Israel said, “Enough! My son Joseph is still alive. I must go and see him before I die.”

## DEVOTIONAL

This is not the only place in Scripture where God's people are commanded to leave behind their belongings. Jesus's disciples came to know this practice well. But here, Joseph's family is not instructed to forget about their possessions and live a life of minimalism, and they're not called to embrace a future of asceticism. Rather, they are invited to make room for something new and better to become theirs in the land of Egypt.

I'm reminded of the image of a hand gripping a cookie inside a cookie jar, stuck because the fist can't fit back out through the jar's opening. How many times have I held tightly to the thing I want because my limited imagination could not conceptualize alternative routes to joy, pleasure, peace, love, fulfillment? How many times have I clung to my idea, believing it's the only way? How many times have I let the fear of scarcity block my openness to abundance?

Joseph's family has become intimately familiar with scarcity, having lived in famine for two years up to this point. Abundance is a fever dream, the "fat of the land" something they haven't known recently. Joseph's family isn't told to simply forget about their possessions and automatically receive the best of the best; Pharaoh tells them to go get their father and come back to him. In other words, there is a reorientation that is required of Jacob and his sons in order to receive the available abundance.

I am eternally grateful that our Creator's imagination is greater than ours. When I fixate on the one cookie in the cookie jar, God is often standing behind me with a whole cookie table, waiting for me to turn around. What abundance might be available to you if only you reorient and loosen your grip?

## PRAYER

Creator God, divine gift-giver, holy and loving healer, thank you for Your patience and provision. When we find ourselves in seasons of famine, help us to trust that a feast will come again. When we find ourselves locked onto a particular outcome, help us to have faith in the goodness of Your unfolding narrative. And when we keep our eyes on the past, help us to hope in the future, making space for Your Spirit to creatively ignite transformation in our hearts and our minds. In Your name we humbly ask these things. Amen.

## THURSDAY, MARCH 12, 2026

*The Rev. Dr. Thomas Hoeke '03*

## SCRIPTURE

### Mark 6:30-46

30 The apostles gathered around Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught. 31 He said to them, "Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. 32 And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves. 33 Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they hurried there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them. 34 As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd, and he began to teach them many things. 35 When it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is now very late; 36 send them away so that they may go into the surrounding country and villages and buy something for themselves to eat." 37 But he answered them, "You give them something to eat." They said to him, "Are we to go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and give it to them to eat?" 38 And he said to them, "How many loaves have you? Go and see." When they had found out, they said, "Five, and two fish." 39 Then he ordered them to get all the people to sit down in groups on the green grass. 40 So they sat down in groups of hundreds and of fifties. 41 Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and blessed and broke the loaves and gave them to his disciples to set before the people, and he divided the two fish among them all. 42 And all ate and were filled, 43 and they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish. 44 Those who had eaten the loaves numbered five thousand men.

45 Immediately he made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. 46 After saying farewell to them, he went up on the mountain to pray.

## DEVOTIONAL

My father-in-law always insisted that bread should be on the table at every meal. Growing up in the Depression, bread was a staple for him. Today, in many parts of the world, bread or grain is a source of food that keeps people alive. Bread is life-giving.

Disciples need to do more than lament the problem. After a full day of ministry to the crowds, the disciples ask Jesus to send the crowds away so they can get something to eat. When Jesus gives his disciples the command, "You give them something to eat," he tells them to address the concern. However, they point to scarcity, saying there is not enough available to feed the crowd. Yet Jesus points to abundance,

indicating not to tell him what you don't have; tell him what you do have.

As the church or as individuals, when ministry opportunities present themselves, we often feel we don't have enough resources. We say that we would like to help, if only we had more.

We may not be called upon to save the world, but we are called to put aside our preconceived notions of what can and can't be accomplished with our resources. As faithful disciples, we cannot just point out the problem. We are challenged to tackle what may seem impossible. Trust in God and turn scarcity into abundance. Let's challenge ourselves, look deep inside ourselves, take an inventory of what we have, and bring it all to the Lord.

Jesus made it clear that the responsibility to care for others belongs to disciples of all time periods. He wants to partner with us to change the world. When the bread is blessed, broken, and given, it is up to us to also provide for others, because we are sent from the Table.

## PRAYER

Gracious and loving God, You make us aware of the needs in our churches, communities, and the world. May we not be swayed or discouraged by a lack of resources, or any other excuses we may encounter, not to respond. May we be open to the possibilities and new ways that we can make a difference. Open our eyes and hands, and move our feet to represent and partner with You. Amen.

## FRIDAY, MARCH 13, 2026

*The Rev. Dr. Carole Reidmeyer Martin '20*

## SCRIPTURE

### Mark 6:47-56

47 When evening came, the boat was out on the sea, and he was alone on the land. 48 When he saw that they were straining at the oars against an adverse wind, he came toward them early in the morning, walking on the sea. He intended to pass them by. 49 But when they saw him walking on the sea, they thought it was a ghost and cried out, 50 for they all saw him and were terrified. But immediately he spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid." 51 Then he got into the boat with them, and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded, 52 for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened. 53 When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored the boat. 54 When they got out of the boat, people at once recognized him 55 and rushed about that whole region and began to bring the sick on

mats to wherever they heard he was. 56 And wherever he went, into villages or cities or farms, they laid the sick in the marketplaces and begged him that they might touch even the fringe of his cloak, and all who touched it were healed.

## DEVOTIONAL

Who is Jesus? How would we react if we saw him show up in the flesh? Would we analyze him? Maybe we'd check for inconsistencies in what he says and what he does. Perhaps we'd scrutinize his motives—is he ambitious or a nobody who's attracting attention?

The disciples, the ones who had been traveling with Jesus for some time now, had seen and heard much that they didn't yet understand. Jesus fed the crowds from a meager lunch. He healed with his words and his touch. The disciples themselves had been commissioned to spread the good news and had themselves cast out demons. But they just saw Jesus walk on water, stilling the storm. And we are told that their hearts were hardened, unreceptive to what they had seen with their own eyes. Who is this Jesus? He seemed, well, they weren't sure exactly who he was.

The crowds on the other side of the lake had seen and heard much as well. They were drawn to Jesus. Jesus' words about the inbreaking of God's kingdom gave them hope. Moreover, they didn't just share what they knew about Jesus; they literally carried the sick to wherever Jesus was so that they might touch the fringe of his cloak and be healed. Who is this Jesus? A healer who gave them hope, who accepted them as they were.

In the end, Jesus' disciples, minus one, carried on Jesus' kingdom mission. Many in the crowds became followers of the Way. For over 2000 years since, Jesus has kept showing up in the lives of his followers. Each one of us must decide how to respond to his invitation. May we openly embrace the invitation to receive Jesus, the One who lived, died, and rose again.

## PRAYER

Compassionate God, draw us near to You in this Lenten season, that we may be closer to You and walk ever faithfully, trusting in Your grace and mercy. Amen.

## SATURDAY, MARCH 14, 2026

*Kacy Grayson '22*

## SCRIPTURE

### Mark 7:1-23

1 Now when the Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around him, 2 they noticed that some of his disciples were eating with defiled hands,

that is, without washing them. 3 (For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, do not eat unless they wash their hands, thus observing the tradition of the elders, 4 and they do not eat anything from the market unless they wash, and there are also many other traditions that they observe: the washing of cups and pots and bronze kettles and beds.) 5 So the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, “Why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders but eat with defiled hands?” 6 He said to them, “Isaiah prophesied rightly about you hypocrites, as it is written,

‘This people honors me with their lips,  
but their hearts are far from me;  
7 in vain do they worship me,  
teaching human precepts as doctrines.’

8 “You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition.”

9 Then he said to them, “You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition! 10 For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and your mother,’ and, ‘Whoever speaks evil of father or mother must surely die.’ 11 But you say that if anyone tells father or mother, ‘Whatever support you might have had from me is Corban’ (that is, an offering to God), 12 then you no longer permit doing anything for a father or mother, 13 thus nullifying the word of God through your tradition that you have handed on. And you do many things like this.”

14 Then he called the crowd again and said to them, “Listen to me, all of you, and understand: 15 there is nothing outside a person that by going in can defile, but the things that come out are what defile.”

17 When he had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples asked him about the parable. 18 He said to them, “So, are you also without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile, 19 since it enters not the heart but the stomach and goes out into the sewer?” (Thus he declared all foods clean.) 20 And he said, “It is what comes out of a person that defiles. 21 For it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come: sexual immorality, theft, murder, 22 adultery, avarice, wickedness, deceit, debauchery, envy, slander, pride, folly. 23 All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.”

## DEVOTIONAL

### Check Your Heart

Being a member at my home church for so long has made me aware of some of the norms during worship—where people’s “unassigned, assigned seats” are, when to sit and rise, when not to go to the bathroom, who plays the tambourines, who has the good church candy in their purse. The list goes on.

Now imagine the traditional norms of your own church, and ponder: what would happen if someone sat in one of those unassigned, assigned, seats? What would happen if someone shouted out with praise when the congregation is usually silent, during the sermon? What if the music was more upbeat instead of mellow and calm? You might say to yourself, “That person must be new.” “What’s going on with the music today?” “It’s never like this.”

In a similarly troubled fashion, the Pharisees were concerned with Jesus’ disciples not upholding the traditional norm of ceremonial washing. They can’t understand how Jesus’ disciples could go against the standards. For them, these practices signified identity, status, and separation from the unholy.

Instead of Jesus agreeing and encouraging his disciples to comply, He challenges the Pharisees. He reminds them that these traditions are human-made. In creating these traditions, they’ve let go of the commands of God and made their own customs more significant. He prompts them to consider that their *true* identity as followers of God comes from what’s inside their hearts.

Lent invites us to consider this same truth—to reshape how we respond to life’s changes and challenges, to reevaluate the posture of our hearts when it comes to our expectations weighed against our obedience to God. Instead of responding with frustration and judgment, Jesus calls us to remember that God expects us to respond with the same love and grace that He extends to us every day.

## PRAYER

Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you for our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who is the ultimate teacher and shows us how to live life righteously. May our interactions with all of Your creation exude the love of Christ that flows through our hearts. May we all embody what it truly means to “love thy neighbor,” even when it challenges our comfort levels. In Jesus’ name we pray, amen.

## SUNDAY, MARCH 15, 2026

*The Rev. Dr. Ian Alexander '24*

## SCRIPTURE

### Romans 8:11-25

11 If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you.

12 So then, brothers and sisters, we are obligated, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh— 13 for if you live according to the flesh, you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. 14 For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. 15 For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, “Abba! Father!” 16 it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs: heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if we in fact suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

18 I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. 19 For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God, 20 for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself will be set free from its enslavement to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. 22 We know that the whole creation has been groaning together as it suffers together the pains of labor, 23 and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. 24 For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope, for who hopes for what one already sees? 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

## DEVOTIONAL

In Scotland, where I live, the fourth Sunday in the season of Lent is Mothering Sunday. Nowadays, it is rather like Mother's Day in the United States, but its origins are quite different. In some traditions it is still called Laetare Sunday from the first few words of the traditional reading for today: "Laetare Jerusalem" ("Rejoice, O Jerusalem") from Isaiah 66:10.

On Mothering Sunday, it was expected that you would return to your mother church—the church in which you received the sacrament of baptism and became "a child of the church," celebrated since the Middle Ages. Mothering Sunday became a day when servants were given time off and could return to their home villages to attend church with their own mothers and wider families.

There was also on this Sunday a reprieve from the rules of fasting, and so special foods were eaten, particularly the simnel cake, perhaps from the day's association with the story of the feeding of the five thousand.

We can take the message of Mothering Sunday as saying to us, in the midst of Lent, that we can still rejoice, for we are led by the generous Spirit of God to be children of a God who, like both mother and father, cares for all God's children, everywhere in our world. The promise of Christ is that we can live abundantly, that the offer of fullness of life is

not a financial offer but a relational one that is for everyone through the boundless generosity of the Holy Spirit. "For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God" (Rom 8:14).

## PRAYER

Rejoice in the Lord.

We give thanks for a God who offers the love of a mother and father to all; we give thanks for Jesus who promises fullness of life to all people; we give thanks for the Holy Spirit, helping us find abundant life in relationship with each other. Amen.

## MONDAY, MARCH 16, 2026

*The Rev. Mark Gaskill '03*

## SCRIPTURE

### Mark 7:24-37

24 From there he set out and went away to the region of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know he was there. Yet he could not escape notice, 25 but a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately heard about him, and she came and bowed down at his feet. 26 Now the woman was a gentile, of Syrophenician origin. She begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. 27 He said to her, "Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." 28 But she answered him, "Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." 29 Then he said to her, "For saying that, you may go—the demon has left your daughter." 30 And when she went home, she found the child lying on the bed and the demon gone.

31 Then he returned from the region of Tyre and went by way of Sidon toward the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. 32 They brought to him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech, and they begged him to lay his hand on him. 33 He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue. 34 Then looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, "Ephphatha," that is, "Be opened." 35 And his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. 36 Then Jesus ordered them to tell no one, but the more he ordered them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. 37 They were astounded beyond measure, saying, "He has done everything well; he even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak."

## DEVOTIONAL

Jesus never loses an argument with a lawyer, a priest, or even the Devil. But he does lose this argument with a Gentile woman. The surprising thing is that, in light of his other teachings, Jesus deserves to lose this argument. Even if you set aside the racial strife between Jew and Gentile, he is ignoring the plea of a desperate mother for the well-being of her child. This deflection is rooted in the kind of legalism that he often forcefully criticizes in the Scribes and Pharisees; in other instances, Jesus would probably refer to a person who was denying compassion and care due to some legal complication as a “whitewashed tomb.”

Jesus had left Galilee to wrestle with a puzzle about his own mission. So, he takes a trip to Tyre; what better place to get your head together than at the beach? There are plenty of miracle stories and moments where Jesus demonstrates his divine insight and compassion, but here he meets a woman who is the living answer to the puzzle he is seeking to solve. Encounters with humanity outside of one's tribe run contrary to so many things Jesus' culture taught him. But instead of holding onto a form of faith imprisoned by the bonds of antipathy between peoples, Jesus does something that truly points to his holiness: he changes his mind. He changes his mind to heal this child, he heals a man from the Decapolis, and he sees that these Gentile “dogs” are such fertile ground for the Good News that he can't even order them to keep it to themselves.

## PRAYER

God of all creation, heal us of the demons that try to divide us. Cast out the lying spirits that justify turning our backs on the suffering. Open our ears to hear what is wrong, loose our tongues to speak with truth, unbind our hearts from narrow, pinching selfishness. Change our hearts and minds to show your compassion to the world.

## TUESDAY, MARCH 17, 2026

*The Rev. Dr. Luke H. Maybry '20*

## SCRIPTURE

### 1 Corinthians 11:2-34

2 I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions just as I handed them on to you. 3 But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of the woman, and God is the head of Christ. 4 Any man who prays or prophesies with something on his head shames his head, 5 but any woman who prays or prophesies with her head unveiled shames her head—it is one and the same thing as having her head shaved. 6 For if a woman will not veil herself, then she

should cut off her hair, but if it is shameful for a woman to have her hair cut off or to be shaved, she should wear a veil. 7 For a man ought not to have his head veiled, since he is the image and reflection of God, but woman is the reflection of man. 8 Indeed, man was not made from woman but woman from man. 9 Neither was man created for the sake of woman but woman for the sake of man. 10 For this reason a woman ought to have authority over her head, because of the angels. 11 Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man or man independent of woman. 12 For just as woman came from man, so man comes through woman, but all things come from God. 13 Judge for yourselves: Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head unveiled? 14 Does not nature itself teach you that, if a man wears long hair, it is dishonoring to him, 15 but if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For her hair is given to her for a covering. 16 But if anyone is disposed to be contentious—we have no such custom, nor do the churches of God.

17 Now in the following instructions I do not command you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. 18 For, to begin with, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you, and to some extent I believe it. 19 Indeed, there have to be factions among you, for only so will it become clear who among you are genuine. 20 When you come together, it is not really to eat the Lord's supper. 21 For when the time comes to eat, each of you proceeds to eat your own supper, and one goes hungry and another becomes drunk. 22 What! Do you not have households to eat and drink in? Or do you show contempt for the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What should I say to you? Should I commend you? In this matter I do not command you!

23 For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” 25 In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

27 Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be answerable for the body and blood of the Lord. 28 Examine yourselves, and only then eat of the bread and drink of the cup. 29 For all who eat and drink without discerning the body eat and drink judgment against themselves. 30 For this reason many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. 31 But if we judged ourselves, we would not be judged. 32 But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.

33 So then, my brothers and sisters, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. 34 If you are hungry,

eat at home, so that when you come together, it will not be for your condemnation. About the other things I will give instructions when I come.

## DEVOTIONAL

This passage would have been so much easier had it started at verse 17 instead of verse two. Who doesn't love communion around Holy Week? What better time to observe "the body of Christ broken for you and the blood of Christ shed for you" than during Lent?

So why would Paul, or whoever doled out assignments for this Lent devotional, include the bit about "the husband being the head of the wife"? Surely Paul isn't serious about the head-coverings—the only people who need those are old bald men like me who need to keep our noggins warm. What, pray tell, do we do with verses 2-16? What do we do with so many difficult passages in our canon?

Paul insists in verse 28 that we examine ourselves before we eat the bread and drink the cup. What exactly should we examine ourselves against? If indeed our canon (or "measuring stick") is holy writ and a special revelation from God, if it is the Holy Bible, then we are thrust into a world wholly different from our own. Disorienting though they may be, these old, ancient words lead to the Word made flesh.

Sometimes, we in the mainline churches are too convinced of our own moral certitude: we are certainly right; therefore, everyone else is certainly wrong. Then we read a passage like 1 Corinthians 11 that makes us scratch our heads. Do we just ignore that passage like it's not there? Or do we read it, study it, pray over it, and wrestle with it? Do we dare admit that we, of all people, need to change and be changed? Do we show up to communion on this Lenten journey, with the best and worst of our humanity, and dare to acknowledge a broken body and spilt blood, all for sinners like us? So, for God's sake examine hard passages like 1 Corinthians 11 on this Lenten journey, and examine yourself while you are at it.

## PRAYER

Holy and Gracious God, we come to you as sinners who have badly missed the mark, standing desperately in the need of grace that only you can give. Grant unto us the courage to examine hard passages that make us uncomfortable. Help us also to examine ourselves: our egos, motivations, fears, ignorance, and pride. We, after all, are part of the very darkness that we claim to reject. Remind us once again of your body that has been broken for us and of your blood of the new covenant poured out for the forgiveness of sins, that we may taste and see that the Lord is good. In the holy name of Jesus Christ we pray, amen.

## WEDNESDAY, MARCH 18, 2026

*The Rev. Michael Wallace '14*

## SCRIPTURE

### Genesis 50:15-26

15 Realizing that their father was dead, Joseph's brothers said, "What if Joseph still bears a grudge against us and pays us back in full for all the wrong that we did to him?" 16 So they approached Joseph, saying, "Your father gave this instruction before he died, 17 'Say to Joseph: I beg you, forgive the crime of your brothers and the wrong they did in harming you.' Now therefore please forgive the crime of the servants of the God of your father." Joseph wept when they spoke to him. 18 Then his brothers also wept, fell down before him, and said, "We are here as your slaves." 19 But Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid! Am I in the place of God? 20 Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people, as he is doing today. 21 So have no fear; I myself will provide for you and your little ones." In this way he reassured them, speaking kindly to them.

22 So Joseph remained in Egypt, he and his father's household, and Joseph lived one hundred ten years. 23 Joseph saw Ephraim's children of the third generation; the children of Machir son of Manasseh were also born on Joseph's knees.

24 Then Joseph said to his brothers, "I am about to die, but God will surely come to you and bring you up out of this land to the land that he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob." 25 So Joseph made the Israelites swear, saying, "When God comes to you, you shall carry up my bones from here." 26 And Joseph died, being one hundred ten years old; he was embalmed and placed in a coffin in Egypt.

## DEVOTIONAL

The Joseph story is one of the richest, and one of my favorites, in the whole Hebrew Bible. As we travel the wilderness road of Lent—a season marked by reflection, repentance, and self-examination—the journey of Joseph offers profound guidance. From a coveted coat revealing Joseph as his father's favorite to his siblings' plot to make Joseph disappear, then from the advances of Potiphar's wife to dream interpretation as a get-out-of-jail-free card, this story has all the drama worthy of a soap opera.

In the final chapters of Genesis, the tension increases as Joseph's brothers come to Egypt begging for help during a famine. They didn't recognize that their own brother was the official in charge. As readers, we know where events are headed. There will eventually be a big reveal, but will Joseph seek retribution and punish his siblings, or will he be moved

with compassion and have mercy on them? Thankfully, Joseph doesn't hold a grudge and even seems to be thankful for the challenges of his life that have led him to this moment. He says to his brothers, "Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good."

In all the twists and turns of our lives, it can sometimes be difficult to see God's hand in it all. Yet the powerful testimony of Joseph reminds us that with holy hindsight we can more clearly bear witness to how God has led us through the most difficult days and seasons. When bad days come—and they most definitely will—let us pray for grace and a spirit of wonder as we seek to discern God's intentions in our lives.

## PRAYER

O God of our days and especially of our nights, we pray for your accompanying presence to be with us through the twists and turns of our lives. In the pit of despair, help us to look up to you. Help us hold onto hope that you are making all things new and that you intend even the worst moments for good and for your ultimate glory. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, amen.

## THURSDAY, MARCH 19, 2026

*The Rev. Dr. Peter Sutton '24*

## SCRIPTURE

### Mark 8:27-9:1

27 Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi, and on the way he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" 28 And they answered him, "John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets." 29 He asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Messiah." 30 And he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him. 31 Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes and be killed and after three days rise again. 32 He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. 33 But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things." 34 He called the crowd with his disciples and said to them, "If any wish to come after me, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. 35 For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. 36 For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? 37 Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? 38 Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of

Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." 9 1 And he said to them, "Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see that the kingdom of God has come with power."

## DEVOTIONAL

Today we find ourselves 30 days into the season of Lent. As we close in on the finish line, this is a good time to reflect on whether we have we have "run with endurance the race that has been set before us" (Heb 12:1).

Here at First (Scots) Presbyterian in Charleston, S.C., we have been exploring this verse with reference to the "great cloud of witnesses" that have gone before us in this historic Lowcountry setting. As we prepare for our 300th anniversary at First (Scots), our aim is to plan for the next 300 years but at the same time hold fast to the strong foundations which others have put in place to help us to continue our witness in the city.

In many ways, today's passage from Mark's gospel is engaged in the same process. Peter's answer to the question "who do you say I am?" is one very much of the present time and indeed anticipates the future. Peter's is an idealized sense of the Messiah which wishes to cut the corners of this race and bypass having to endure the hardships of Holy Week.

Many worshippers joyfully celebrate Palm Sunday and do so again a week later on Easter Day without necessarily exploring the week that the two bookend. The resurrection is embraced without paying due reverence to all those who have gone before—none more so than Christ.

The next verse in the gospel (9:2) leaves us in no doubt about the need to acknowledge our roots. As Christ prepares to set his gaze on Jerusalem, he does so through the Transfiguration, with Elijah and Moses by his side. May we, too, find strength for the journey that lies ahead by drawing on the witness of those who have gone before us.

## PRAYER

Dear Lord,

As Christ prepares to set His gaze on Jerusalem, may we set our gaze on Him, acknowledging His perseverance, His ability to endure on our behalf, and the strength He drew from those who had gone before Him, Your true and trusted servants whom we seek to follow.

Amen.

## FRIDAY, MARCH 20, 2026

*The Rev. Dr. James Goodlet III '25*

### SCRIPTURE

#### 1 Corinthians 12:27-13:3

27 Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. 28 And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues. 29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work powerful deeds? 30 Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? 31 But strive for the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.

13 If I speak in the tongues of humans and of angels but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 And if I have prophetic powers and understand all mysteries and all knowledge and if I have all faith so as to remove mountains but do not have love, I am nothing. 3 If I give away all my possessions and if I hand over my body so that I may boast but do not have love, I gain nothing.

### DEVOTIONAL

I have a love/hate relationship with this time of year. As one who lives in the southern part of the United States, the month of March represents something of a colossal tease. One day, temperatures will rise to the 70s or 80s as the dogwoods bloom and the carpenter bees buzz. The next day, a cold front will race through our region, bringing with it thunderstorms, tornadoes, and an unwelcome blast of cold air. We Southerners are well-acquainted with Mother Nature's fickle ways during the third month of our calendar year. Indeed, many from these parts will remember the famous blizzard of 1993—as a middle schooler, I experienced snow flurries at Disney World on March 12 of that year.

Fittingly, an old proverb states, "March roars in like a lion and bows out like a lamb." In the state where I live, this represents the hinge season between the chillier climate of February and the eventual springtime heat of April. And there, amid the precipitous increases and decreases in temperature of the month, sits March 20, also known as the spring equinox, the date marking the official start of spring and the beginning of a season when daytime finally outlasts the night.

*When daytime finally outlasts the night.*

There is something very fitting—very mid- to late-Lenten—about March 20. The darkness is still very much present, almost in equal proportion to the day. But not quite. Not anymore. The light begins to take over, with the cold sting

of death soon giving way to the radiant temperatures of resurrection.

And yet—still—we're not there. We Lenten pilgrims remain very much on our way. Soon, however, the darkness will fade. Even as the weather patterns of our lives change with lightning-quick speed. Even as Corinthian-like division runs amok within our world, our countries, and our homes. Even as we squabble about whose gifts are the greatest in the kingdom of God.

Daytime finally outlasts the night. The season now turns over to spring and all the life it ushers forth, as crosses and empty tombs dot the horizon.

And we, O Church, strive for the greater gifts—the greatest of which is love.

### PRAYER

Almighty God, as the seasons change and the darkness gives way to light, may we hold fast to the hope that anchors us in all times and all places: Jesus Christ, the Light of the World. Instill within us a love that builds up, that edifies, that unifies—even as the storms of division rage and the winds of dissension blow. May we speak, listen, respond, and act as teachers, apostles, prophets, and healers, remembering always that the greatest of all gifts is love. Come Holy Spirit; make it so. Amen.

## SATURDAY, MARCH 21, 2026

*The Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Sterling '88/'98*

### SCRIPTURE

#### The Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Sterling '88/'98

23 After a long time the king of Egypt died. The Israelites groaned under their slavery and cried out. Their cry for help rose up to God from their slavery. 24 God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. 25 God looked upon the Israelites, and God took notice of them.

1 Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; he led his flock beyond the wilderness and came to Mount Horeb, the mountain of God. 2 There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. 3 Then Moses said, "I must turn aside and look at this great sight and see why the bush is not burned up." 4 When the Lord saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." 5 Then he said, "Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are

standing is holy ground.” 6 He said further, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

7 Then the Lord said, “I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, 8 and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and spacious land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the country of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. 9 The cry of the Israelites has now come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them. 10 Now go, I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.” 11 But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?” 12 He said, “I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you that it is I who sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain.”

13 But Moses said to God, “If I come to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?” 14 God said to Moses, “I am who I am.” He said further, “Thus you shall say to the Israelites, ‘I am has sent me to you.’” 15 God also said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the Israelites, ‘The Lord, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you’:

This is my name forever,  
and this my title for all generations.

## DEVOTIONAL

It's a famous passage—the “burning bush” call of Moses. I wonder how many sermons we've preached—or listened to—on this passage? We've come up with dozens of “novel” ideas about how to approach the bizarre story that Moses had a life-changing dialogue with a shrubbery, and have even been encouraged to keep an eye peeled for “our” burning bush, like we'd miss that? Well, I did once read in a commentary that burning bushes were not “unusual” in the hot deserts of that part of the world, so Moses could have missed it, but then, this one talked.

The first “voice” we hear in the passage is the griping. Aren't we all griping about something? Right now, the American “gripe machine” is at fever pitch. Israel perfected the art, apparently—not that they didn't have good reason. Of course, slavery in Egypt was bad, but later, they will gripe that they left it and “the fleshpots of Egypt” behind. Griping can be such a fickle thing. The amazing thing is that “God took notice of them.”

The next voice is God, addressing Moses from the Burning Bush Boom Box—actually more of a Bluetooth speaker, as it just relayed the voice, I guess. God was about to share the divine remedy for Israel's suffering, and as God often does, God chose an unlikely instrument. Moses certainly had the political connections, but beyond that, he was adequately flawed.

Voice number three was Moses, answering the burning bush call with what must have been a squeaky “Here I am.” Woody Allen once said that two-thirds of success is showing up. Moses shows up, but not without much hesitation. The rest is history.

We seem to have the griping down, but will we hear God, trying to connect with us over the groaning? This is the Lenten question, isn't it? And when our burning bush call comes, will we show up, or just keep queuing the excuses? May we be more like that little dog in front of the phonograph trumpet in the old RCA logo, labeled appropriately, “His Master's Voice.”

## PRAYER

God, forgive us for listening but not hearing, speaking but not measuring our words or remembering Whose word is more important, and for inadvertently superimposing our “solutions” over Yours, then blaming You when they fail. Give us the courage to show up, speak Your truth, and act on it. Amen.

## SUNDAY, MARCH 22, 2026

*The Rev. Carol Divens Roth '85*

## SCRIPTURE

### Romans 12:1-21

1 I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, on the basis of God's mercy, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable act of worship. 2 Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.

3 For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. 4 For as in one body we have many members and not all the members have the same function, 5 so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. 6 We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; 7 ministry, in ministering; the

teacher, in teaching; 8 the encourager, in encouragement; the giver, in sincerity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.

9 Let love be genuine; hate what is evil; hold fast to what is good; 10 love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. 11 Do not lag in zeal; be ardent in spirit; serve the Lord. 12 Rejoice in hope; be patient in affliction; persevere in prayer. 13 Contribute to the needs of the saints; pursue hospitality to strangers.

14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep. 16 Live in harmony with one another; do not be arrogant, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. 17 Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. 18 If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. 19 Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, says the Lord." 20 Instead, "if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink, for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads." 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

## DEVOTIONAL

When she was three years old, our granddaughter, the youngest of four siblings and the only girl, was her mother's devoted traveling companion as they shopped and ran errands almost daily. She reigned over the back seat providing nonstop entertainment, singing to the radio and supplementing from her own personal playlist. One day as they traveled, she was running through her Sunday school repertoire, belting out "Jesus Loves Me," when suddenly there was an abrupt, uncharacteristic silence.

Then a shout: "WE ARE NOT WEAK!"

The soundtrack of her life had a new beat. It was as if she had a flash of insight into her own agency, seeing herself as someone who had the strength to act, to choose, to forge a path—not helpless but empowered.

In Romans 12, Paul changes the drumbeat of faith. For 11 chapters, he lays the foundation of belief, of what God has done for us in Christ Jesus, and now, therefore, he issues the call to agency. If you're singing "Jesus loves me" with all your heart, soul, mind and strength because you believe it, then put it into action.

Show the empathy that Jesus has for you by "one-anothering." Put yourself in the place of the mother who weeps for the child she cannot feed today. How can you have an impact? Pursue hospitality to strangers. Offer love to trans kids. Find out how to help immigrants from being treated

unfairly. Live in harmony with all. Associate with the lowly. Let love be genuine. Love one another with mutual affection.

As Paul writes, we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us. That means *we all have gifts*. Use your gifts in faithful nonconformity. Together, WE ARE NOT WEAK!

## PRAYER

Dear God, Jesus loves me. This I know. This I know. This I know. Let the sure power of that knowledge strengthen me to live it out and show that love for the world and all my fellow creatures. Make me your faithful nonconformist. Amen.

## MONDAY, MARCH 23, 2026

*The Rev. Steven Fazenbaker '20*

## SCRIPTURE

### Mark 9:30-41

30 They went on from there and passed through Galilee. He did not want anyone to know it, 31 for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, "The Son of Man is to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed, he will rise again." 32 But they did not understand what he was saying and were afraid to ask him. 33 Then they came to Capernaum, and when he was in the house he asked them, "What were you arguing about on the way?" 34 But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another who was the greatest. 35 He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all." 36 Then he took a little child and put it among them, and taking it in his arms he said to them, 37 "Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me."

38 John said to him, "Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him because he was not following us." 39 But Jesus said, "Do not stop him, for no one who does a deed of power in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me. 40 Whoever is not against us is for us. 41 For truly I tell you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you bear the name of Christ will by no means lose the reward.

## DEVOTIONAL

Twentieth century mystic Thomas Merton once wrote in a letter to his friend Fiona Gardner: "The Lord give you every blessing and joy and keep ever fresh and young your 'child's mind,' which is the only one worth having." Indeed, not long after imploring his disciples to welcome the child, Jesus goes

on to say that "whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it" (Mark 10:15). Could it be that the child Jesus put among them could also represent the child that was within each of them?

In her book, *The Only Mind Worth Having: Thomas Merton and the Child Mind*, Fiona Gardner states that pre-verbal children lack the capacity to name things, let alone assign value to them. She then suggests that adults can develop their "child's mind" by approaching the world, as children do, with curiosity rather than judgment, and she offers three practices toward this end. The first practice is to reconnect with nature. Gardner writes, "the small child does not discriminate . . . through accepting one thing such as a butterfly, and rejecting another thing such as a slug, until they are encouraged to do so." The second practice is reading and writing poetry, paradoxically using as few words as possible to describe the world with as much detail as possible. The third practice is playing, that is, engaging in activities in which being engaged in the activity is its own reward.

During this Lenten season, we are invited to discern that which is acceptable about ourselves, and that which should be rejected. Let us also practice welcoming our child within, then seeing the world through that child's eyes.

## PRAYER

Creator and creating God, when You decided to become flesh and dwell among us, You came in the form of a child. Help us to recognize the child within each of us, and to remember that child is created in Your image. In the name of the Christ Child, amen.

## TUESDAY, MARCH 24, 2026

*The Rev. Dr. Jennifer Watley Maxell '25*

## SCRIPTURE

### Amos 5:6-15

6 Seek the LORD and live,  
or he will break out against the house of Joseph like fire,  
and it will devour Bethel, with no one to quench it.  
7 Ah, you that turn justice to wormwood,  
and bring righteousness to the ground!

8 The one who made the Pleiades and Orion,  
and turns deep darkness into the morning,  
and darkens the day into night,  
who calls for the waters of the sea,  
and pours them out on the surface of the earth,  
the LORD is his name,  
9 who makes destruction flash out against the strong,  
so that destruction comes upon the fortress.

10 They hate the one who reproves in the gate,  
and they abhor the one who speaks the truth.

11 Therefore because you trample on the poor  
and take from them levies of grain,  
you have built houses of hewn stone,  
but you shall not live in them;  
you have planted pleasant vineyards,  
but you shall not drink their wine.

12 For I know how many are your transgressions,  
and how great are your sins —  
you who afflict the righteous, who take a bribe,  
and push aside the needy in the gate.

13 Therefore the prudent will keep silent in such a time;  
for it is an evil time.

14 Seek good and not evil,  
that you may live;  
and so the LORD, the God of hosts, will be with you,  
just as you have said.

15 Hate evil and love good,  
and establish justice in the gate;  
it may be that the LORD, the God of hosts,  
will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.

## DEVOTIONAL

### Leadership With A Cause

"No one who hopes in you will ever be put to shame, but shame will come on those who are treacherous without cause."

As Christians, our identity as Christ-followers is inherent in our name. However, we live in complicated, divisive times, where that simple truth has been problematized and distorted by contrarianism. The inclination to oppose or reject Christian practice and/or belief, often for the sake of likes, clicks, and platform engagement, has become a scourge among Christians on social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram.

In our efforts to delve into the complexities of our faith, to seek deeper truth, and to hold leadership accountable, too many faith leaders have adopted culturally-modeled practices steeped in disagreement, exposure, and controversy rather than the Christian practices of private conversation, mediation, and the counsel of leadership as exemplified by Jesus in Matthew 18.

When we, as leaders, engage in "call-out culture" in our attempts to address concerns within the church, regardless of the amount of public engagement, our posts become treacherous without a cause, which can only lead to shame.

The church is an imperfect institution plagued by the same ills that secular institutions face. However, one of the characteristics that makes us distinct is the way we solve our

disagreements and address impropriety. When we model ourselves in the way of Christ, we are affirmed by our desire to embody the ways of Christ. When we embody worldly divisiveness, we become treacherous without the cause of Christ to empower us.

Lent, as a time of deep personal reflection, prayer, fasting, and repentance, offers us an opportunity to take stock of areas in our lives that may go unintended: areas where we have slipped into habits that don't align with our Christian identity, areas that make us detractors and not defenders of our faith in practice, areas that draw attention to us, our posts and our platforms, but do not edify the body of Christ.

Let us commit to rooting out our contrarian tendencies, repenting, and replacing them with Christian practices of resolution.

## PRAYER

Dear Lord,

We come today confessing that sometimes we have fallen into contrarianism as we have sought to address issues within the church and culture. Lord, remind us of our Christian identity and the ways of reconciliation that Jesus modeled for us. Help us to not be like those who are treacherous without a cause, but help us to embody the cause of Christ in all we do.

In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

## WEDNESDAY, MARCH 25, 2026

*The Rev. Dr. Lisa D. Kenkeremath '11*

## SCRIPTURE

### Psalm 51

1 Have mercy on me, O God,  
according to your steadfast love;  
according to your abundant mercy,  
blot out my transgressions.  
2 Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,  
and cleanse me from my sin.  
3 For I know my transgressions,  
and my sin is ever before me.  
4 Against you, you alone, have I sinned  
and done what is evil in your sight,  
so that you are justified in your sentence  
and blameless when you pass judgment.  
5 Indeed, I was born guilty,  
a sinner when my mother conceived me.  
6 You desire truth in the inward being;  
therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.

7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;  
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

8 Let me hear joy and gladness;  
let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.  
9 Hide your face from my sins,  
and blot out all my iniquities.

10 Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
and put a new and right spirit within me.

11 Do not cast me away from your presence,  
and do not take your holy spirit from me.

12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation,  
and sustain in me a willing spirit.

13 Then I will teach transgressors your ways,  
and sinners will return to you.

14 Deliver me from bloodshed, O God,  
O God of my salvation,  
and my tongue will sing aloud of your deliverance.

15 O Lord, open my lips,  
and my mouth will declare your praise.

16 For you have no delight in sacrifice;  
if I were to give a burnt offering, you would not be pleased.

17 The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit;  
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

18 Do good to Zion in your good pleasure;  
rebuild the walls of Jerusalem;

19 then you will delight in right sacrifices,  
in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings;  
then bulls will be offered on your altar.

## DEVOTIONAL

*Against you, you alone, have I sinned (Ps 51:4).*

I have always been troubled by this verse of Psalm 51—don't we sin against other people all the time? It seems to me that sin is rarely just between God and us, as our ways of self-absorption and self-interest almost always hurt someone in some way. Calvin, though, puts the verse in context in his commentary on the Psalms: ". . . though the world should pardon [us], . . . God is the Judge with whom we have to do." In other words, human forgiveness alone cannot appease our consciences.

In Jonathan Franzen's 2021 novel *Crossroads* (a story of a disintegrating family), the characters try, and mostly fail, to live virtuous lives. Russ, a Reformed pastor, schemes to have an affair with one of the youth group moms while his wife and two of his sons are in crisis. Russ believes in his own basic goodness and righteousness, so while briefly troubled by his dalliance with a woman not his wife, he doesn't dwell on it—sin and guilt are not an issue for him.

Russ's wife, Marion, a former Catholic with a haunted past, believes that bad things that come her way are just retribution for the sins of her young adulthood. Her therapist tries to coach her toward self-forgiveness, but Marion objects: "I know you think it's sick to blame myself, but spiritually I think it's healthier." Though Russ and Marion both have distorted views of the nature of forgiveness, Marion's

view does seem spiritually more astute. For Marion, sin is not an idea or a feeling, but something real, nameable, and intractable. Marion errs in rejecting the possibility of forgiveness, but Russ errs in taking it for granted.

The psalmist does not take it for granted. Yet he knows that he has to do with a God whose nature it is to be forgiving. "The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise" (v. 17). God calls us neither to self-flagellation nor to indifference about the ways we fail to do what is right and good, but only asks us to be honest about ourselves.

## PRAYER

Holy God, You desire truth in the inward being. So, create in me a clean heart, and put Your Spirit within me. Keep me from self-delusion about the ways I do wrong or think wrongly, and help me to trust in Your grace alone to forgive, heal, and change me, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

## THURSDAY, MARCH 26, 2026

Andrew (Hill) Schleupner '23

## SCRIPTURE

### Exodus 7:25-8:19

25 Seven days passed after the LORD had struck the Nile.

1 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh and say to him, 'Thus says the LORD: Let my people go, so that they may worship me. 2 If you refuse to let them go, I will plague your whole country with frogs. 3 The river shall swarm with frogs; they shall come up into your palace, into your bedchamber and your bed, and into the houses of your officials and of your people, and into your ovens and your kneading bowls. 4 The frogs shall come up on you and on your people and on all your officials.'" 5 And the LORD said to Moses, "Say to Aaron, 'Stretch out your hand with your staff over the rivers, the canals, and the pools, and make frogs come up on the land of Egypt.'" 6 So Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt; and the frogs came up and covered the land of Egypt. 7 But the magicians did the same by their secret arts, and brought frogs up on the land of Egypt.

8 Then Pharaoh called Moses and Aaron, and said, "Pray to the LORD to take away the frogs from me and my people, and I will let the people go to sacrifice to the LORD." 9 Moses said to Pharaoh, "Kindly tell me when I am to pray for you and for your officials and for your people, that the frogs may be removed from you and your houses and be left only in the Nile." 10 And he said, "Tomorrow." Moses said, "As you say! So that you may know that there is no one like the LORD our God, 11 the frogs shall leave you and your houses and your

officials and your people; they shall be left only in the Nile." 12 Then Moses and Aaron went out from Pharaoh; and Moses cried out to the LORD concerning the frogs that he had brought upon Pharaoh. 13 And the LORD did as Moses requested: the frogs died in the houses, the courtyards, and the fields. 14 And they gathered them together in heaps, and the land stank. 15 But when Pharaoh saw that there was a respite, he hardened his heart, and would not listen to them, just as the LORD had said.

16 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Say to Aaron, 'Stretch out your staff and strike the dust of the earth, so that it may become gnats throughout the whole land of Egypt.'" 17 And they did so; Aaron stretched out his hand with his staff and struck the dust of the earth, and gnats came on humans and animals alike; all the dust of the earth turned into gnats throughout the whole land of Egypt. 18 The magicians tried to produce gnats by their secret arts, but they could not. There were gnats on both humans and animals. 19 And the magicians said to Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God!" But Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he would not listen to them, just as the LORD had said.

## DEVOTIONAL

Since graduating with my M.Div., I've become something of a property management expert within my presbytery. Given the amount of time I spend shoring up problems with old buildings that can quickly spiral out of control, I'm reading the story of the plagues with a perspective I didn't have in seminary. The plagues begin with the water of the Nile turning into blood. Next, God sends an overwhelming number of frogs up from the river and, once they've invaded everyone's homes, kills them on site. Then gnats swarm on everything: people, animals, rotting frog corpses, you name it. Interestingly, God doesn't kill the gnats, and the internet tells me that they generally live for about a week, so let's presume that between the stinking mounds of dead frogs and clouds of swarming gnats, the Egyptians had quite a week.

Does that sound about right for the life of a pastor, especially during lent? Have you had an exhausting week? Perhaps your church isn't overrun by frogs and gnats, but maybe you've had problems with heat, pests, leaks, mold, or worse. Perhaps one way to interpret the plagues is that it wasn't a series of isolated events but a chain reaction: the river became blood, which sent the frogs into the city, where they died, then the gnats multiplied without the frogs to eat them and the flies multiplied like crazy eating all the gnats and then spread disease to the livestock, and perhaps that somehow led to skin boils which attracted all the locusts, and then maybe everything went dark because the earth had had enough and needed a nap. Like most things about the Old Testament, this isn't a perfect modern analogy, so let's end it before we get to the final plague.

Here's what I'm seeing in this story through the eyes of presbytery property manager: God wanted to deliver God's people from an aging system of oppression, and I'm suggesting that some of our congregations need deliverance from their buildings that are constantly suffering plagues. If your building seems to experience annual chain reactions that require repairs upon repairs, you know the oppression your building wields over your ministry budget. Perhaps it's time to act like your building is Pharaoh, and tell it to let God's people go.

## PRAYER

Lord, we thank You for the buildings we worship in, the lands You consecrate with Your holy presence. We ask that You continue to bless us with the energy and the funds to care for the property You've blessed Your people with, and give us the wisdom to know when it's time to release it. No matter what season of life our property is in, fill us with gratitude for how Your church has grown within its walls and an awareness for how it is growing beyond the building.

## FRIDAY, MARCH 27, 2026

*The Rev. Jacob Judy '19*

## SCRIPTURE

### Mark 10:32-45

32 They were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them; they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. He took the twelve aside again and began to tell them what was to happen to him, 33 saying, "Look, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death; then they will hand him over to the gentiles; 34 they will mock him and spit upon him and flog him and kill him, and after three days he will rise again."

35 James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to him and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you." 36 And he said to them, "What is it you want me to do for you?" 37 And they said to him, "Appoint us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory." 38 But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" 39 They replied, "We are able." Then Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized you will be baptized, 40 but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to appoint, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared."

41 When the ten heard this, they began to be angry with James and John. 42 So Jesus called them and said to them, "You know that among the gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. 43 But it is not so among you; instead, whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, 44 and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. 45 For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many."

## DEVOTIONAL

Jesus responds to James and John's request with a profound statement and a sobering challenge: "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" It does not seem possible that James and John would be unaware of the implications of their request. Remember, they had traveled with Jesus from the beginning of his ministry, which means they were witnesses to several astonishing miracles, present for Jesus's transfiguration, and had a first-hand experience of how Jesus treated those he encountered. Yet, their ill-timed, selfish request for power and position in Jesus' kingdom makes it clear that they have misunderstood what Jesus just told them about the events that would take place in Jerusalem.

However, Jesus' next words are clear and to the point, "But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Many of us are nodding our heads in resounding agreement, while murmuring to ourselves, "yep, those words make it clear, that is what it means to be a disciple!" So, as Easter approaches, let us remember our affirmation that being a disciple of Jesus is not about lording our perceptions of righteousness over others to receive their praise; it is about walking with others as they enter Jerusalem—as they are mocked, flogged, spit on, and unjustly persecuted. Being a disciple of Jesus means that we give ourselves in obedient service to God so others will learn about the power of Christ's love.

## PRAYER

Mighty and loving God, we thank You for Your Son, Who demonstrated to us a servant's heart. Transform our selfish desire for power and position into a desire to demonstrate the power of Christ's love, as seen in the position of a servant. We ask this in the name of Jesus and through the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

## SATURDAY, MARCH 28, 2026

*The Rev. Dr. Kurt J. Helmcke '10*

### SCRIPTURE

#### 2 Corinthians 4:13-18

13 But just as we have the same spirit of faith that is in accordance with scripture—"I believed, and so I spoke"—we also believe, and therefore we also speak, 14 because we know that the one who raised Jesus will also raise us with Jesus and will present us with you in his presence. 15 Indeed, everything is for your sake, so that grace, when it has extended to more and more people, may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.

16 So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. 17 For our slight, momentary affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure, 18 because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen, for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal.

### DEVOTIONAL

Quilts have a powerful capacity for transmitting comfort. That's exactly what the Holy Spirit has been doing through our congregation's quilting group, who recently shared with me the names of several people to whom they have given handsewn quilts. I praised God as I pictured each of these recipients being comforted in their afflictions by the Holy Spirit, along with a quilt delivered by these agents of care.

In 2 Corinthians, the Apostle Paul honestly shares his struggles in a way that invites us to consider our own. Some struggles present themselves as minor inconveniences; others threaten to unravel the very fabric of our lives. Those of us called by God to ministries of care get a front-row seat to observe the suffering of others. As our Lenten journey draws closer to Holy Week, we ready ourselves to witness the suffering of Jesus for our sake.

We are well-acquainted with the aspects of life and loss that drain us of our hope and give rise to feelings of discouragement. Paul's bold claim that "we do not lose heart" (v. 16) seems remarkable. What gives Paul such hopeful confidence in the face of what he knows is "wasting away"? He describes a renewal of our inner nature that is happening day by day, springing from an eternal source, a "weight of glory" that when compared to our afflictions make them seem light. It's a confidence we have because "the one who raised Jesus will also raise us with Jesus" (v. 14).

This eternal weight of glory that we have in Christ is like the comfort of quilts, the old-school version of today's weighted blankets, prescribed for those who suffer from stress and anxiety. The weight of the blanket provides something like a human hug, deep pressure stimulation that settles us into calmness. This describes well what happens when we consider ourselves blanketed in the comforting weight of God's eternal promises.

### PRAYER

God of all comfort, thank you for those who receive your comfort and pass it along to others, sometimes with a quilt that wraps us in warmth. Remind us of the eternal weight of glory we have in Jesus that wraps us in comfort amid our afflictions, renewing our hope. Amen.

## SUNDAY, MARCH 29, 2026

*The Rev. Dr. Nancy Lowmaster '11/21*

### SCRIPTURE

#### Psalm 42

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

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

When shall I come and behold  
the face of God?

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

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

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

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

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

8 By day the Lord commands his steadfast love,

and at night his song is with me,  
a prayer to the God of my life.

9 I say to God, my rock,  
"Why have you forgotten me?  
Why must I walk about mournfully  
because the enemy oppresses me?"  
10 As with a deadly wound in my body,  
my adversaries taunt me,  
while they say to me continually,  
"Where is your God?"  
11 Why are you cast down, O my soul,  
and why are you disquieted within me?  
Hope in God, for I shall again praise him,  
my help and my God.

## DEVOTIONAL

Some have observed that the most frequent divine command throughout Scripture is "Do not be afraid." "Do not be afraid" is what God tells Abram when he laments that has no heir (Gen 15:1-6), what the LORD tells the people through the prophet Isaiah as he reassures them of God's salvation even though the way ahead seems dark (Isa 43:1-2), what the angel tells the women when the stone was rolled back, revealing an empty tomb (Matt 28:1-7).

If "Do not be afraid" is Scripture's most frequent command, the second may be "Remember." Psalm 42 illustrates the close connection between these two commands. The poet is facing a time of uncertainty, challenge, even persecution. The psalmist feels deep anxiety and a distance from God; fear threatens to overwhelm. But then the Spirit whispers, "Remember." Remember God's never-ending love, poured out extravagantly in the past. Remember God's faithfulness to all God's promises to rescue and restore. Remember the community of the faith-filled which buoys us when our own faith wavers, prays with us and for us when we are empty, and remembers for us when we forget. Remembering leads away from fear and toward hope: the assurance of God's loving presence with us. Remember and have hope—the trust that God will make a way even where there seems to be no way.

On this Palm Sunday, even as we hold palm branches aloft, we stare at the deep darkness into which Jesus descends during Holy Week. Like the first disciples, we watch from the shadows as Jesus faces terrible cruelty and injustice, always trusting His Father and never abandoning the holy way of love and peace. As we each face our own dark times in our lives, may we be Christ-like in our trust. "Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my help and my God."

## PRAYER

Lord God, I live so much of my life afraid—of circumstances I can't control, problems I can't fix, dangers I can't foresee. Help me remember Your perfect love that casts out fear. Fill

my heart with hope—not with a flimsy wish for the future, but with a confident assurance in Your abiding presence and a deep trust in Your saving grace today. In Christ I pray, amen.

## MONDAY, MARCH 30, 2026

*The Rev. Dr. Wilbur C. Douglass III '81*

### SCRIPTURE

#### Psalm 121

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

## DEVOTIONAL

Last winter, I joined my friend on a one-week tour of the state and national parks near the Grand Canyon. We spent the last two days in Grand Canyon National Park. On the final day, our bus dropped us off along the trail of the South Rim, about three miles from our hotel. We began the hike back to our hotel, but I slowly drifted behind the others.

Taking in the majestic, awe-inspiring sights along the trail, I realized that photobooks and verbal descriptions from previous travelers could never fully equate to what I was personally observing. Eventually, I found myself all alone. Even worse, I had become quite fatigued, with several miles still remaining on my trudge home.

Although all alone, I never felt lonely. The words of Psalm 121 could not have been more assuring for me as I continued my journey. *"My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth."* I was hiking through God's creation, and God was my source of strength. I remembered then, and at all times, that even when all others leave me or forsake me, it is God alone who guides me and protects me. *"The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade at your right hand."*

Too often, we rely solely on ourselves to overcome the obstacles and challenges in our lives. We quickly forget that God is our constant source of strength. God created this world, and it is God who controls that which God created.

During this Lenten season we need to pause, reflect, and remember that we serve an awesome, loving, and omnipresent God. Our God protects us and guides us in our life's journey, especially in our darkest and most challenging times. Although we will encounter and be surrounded by the world's evil, we most certainly do not have to succumb to it. *"The Lord will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life."* May this Lenten season serve as a sacred time of renewal and recommitment to our Sovereign Lord and Savior.

## PRAYER

Gracious God, You are our eternal Help and Strength. Renew our hearts, our spirits, and our devotion to You, allowing us to experience You in ways unknown. Guide us to a place of heightened revelation. We pray in the precious name of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

## TUESDAY, MARCH 31, 2026

*The Rev. Dr. MaryAnn Rennie '24*

## SCRIPTURE

### Lamentations 1:17-22

17 Zion stretches out her hands,  
but there is no one to comfort her;  
the Lord has commanded against Jacob  
that his neighbors should become his foes;  
Jerusalem has become  
a filthy thing among them.  
18 The Lord is in the right,  
for I have rebelled against his word;  
but hear, all you peoples,  
and behold my suffering;  
my young women and young men  
have gone into captivity.  
19 I called to my lovers,  
but they deceived me;  
my priests and elders  
perished in the city  
while seeking food  
to revive their lives.  
20 Look, O Lord, at how distressed I am;  
my stomach churns;  
my heart is wrung within me  
because I have been very rebellious.  
In the street the sword bereaves;  
in the house it is like death.  
21 They heard how I was groaning,

with no one to comfort me.  
All my enemies heard of my trouble;  
they are glad that you have done it.  
Bring on the day that you have announced,  
and let them be as I am.  
22 Let all their evildoing come before you,  
and deal with them  
as you have dealt with me  
because of all my transgressions;  
for my groans are many,  
and my heart

## DEVOTIONAL

In the Scots language, "to greet" is not always to offer a welcome. "Greetin'" is something that upset children do, or fans of the losing team, or disgruntled workers. In Scots, "greet" means weeping, crying, lamenting, complaining, or grumbling. In the Scottish song "Coulter's Candy," a child sits on a mother's knee "greetin' for a wee bawbee," crying for a small coin.

Sometimes people get together for a "greetin' meeting." This is a meeting where a group can share their grumbles about the world and the sadness of their lot. The almost dismissive term captures an unintentional moment of raw humanity embraced by human kindness. Greetin' meetings can be profound moments of sorrow spoken aloud and embraced with the compassion of others. The companions may not fix the grief, but words and presence offer a hook of hope or a small foundation from which life might begin again.

A greetin' meeting can traverse between Scots and English dialects as from the depths of despair we can be welcomed into the care and compassion of others.

Lamentations, while not a greetin' meeting, captures the sorrow and distance of these encounters. Zion stretches out her hands, but there is no one to comfort her. In Holy Week we are drawn into that same sense of isolation. As Jesus walks between Bethany and Jerusalem, the circle of friends grows smaller, the shadows lengthen, the distance between human pain and divine presence feels vast.

Even from the depths of lament, there are glimmers that God's welcome is beginning to stir. Verse 22 reflects the God who seems absent reaching into human life once more.

Holy Week is a bumpy ride that contrasts human failings with divine love and compassion. But it is a bumpy ride that reminds us that beyond the greetin' of lament and sorrow, we are greeted with God's embrace.

## PRAYER

Lord of sorrow,  
Whose patience is inexhaustible:  
with each step we walk this week

the burden of Your sorrow will curve our shoulders;  
with each step we walk,  
Your words will challenge our thoughts and our actions;  
with each step we walk,  
Your presence with us will feel more distant.  
Christ of compassion,  
whose purpose is life-restoring:  
with each step You take,  
You will be part of human experience;  
with each step You take,  
You will demonstrate love in action;  
with each step You take,  
God's welcome will be declared.  
Amen.

## WEDNESDAY, APRIL 1, 2026

*The Rev. Anthony R. C. Hita '13*

### SCRIPTURE

#### Mark 12:1-11

1 Then he began to speak to them in parables. "A man planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a pit for the winepress, and built a watchtower; then he leased it to tenants and went away. 2 When the season came, he sent a slave to the tenants to collect from them his share of the produce of the vineyard. 3 But they seized him and beat him and sent him away empty-handed. 4 And again he sent another slave to them; this one they beat over the head and insulted. 5 Then he sent another, and that one they killed. And so it was with many others; some they beat, and others they killed. 6 He had still one other, a beloved son. Finally he sent him to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' 7 But those tenants said to one another, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.' 8 So they seized him, killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard. 9 What then will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others. 10 Have you not read this scripture:

'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; 11 this was the Lord's doing, and it is amazing in our eyes'?"

### DEVOTIONAL

April Fools' Day reminds us of how easy it is to mistake one thing for another, to see mercy as foolishness, and wisdom in folly. In the parable of the Wicked Tenants, at first, the vineyard owner seems to be the fool. Any sensible person would have acted after the first offense, yet he continues to send servants despite escalating violence, until it finally claims his son. By sending multiple envoys without retaliation, the

vineyard owner is demonstrating remarkable patience and grace, and even implying that if the tenants simply deliver the harvest and return what was entrusted to them, reconciliation is still a possibility.

Instead, the tenants show themselves as the actual fools by mistaking grace for weakness. They imagine they can exploit the owner's generosity by killing his son and seizing his inheritance—never realizing that they are destroying the very foundation of their livelihood. Their ambition exceeds their grasp; they fool themselves into believing they can become heirs through their own violent means, and in so doing, lose even the ability to remain workers.

Holy Week confronts this same ambition in us. Our foolishness is believing that we can seize, through our own cleverness or might, what can only ever be received from God as grace.

### PRAYER

Lord God of mercy and patient love, as we drive our world ever further away from Your ways, we inflict on each other greater injustice and pain. Yet, in Jesus, You have shown us a different, better way to love each other as You first loved us. Open our eyes that we may yet turn away from our self-destructive course and back to You. In Jesus' name, amen.

## THURSDAY, APRIL 2, 2026

*The Rev. Dr. Carolyn Fenner Moss '88/22*

### SCRIPTURE

#### Mark 14:12-25

12 On the first day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover lamb is sacrificed, his disciples said to him, "Where do you want us to go and make the preparations for you to eat the Passover?" 13 So he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, "Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you; follow him, 14 and wherever he enters, say to the owner of the house, 'The Teacher asks: Where is my guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' 15 He will show you a large room upstairs, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there." 16 So the disciples set out and went to the city and found everything as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover meal.

17 When it was evening, he came with the twelve. 18 And when they had taken their places and were eating, Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me." 19 They began to be distressed and to say to him one after another, "Surely, not I?" 20 He said to them, "It is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread into the bowl with me. 21 For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that one by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that one not to have been born."

22 While they were eating, he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to them, and said, "Take; this is my body." 23 Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, and all of them drank from it. 24 He said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. 25 Truly I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

## DEVOTIONAL

Jesus has returned to Jerusalem to shouts of "Hosanna" and "Alleluia." Now, the season of Passover begins. The time to remember what God has done for the people of Israel is affirmed and celebrated. Jesus sends the disciples out to find a place to gather together, and just as he said, it's available, so the table for Passover is prepared.

We know what is to come, but the disciples had to be feeling really good, no troubles. The room was there just as Jesus said, and they prepared everything. And what does Jesus say? Not "this is great" or "good job"; rather, Jesus says: "Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me."

Whoa. Jesus, that was not on script! Where did that come from? And yet, the meal continues. The bread is blessed and broken. One of the cups is filled and shared with all at the table, including Judas, who a few short verses earlier was noted to have taken money from the chief priests to betray him. Jesus partakes of the Passover meal with all of his disciples, even the one who will betray him. That may just give us pause to think about who God is—what the character of God is that Jesus would sit at table, break bread, share the cup with one who would betray him so seriously that Jesus will end up dying on a cross.

As you journey through this day and perhaps attend or lead a Maundy Thursday worship time, consider once again how great and deep, how rich and strong the love of God is for creation—for you and for me as revealed through the life, the imminent death, and—even more astoundingly—the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

## PRAYER

God, we give You thanks and praise this Maundy Thursday for the gift of Jesus Christ, who through His life, death, and resurrection has offered and continues to offer us a restored relationship with You. May we never take that gift for granted. In Jesus' name. Amen.

## FRIDAY, APRIL 3, 2026

*The Rev. Minh Phuong Towner '13*

## SCRIPTURE

### John 13:36-38

36 Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus answered, "Where I am going, you cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterward." 37 Peter said to him, "Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you." 38 Jesus answered, "Will you lay down your life for me? Very truly, I tell you, before the cock crows, you will have denied me three times.

## DEVOTIONAL

### God's Sustaining Grace

Have you ever made a bold promise, only to break it? Maybe you told a friend, "I'll always be there for you," but life got busy. Or you vowed to God, "I'll never fall into that sin again," only to stumble days later. In John 13:36-38, we meet Peter in such a moment. His heart is sincere, his words are passionate, but his confidence rests on shaky ground.

This conversation happens between Jesus and Peter during the Last Supper. Jesus had just washed His disciples' feet (vv. 1-17) and predicted Peter's betrayal (vv. 21-30).

The atmosphere was tense and intimate. Here, Peter is known for his impulsive courage. In Jewish culture, loyalty to a rabbi was a matter of honor—and it was personal as well. So, Peter's pledge "I will lay down my life for you" was not empty words but resonated with sincerity. Peter truly believed he could stand firm, even to death. Peter's boldness reflects this expectation; he imagines living out his loyalty through physical courage. However, Jesus knows Peter's weaknesses: that human strength falters under pressure.

In Roman culture, crucifixion was one of the most shameful deaths imaginable. To follow Jesus to the cross was socially and politically unthinkable. Peter's claim shows his misunderstanding of the cost of discipleship; here, Jesus speaks of a different kind of discipleship: through suffering and death.

Jesus exposes Peter's presumption: "*Will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly, I say to you, the rooster will not crow till you have denied me three times.*" The triple denial contrasts with Peter's triple affirmation later in chapter 21, and this shows that failure is not final when God's grace restores. Like a GPS warning, "*You're about to take a wrong turn,*" Jesus gives Peter a spiritual warning—not to condemn, but to guide him back later.

In life, we ought not to let confidence like Peter's guide us; instead, let humility be the way. Victory comes because we abide in Christ; it does not rely on our self-effort. When we face our failure, it does not mean we face the end—we need to believe that there is hope for us to be restored through God's grace. As a branch cut off from the vine withers quickly, our strength apart from Christ is dry and powerless. But when we are connected to Christ, we thrive.

## PRAYER

Lord Jesus, thank you for loving us even when we fail. Teach us to depend on Your strength, not on our own strength. When we stumble, remind us that there is hope for restoration through Your grace. Thank you for Your unconditional love and Your ultimate sacrifice on the cross for us. Help us to follow You faithfully, even when the path is hard. Amen.

## SATURDAY, APRIL 4, 2026

*The Rev. Christopher Taylor '19*

## SCRIPTURE

### Psalm 143

1 Hear my prayer, O Lord;  
give ear to my supplications in your faithfulness;  
answer me in your righteousness.  
2 Do not enter into judgment with your servant,  
for no one living is righteous before you.  
3 For the enemy has pursued me,  
crushing my life to the ground,  
making me sit in darkness like those long dead.  
4 Therefore my spirit faints within me;  
my heart within me is appalled.  
5 I remember the days of old;  
I think about all your deeds;  
I meditate on the works of your hands.  
6 I stretch out my hands to you;  
my soul thirsts for you like a parched land. Selah  
7 Answer me quickly, O Lord;  
my spirit fails.  
Do not hide your face from me,  
or I shall be like those who go down to the Pit.  
8 Let me hear of your steadfast love in the morning,  
for in you I put my trust.  
Teach me the way I should go,  
for to you I lift up my soul.  
9 Save me, O Lord, from my enemies;  
I have fled to you for refuge.  
10 Teach me to do your will,  
for you are my God.  
Let your good spirit lead me  
on a level path.

11 For your name's sake, O Lord, preserve my life.  
In your righteousness bring me out of trouble.  
12 In your steadfast love cut off my enemies,  
and destroy all my adversaries,  
for I am your servant.

## DEVOTIONAL

I had a pretty bad day recently. It was one of those days you wish was over before reaching noon. A comedy of errors and self-inflicted mistakes caused undue stress and prolonged an already busy schedule. I could have used Psalm 143 late that evening as my head finally hit the pillow, replaying the difficulties of the day. When read as an evening prayer, I see Psalm 143 pushing us to acknowledge reality and look ahead with faith in God.

"Let me hear of your steadfast love in the morning, for in you I put my trust" reads verse eight in particular.

How fitting for a day like today. Tucked between the pain of Good Friday and the joy of Easter Morning, Holy Saturday is a day of quiet uncertainty and waiting in the darkness of death for what tomorrow may bring. Like the psalmist, our spirits are indeed faint and our hearts appalled at the reality of Jesus' death. We wait with creation and acknowledge that the world is not as it should be.

Yet, we wait with hope and a faithful trust in God. Despite the bad day, despite the injustices and suffering of the world, and despite the fact that our savior lies lifeless in the tomb, we recall the works of God's hands in all ages past. In this, we believe that the morning will bring something new and good. Until then, may we trust that God's redemptive hand is at work amidst this waiting.

## PRAYER

Hey God, today is a hard day. We mourn that Jesus suffered death at the hands of others. May Your steadfast love meet us in the morning and bring a newness to life that we cannot yet see. With trust in You we pray, amen.

## SUNDAY, APRIL 5, 2026

*Elder Hunter Steinitz '22*

## SCRIPTURE

### Luke 24:13-35

13 Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem,  
14 and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. 15 While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, 16 but their

eyes were kept from recognizing him. 17 And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad. 18 Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?" 19 He asked them, "What things?" They replied, "The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, 20 and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. 21 But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. 22 Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, 23 and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. 24 Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him." 25 Then he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! 26 Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" 27 Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

28 As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. 29 But they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over." So he went in to stay with them. 30 When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. 31 Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. 32 They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?" 33 That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. 34 They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!" 35 Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

## DEVOTIONAL

The road to Emmaus is one of those stories that gets right to the heart of who God is and how we are drawn into relationship with God. The gospel writer seems to be panning the camera away from the "action" at the tomb and toward the stranger who breaks bread with his companions. It is in the sharing of food at a table that God reveals Godself—not just on Easter, but every day, at every table where we sit down. Today we celebrate the resurrection of our Lord who conquered death! But we do not just celebrate this once a year; we are Easter people! We live in the light of the resurrection every day. And as Easter people, we search for God in the tangible.

As we sit down to our Easter spread, how are we encountering God in our midst? What will be revealed to us in the breaking of bread? The mystery found at the Table is found at every table, and it unites all of us into a truth deeper than ourselves. Sara Miles, in her book *Take This Bread*, puts it this way:

All of it pointed to a force stronger than the anxious formulas of religion: a radically inclusive love that accompanied people in the most ordinary of actions—eating, drinking, walking—and stayed with them, through fear, even past death. That love meant giving yourself to feed and live for others. The stories illuminated the holiness located in mortal human bodies, and the promise that people could see God by cherishing all those different bodies the way God did.

As we gather around our tables to celebrate with those we love, I will be looking for the stranger in the midst of familiar faces. As we begin to eat together, I will be savoring the love poured out in flavors and textures. As we embrace one another, I will feel the touch of God in the arms of the other mortals at the Table.

## PRAYER

Oh sacred head once wounded, we praise You in Your victory over death! In your resurrection, your body is broken and whole, mortal and eternal. Be with us, Lord, as we gather at our tables. Remind us that all tables are Your Table. Unveil Your mystery and pour out Your love through the bread that we break together. In Your holy and victorious name, Alleluia and Amen!

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