

Forty Days of Prayer with the Byron Presbyterian Church



*"Get out of bed, Jerusalem!
Wake up. Put your face in the sunlight.
God's great glory has risen for you.
The whole earth is wrapped in darkness,
But God rises on you,
God's sunrise glory breaks over you!"*

Isaiah 60:1-2, The Message

Prayer Life at the Byron Presbyterian Church

In addition to all of the ways that you may pray on their own – in the morning, at bedtime, before meals, before going to the doctor – our church welcomes your involvement in the congregational prayer:

Hold up your hand during prayer time in the worship service, and share your worry, or share your joy! Either way, we're excited to pray with you!

Inform the pastor or the church secretary in advance and we can include your prayer in the printed worship bulletin each Sunday, or in the Church Newsletter.

Activate our "Prayer Chain"! We have a large group of people in the church and community who are ready to pray for your special need. Call Laura at 548-2245 or Jean 548-2417.

Please take a close look at our church web page, www.byronfpc.org, and look for the page where you can add your prayers. It's anonymous, and prayers from around the world get added.

First Presbyterian Church of Byron
6293 West Main
Byron, NY 14422
585-548-2800

Forty Days of Prayer and Study

It may surprise you to learn that the "Forty Days" tradition of Lent, lasting from Ash Wednesday to Easter, is actually forty six days in duration. The difference is explained by the fact that Sundays – celebrations of the resurrection – are not considered to be part of Lent. Use the space for Sunday devotions for your own anticipation of the resurrection to come!

Day 1 Wednesday, February 25 "Ash Wednesday"

"The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff--they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD my whole life long." [Psalm 23]

My Story: This is a very special Psalm for me. It has meant a lot to me throughout my life and to my mom and grandmother, both of whom have passed on. I have relied on this for peace, hope and encouragement.

My Prayer: O God, help us find strength and encouragement in the familiar words of this well-known Psalm. Help us see our lives not as a short moment in the course of history, but with a purpose and destiny that reaches eternity. Bless as we begin these forty days of prayer and study.

Melanie Nesbitt, Deacon

Day 2 Thursday, February 26

"Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." [Matthew 19:14]

My Story: This is the inscription I wrote for my granddaughter Payton inside the cover of her Bible I gave her in August. It opens with a Bible verse. I am happy to share with the church the message I gave her.

My Prayer: Dear Payton, I give you this Bible for your second

birthday. Please remember: If God brings you to it, He will bring you through it. Happy moments, praise God. Difficult moments, seek God. Quiet moments, worship God. Painful moments, trust God. Every moment, thank God. At any time in your life, when you need an answer, you can find it in this book. You are loved.

Jan Kent, Elder

Day 3 Friday, February 27

He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. 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." [Mark 8:34-9:1]

My Story: Take up the Cross and follow Jesus? The Cross seems so distant from my daily life in our town! Where is the Cross when I'm eating breakfast in the morning? Where is the Cross as I drive down Rt. 237 towards the church? Where is the Cross while I'm riding at stationary bike at the Y in Batavia? Where is the Cross when I stop at the grocery store on the way home in the evening? Where is the Cross as I end the day watching some television? The challenge of these Forty Days leading up to Easter is to look for the Cross in everyday life. It's not easy. Where do you see people in need? What is your need? When you think about things like this, you are coming closer to the Cross. Jesus saw the need – saw my need - and responds! But in responding he upsets the balance of power and it leads to the cross. As we respond to the needs of others what balance are we upsetting? As we respond to the needs of others are we moving closer to the Cross?

My Prayer: For the people in need that I see every day – the lost, the jobless, the worried, the forgotten, the discouraged, the victims. And pray for me (and you) to see the need in others and not move away from them ... but closer! This is what the Cross leads us to do and be.

Rev. James Renfrew, Pastor

Day 4 Saturday, February 28

"Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the pledge of a good conscience toward God) through the resurrection of Christ." [1 Peter 3:21]

My Story: I am a "new" Christian, if you will. I try to attend church as often as I can and I try to love my life the way I think Jesus would want me to live. However, there has been one aspect of my faith journey that I have not completed ... being baptized. I understand that baptism, isn't a guarantee into heaven or that by being baptized I am suddenly this wonderful person. I just think that it would be nice to make this personal commitment. I know that as a human being I am weak and loaded with sin, but by accepting Jesus as my Lord and with the help of my fellow church members ... I may just be on the right track.

My Prayer: I pray that as each day passes I am closer to knowing Jesus Christ.

Marie Andes

Resurrection! Sunday, March 1



Day 5 Monday, March 2

"For I know the plans I have for you", declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart." [Jeremiah 29:11-13]

My Story: I often refer to this passage when I am wondering about the direction of my life and what should be next. As I plan to retire in the next few months, I wonder what paths my life will or should take. How much volunteer work should I do? Should I work part-time? If not, will there be enough money? Both in the past and now in the present, reading this passage assures me that God has a plan for me, I don't need to work it all out for myself. This is not always an easy realization for someone who tends to plan and prepare for even the small things in life. These words are a reminder that God is in charge and I will see the plan unfold as it was meant to be. It is a reminder that the part I have to play is to seek God with my whole heart and trust in His plan for me.

My Prayer: Dear God, be with me and all those who are unclear about the path their life should take, especially in these difficult times. Let each of us be assured of your love for us, and deepen within us the sure knowledge that you have a plan for each person that will see us through any period of uncertainty if we seek you with all our hearts. May the comfort of Jesus Christ surround and sustain each person as we go forth into the future with the hope that can only come from our trust and faith in you. Amen.

Ruth Andes

Day 6 Tuesday, March 3

"The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff--they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the

presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD my whole life long.” [Psalm 23]

My Story: I often repeat the words of this psalm to myself when I am worried about things. Some things that I worry about are within my control, but many things are not. As I say the words, it helps me to focus on the things I can act on with God’s help. What about things that are beyond my control? In those cases I pray for the people who have the opportunity and ability to act; some of them known to me, some of them not.

My Prayer: Please pray for me, that when I am anywhere near the “shadow of death” I am reminded by you of God’s great love and care for me in Jesus Christ. And I will pray for you anytime I sense that you are near that shadow in any way, to remind you of God’s great love and care for you! Also pray for peace in our families, community and world. Pray for students and teachers in our schools. Pray for the early arrival of spring flowers.

Anonymous

Day 7 Wednesday, March 4

This, then, is how you should pray: “Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever”. [Matthew 6:7-13]

My Story: We hear this prayer every Sunday. We repeat it so often that we hardly pay attention to the words we are repeating from memory. So here’s an idea to try in the weeks leading up to Easter: try putting it in your own words. A lot of the words in the prayer are archaic, using vocabulary that is no longer in fashion, words like “art”, “hallowed”, “thy”, “and debts and debtors”. Make your own translation as a way to bring out the meaning of the prayer. Share it with your family, or with friends in the church. Most of all, use it as you try to teach the children in your life its meaning. A prayer like this has power to open our eyes to see heavenly things, and to open our inner mind to the truth of God’s love and care, in a hospital room, at a soup kitchen, or anywhere else we may be.

My Prayer: O God, there are so many things in our traditions that no longer surprise us, such as the memorized words of the “Lord’s Prayer”. Help us to hear new surprises in old words!

Anonymous

Day 8 Thursday, March 5

“You groped your way through the murk once, but no longer. You’re out in the open now. The bright light of Christ makes your way plain. So no more stumbling around. Get on with it! The good, the right, the true – these are the actions appropriate for daylight hours. Figure out what will

please Christ, and then do it.” [Ephesians 5:8-14, from The Message]

My Story: The reading urges us to seek spiritual maturity. Were you ever immature? Come on, now, be honest! Are you mature now? What’s the difference? When did you cross over from immaturity to maturity? Is there a set age? 12, 16, 21 years old? Here are some signs of maturity, I think: To be mature means that you no longer believe that driving fast impresses other people. To be mature means that when you go to the store you don’t immediately head to the candy rack. To be mature means that you think clearly about the consequences of your actions instead of just living for the moment. Is there maturity in faith, too?

My Prayer: Help us so that our faith is never content, but always growing and maturing.

Rev. James Renfrew, Pastor

Day 9 Friday, March 6

When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they came together, and one of them, a teacher of the Law, tried to tarp him with a question. “Teacher,” he asked, “which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” Jesus answered, “ ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and most important commandment. The second most important commandment is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as you love yourself.’ The whole Law of Moses and the teachings of the prophets depend on these two commandments.” [Matthew 22:34-4] (compare with Mark 12:28-34)

My Story: We turn to the Bible for so many reasons, but often it seems to be for simple guidance and direction on how to live our lives in a way that is consistent with God’s word. For me, anyway, this has on occasion resulted in no small confusion! Is this an allegory, a parable, or to be taken literally? My interpretation is different from my friend’s: which is more correct? Was the writer speaking to a particular people in a specific time, or are his words meant for all people in all times? Have the translations of this passage over time actually changed the meaning slightly? I need an anchor! Something that is clear to fall back on when I’m lost. The readings above have been just that for me in so many times of needing help. They are clear, the words of Jesus, obviously meant literally, and they are the bedrock upon which everything else depends. These words have so often guided me and made things clear: may they do the same for you.

My Prayer: Please Lord, when we are lost, when we are confused, when we try to make your words say what we want to hear instead of what You are trying to tell us, let us remember these two commandments on which hang all the law and the prophets according to Jesus Himself. Help us to love You our God, and then our neighbors, first and foremost in all situations and never to lose sight of the truth that this is where it starts and ends.

Jim Moore

Day 10 Saturday, March 7

"Let him have all your worries and cares, for he is always thinking about you and watching everything that concerns you." [1 Peter 5:7]

My Story: I have found that I often try to work out my problems and worries through my own efforts and only after a lot of struggling, grumbling and sleepless nights do I realize that I have forgotten to include God as part of the solution. Once I reach out to him in prayer and the belief that he loves me unconditionally and wants what's best for me, my problems are put into perspective and I can address those same issues with a sense of calm and peace knowing that even though the solution may not be what I wanted, God is directing the paths of those I pray for and the concerns that touch my heart.

My Prayer: Lord, please help me to remember that I do not have to face anything alone and when problems arise, help me to trust in you rather than relying on my own efforts to "fix things". Please guide my actions and words so that I may be a part of your solution to the problems that I encounter. Pray for those who experience difficult problems and situations everyday that they too may be comforted by the guidance and peace of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Pray for our soldiers fighting in foreign lands, our police serving our communities and for peace in a troubled world.

Patty Welch

Resurrection! Sunday, March 8 (Growing in Faith Sunday)



Day 11 Monday, March 9

"God can pour on the blessings in astonishing ways so that you're ready for anything and everything, more than just ready to do what needs to be done. As one psalmist puts it,

*He throws caution to the winds,
giving to the needy in reckless abandon,
His right-living, right-giving ways
never run out, never wear out. (Psalm 112:9)*

This most generous God who gives seed to the farmer that becomes bread for your meals is more than extravagant with you. He gives you something you can then give away, which grows into full-formed lives, robust in God, wealthy in every way, so that you can be generous in every way, producing with us great praise to God." [II Corinthians 9:8-11 – The Message, paraphrase by Eugene Peterson]

My Story: When I was growing up, the church I attended emphasized a somber, internal self examination and evaluation period for the Lenten season. The goal was to repent (change your ways) and get right with God prior to Easter and to be grateful for the gift of God in Jesus. In my recollections, it seems as though the gratitude part of the Lenten season was often lost in the dour, mournful words and dirge-like music. While Lent for me is a time of self examination of one's faith, it seems to me that it should also be a time of thanksgiving for what God has done in the past, particularly in Jesus, and for what God is doing in our lives today.

As economic conditions have declined, I have tried to hold onto a positive attitude of gratitude. Christmas, following closely after the difficulties with the economy became apparent, gave me a focus for an attitude of thankfulness. Since the beginning of the New Year, I have been looking for a scripture passage which recognizes and summarizes a spirit of gratitude. Recently, the passage above came to my attention. I particularly like the everyday language of The Message paraphrase. It not only reminds how generously we have all received, but lifts up and encourages being generous to others as a way of praising God.

The reason for this letter to Corinth by the Apostle Paul was to try to raise funds to provide assistance to fellow Christians in the Jerusalem church. Paul lifts up for the Corinthians how richly blessed they have been and are. Because they have received so richly from God's extravagant generosity, Paul tells them that they should have an attitude of abundance which will allow generous giving to others.

I suspect that we daily take many blessings for granted. Perhaps part of our Lenten preparation for Easter should be to focus on how richly blessed we are.

My Prayer: God, be with me in this Lenten season of preparation. Guide me to look inward and examine my faith's strengths and weaknesses. Support and sustain me as I resolve to be more faithful in every way. Give me insight into the many ways in which I have been and am blessed by Your generosity. Help me to give thanks by sharing of my bounty with others and in so doing, praise You.

Remembering the example of Jesus, I pray. Amen.

Rev. David Franke

Day 12 Tuesday, March 10

If you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive you. [Matthew 6:15]

My Story: When I read this verse, it reminded of a time, many years ago, when I was erroneously accused by an anonymous co-worker of being instrumental in having

another colleague fired. This bothered me tremendously, and I always got a sick feeling in my stomach whenever I thought of it. I carried this burden with me for years, never quite being able to let it go. One day a very wise pastor preached about leaving your burdens with God. "Let go and let God" is what she told us that day. It was just what I had needed to hear after all those years. I decided to forgive my 'accuser' and immediately felt the burden lifted. Since I made that decision, I very seldom even think of this incident anymore. Reading the verse brought it back to mind. God forgave me for not being 'big enough' to immediately forgive the person who had put me through so much pain. How wonderful it feels to know that I am forgiven.

My Prayer: Heavenly Father, nothing can replace the peace of mind that comes with forgiving and forgiveness. Make me always mindful of the need to forgive. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Gwen George, Elder

Day 13 Wednesday, March 11

"I love the LORD, because he hears me; he listens to My Prayers. He listens to me every time I call to him. The danger of death was all around me; the horrors of the grave closed in on me; I was filled with fear and anxiety. Then I called to the LORD, 'I beg you, LORD, save me!' The LORD is merciful and good; our God is compassionate. The LORD protects the helpless; when I was in danger, he saved me. Be confident, my heart, because the LORD has been good to me." [Psalm 116:1-7]

My Story: God is so responsive that you can always reach him. He bends down and listens to your voice. The writer's love for the LORD had grown because he had experienced answers to his prayers. If you are discouraged, remember that God is near, listening carefully to every prayer and answering each one in order to give you his best.

My Prayer: God, is this what you are really like? I want to believe it, but when the pressure is on I begin to hesitate. In these forty days, open my eyes to how much you surround me with lots of evidence of your love and reliability. Amen.

Melanie Nesbitt, Deacon

Day 14 Thursday, March 12

"the Spirit led Jesus into the desert to be tempted by the Devil." [Matthew 4:1]

My Story: I am conscious of temptation every minute of every day. It's because I have diabetes, which is a killer disease if not taken care of. I have to watch my diet all through the day, strictly limiting my intake of sugar and fat, so that my natural supply of insulin will not be depleted, and I have to get a lot of exercise to keep my weight down, so what natural insulin I have can work well. But throughout the day my resolve to keep healthy is at war with contrary impulses: my stomach says "feed me, I'm hungry!", and my body says, "I'm too tired to exercise today". It's so easy to give in to the temptation to avoid the diet and put off the exercise. So

diabetes, in addition to forcing me to become honest about my health needs, also forces me to admit that I am a sinner, constantly surrounded by temptation.

I don't believe that people set out to be sinners when they begin their day. Few people wake up, yawn, stretch, and then say to themselves, "Let's see, what sins shall I commit today?" Most everyone I can think of, including people in the county jail and Presidents in the White House, resolve to be strong, but succumb to temptations as the day unfolds.

I've learned to be more honest about my status as a sinner because of diabetes. The worst temptation I experience goes beyond my own personal choices, and involves the whole of society, including all of you. I am a sinner not only because I ate some junk food yesterday, but also because I know that I need to help the poor, defend the weak, and work for peace. And I did not do enough of that in the last week. I am easily tempted to look away from these needs - your needs - to act like they aren't there.

Is there any way to escape our sinful nature? God does not offer us freedom from the power of sin on the basis of firm belief or saintly behavior. God offers us freedom simply because we yearn for it. This is "Grace". We share this yearning with one another, with the person on your left, and the person on your right, with the very youngest and the very oldest ones in our church. The healing, the hope, the peace, the mercy and forgiveness we share with those around us become the life blood of a grace-filled church.

My Prayer: It is a comfort, O God, to know that your grace does not depend on our mastering the power of temptation. What you offer is not based on what we have earned, but upon what we need. Amen!

Rev. James Renfrew, Pastor

Day 15 Friday, March 13

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." [John 3:16]

My Story: This was a Bible verse I memorized when I was a teenager and was part of a Bible study group composed of other teenagers. A science teacher from our school led the group and that was intriguing to me—that someone from the science world could also have faith and believe in the Bible. It helps to think about this Bible verse—I think I like best the part that "For God so loved the world". In the daily turmoil we see throughout our world, it helps to know that God is still there and still loving everyone in it. Sometimes it is not easy to believe that when we see war, people starving, natural disasters and an economy that is in an upheaval, but the verse will come to mind and I know that He is there.

My Prayer: Please pray for me and my family, that we will see that God's love is there, embracing us and those around us and through our greater world. Pray also that those that are in troubling times can see that God's love is there to uplift them; help them to see the grace that God offers to them.

Pam Kenward, Elder

Day 16 Saturday, March 14

“Be glad for all God is planning for you. Be patient in trouble, and prayerful always.” [Romans 12:12]

My Story: I sometimes worry about where my life is headed. I trust that God has a plan. I thank him for all that he has done and for the blessings I have received. Sometimes I don't understand, but I keep my faith and keep praying.

My Prayer: Thank you God, for my many blessings. Thank you for my family and many friends. I am truly blessed. Even though I don't understand why things have happened, I trust in you and thank you for your wisdom.

Vicky Truax, Elder

Resurrection! Sunday, March 15 (Communion Sunday)



Day 17 Monday, March 16

“Don't worry about anything, but in all your prayers ask God for what you need, always thanking him with a thankful heart. And God's peace, which is far beyond human understanding, will keep your hearts and minds safe in union with Jesus Christ.” [Philippians 4:6-7]

My Story: If I could count the times in my life that I have felt less than thankful I should be embarrassed to mouth the number. How often I've focused on wanting more, missed opportunities, lack of achievement, difficult personal situations, and the list goes on and on. It's just so easy to feel that we are not getting what we want, need, or deserve, at least according to our perspective.

Ah! A light sometimes dawns! Our perspective - what a limited, unenlightened, and even sinful thing that can be. Our whole life is less than a drop in an ocean of eternity; what do these earthly things matter? How can we attach such importance to them based on our limited view.? Rather than perspective I fear I have suffered from tunnel vision. Each minute of this life is according to God's plan and usually way beyond our comprehension.

Faith and a willingness to trust Him who not only watches over us, but has offered us eternal salvation, is the lens through which we should view each day of our lives.

In retrospect I can not only be thankful more easily for what seemed to be awful times, but I can see the blessings I received and took for granted. He is always teaching us, strengthening us, and blessing us in ways that are sometimes difficult to see. Remembering this, and focusing as much as I am able on that ocean of eternity over which He presides, has become my solution to being always thankful to our all-knowing, loving, and forgiving God.

My Prayer: Please Lord, when we are unable to see the good you bless us with daily, when we suffer from self-centeredness, when we lose sight of You and Your infinite love and wisdom, help us to come back to You and be always thankful for Your love and grace. Help us to know in our hearts that all is according to Your plan and is ultimately good and reason to give continual thanks and praise to You. Forgive us when we get lost in this world and help us to help others who may have become blinded by earthly desires and temptations. Let the light of Jesus our Savior be the light that blinds us to all the things of this world that lead us astray. Amen.

Jim Moore

Day 18 Tuesday, March 17

“Don't worry about anything, but in all your prayers ask God for what you need, always thanking him with a thankful heart. [Philippians 4:6]

And then Jesus said to the disciples, “And so I tell you not to worry about the food you need to stay alive or about the clothes you need for your body. Life is much more important than food, and the body much more important than clothes. Look at the crows” they don't plant seeds or gather a harvest; they don't have storage rooms or barns; God feeds them! You are worth so much more than birds! Can any of you live a bit longer by worrying about it? If you can't manage even such a small thing, why worry about the other things? Look how the wild flowers grow: they don't work or make clothes for themselves. But I tell you that not even King Solomon with all his wealth had clothes as beautiful as one of these flowers. It is God who clothes the wild grass – grass that is here today and gone tomorrow, burned up in the over. Won't he be all the more sure to clothe you? What little faith you have! So don't be upset, always concerned about what you will eat and drink. (For the pagans of this world are always concerned about all these things.) Your Father knows that you need these things. Instead, be concerned with his Kingdom, and he will provide you with these things. [Luke 12:22-31]

My Story: How much of our lives we spend worrying. I even worry about the time I spend worrying! Common sense tells us that worry accomplishes nothing but, more importantly, I am coming to understand that it is a sin. Worry is the opposite of faith. The Bible tells us explicitly not to worry and

to trust and cast our worries upon God. To do otherwise is to blatantly ignore His word.

Of course it's hard; He never promised that life would be easy. When my own daughter was in the hospital I was wrought with worry, and fear. Many times a day I had to pray and tell God that I did trust in Him in all things and ask forgiveness for my own fears and momentary lack of faith. Yes, with each prayer He gave me peace and I was reminded that all is in His loving hands.

With each passing day I am learning more and more to give my concerns over to Him. This is so different from asking him to fix the situation! We don't know how to do that anyway: we are limited by this mortal body and mind. The solutions we imagine are often wrong, as right as they may seem at the moment. Only He knows what needs to be done.

If we truly believe and trust in Him, if we live our faith, if we constantly remind ourselves of what the Bible says, it should be impossible to let worry overcome us. It's difficult, and we ourselves are not able to handle it, but for Him nothing is impossible and with His help we can cast off fear as yet another tool of the devil.

My Prayer: Dear Lord, forgive me when I worry, when I am filled with fear. Help my worries to be but a reminder to trust and depend on You and Your infinite grace and wisdom. Let me learn to give all my earthly concerns over to You in faith and knowing that all things are in Your loving hands. Remind me to pray for others when they are lost in worry, not that their problems be fixed, but that they have the Faith to trust all of their worries to You. Remind me when I falter that You already know what we need and how we feel and that we can and must always rely on that alone. Lord we trust in You who are greater and stronger than the attacks we suffer and we trust in Your Son whom You sent to save us. Amen

Jim Moore

Day 19 Wednesday, March 18

"And I will be with you always ...". [Matthew 28:20]

My Story: Many years ago, when the 'kids' were young enough to think "doing doughnuts" in the road was exciting, we did just that on our way to school one day. I remember that it was in January, and the road was a little icy, so we were going rather slowly along the back roads. We were actually following another teacher, who had studded tires, when we came to a fairly large dip in the road. The other teacher made it just fine. However, just before we came to the dip, we found ourselves spinning around in the road. When we finally came to a stop, we found ourselves facing east, when we had been going west. We had also spun to the south shoulder of the road where there was some exposed gravel, which stopped us. When my heart went back down out my mouth, I looked at the north shoulder and noticed the deep drop-off where we could just as well have landed. I knew then that we were not alone in that car. We continued on down the dip after a few minutes, going very slowly. We managed to make it up the other side, but after we got on the long, gradual slope, we came to a standstill. We could get

no more traction. However, the other teacher did make it and was able to let the people at school know where we were. We had to wait for a sander to come spread sand before we could continue. God is good.

My Prayer: Gracious Lord, we thank you for always being with us through all of our trials and triumphs. We also thank you for your hand of protection helping us through our adversities. In Jesus' name we pray. *Gwen George, Elder*

Day 20 Thursday, March 19

"Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God, and everyone that loveth is born of God and knoweth God." [1 John 4:7, King James Version]

My Story: This reading was always one of my favorites when I was growing up and it was from the King James Version. I always remember it this way because we learned a song (composed from this King James Version) at a Christian Camp I attended. I loved the song! It has stayed with me all these years. It is a wonderful reminder to me, when I sometimes get frustrated with others, to love them anyway! Loving one another despite perceived shortcomings is what makes our church family what it is. Every time I get involved with a mission idea or project, I am reminded that God gave us Jesus to show us an example of how He wants us to live our lives—by reaching out to others and loving them the best we can.

My Prayer: Please pray for me—give me patience to love those around me despite what I perceive to be their shortcomings. Help me to reach out to others and to show them God's love.

Pam Kenward, Elder

Day 21 Friday, March 20

"Pray at all times, be thankful in all circumstances". This is what God wants from you in your life in union with Jesus Christ." [Thessalonians 5:17-18]

"Do all this in prayer, asking for God's help. Pray on every occasion, as the Spirit leads. For this reason, keep alert and never give up; pray always for all God's people." [Ephesians 6:18]

My Story: My grandpa used to say, "If my foresight were as good as my hindsight I'd be better off by a darn sight". What truth. Looking back over the years I see the times loved ones were in the hospital and I prayed, the time I lost most of a retirement fund built up over 50+ years and I prayed, the times when parents were dying and I prayed unceasingly, the one time I didn't think I could deal with life and what it had dealt me and I prayed, the times when others around the world seemed to have suffered such horrific blows ... and I prayed. I didn't just pray at these times, I prayed like there was no tomorrow; I prayed with all my heart and mind and soul.

But now, with that hindsight my grandpa spoke of, I see the problem more clearly. There was nothing wrong with praying during these trying times. The problem is that these

were the only times I gave all of myself to My Prayers; these were the only times I desperately wanted God to come into my life and save me (or someone else).

Why do we not pray with the same sincerity and frequency during the good times? Be they prayers giving thanks, asking for simple day-to-day guidance, or seeking His protection from evil, simple prayer has its place in almost every minute of our lives. This is the kind of prayer life I now strive for. So regular and continual that it becomes a part of every thought that goes through my mind and every action I take.

I have to wonder how long earthly relationships would last if the only times we really seemed to care about others, or felt the need to be close to them, were the times we were in great need and wanted their help. God's infinite patience and love must be so superior to what we can muster ourselves!

My Prayer: Lord forgive me for only seeking You when times were bad. Forgive me for not realizing that I need you in all aspects, and at all times in my life. Forgive me for thinking during the good times that I had control and could cope well enough on my own and for seeking You only as a last resort. Heavenly Father, I invite you now to come into my life afresh. Help me to be constantly aware of Your love and Your Word and to seek You in all things at all times. Help me to live the remainder of my life in all ways according to Your purpose and to be continually and constantly guided by You in all that I do. Amen.

Jim Moore

Day 22 Saturday, March 21

“What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill,” and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead. But someone will say, “You have faith and I have works.” Show me your faith apart from your works, and I by my works will show you my faith.” [James 2:14-18, NRSV (New Revised Standard Version)]

My Story: The Christian reformer, Martin Luther, had little use for the Letter of James. Luther was so annoyed by it, he even thought that the Letter should be taken out of the New Testament! He thought that the Letter of James watered down the importance of faith in the Christian life. Luther can probably be better understood, perhaps even forgiven, if we know why he felt the way he did. One of the things he wanted to reform in the church was that people of his day thought they could be saved merely by the things they did. He thought Christians ought to know that they would be saved not by what they did, but by their faith. The faith and works balance suggested by the Letter of James undermined the reforms Luther was trying to promote.

There are, of course, still those who emphasize faith to the exclusion of doing anything with their faith. I grew up in a church which stressed faith, while barely a word was said

about living out that faith in everyday situations. Certainly there was very little outreach from that church into the community where there were people in need. When I got to college, I was surprised to discover that some other congregations and denominations not only emphasized faith, but stressed putting that faith into action. They talked about Christians as whole persons who had faith which was the motivation and the source of strength for reaching out to care about and for others.

It was about this time that I discovered the passage above in the Letter of James. It embodied my new understanding of the Christian life as being balanced between having faith and putting faith into action. This particular passage of the New Testament has been important to me since those days in college. Lent is traditionally a time during the church year for self examination and evaluation. It is a time of preparation for the celebration of Easter. It is a time when we might ask ourselves about how well balanced our Christian lives are. On the one hand, is our faith strong? On the other hand, is that faith being put to work? How is the balance between the two?

My Prayer: O God, thank you for your many blessings and lovingkindness. Thank you for your abiding presence and strength. Thank you for guiding me in faith thus far. Help me to examine how my faith and my acting on my faith mesh in my daily living. Help me to be mindful of those who may be in need around me and how best to put my faith to work. I pray, remembering your son, Jesus. Amen.

Rev. David Franke

Resurrection! Sunday, March 22



Day 23 Monday, March 23

“For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; a time to throw away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; a time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to throw away; a time to tear, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; a time to love, and a time

to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace.” [Ecclesiastes 3:1-8]

My Story: I grew up as a Catholic and remember this reading as a young child. It has always had a special meaning to me. God has control of our lives even though we are in the body he is in our spirit. God so chooses the happenings of our lives, but we still control most things in our lives, but when we can't we must rely on God being in control.

My Prayer: My Prayer is to accept each time in our life and embrace it, openheartedly, the good and the bad, happy and sad.

Laura Platt, Elder

Day 24 Tuesday, March 24

“For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.” [Psalm 139: 13-16]

My Story: This passage has brought me comfort in knowing that God created me as the unique human being that I am, complete with my limitations as well as my talents. It assures me that my life has purpose and that God knew that purpose in creating me. It also reinforces that my life is in God's hands and that whatever happens is part of a larger plan. Reading this passage in life's difficult times encourages me to trust that God is --- and will be --- with me in whatever happens.

My Prayer: Dear God, continue to guide me in the direction you planned for me. Help me to discern the paths you want me to walk and guide me to fulfill the mission you envisioned when you created me. Let your Word be a light unto my path and a lamp unto my feet. Amen.

Ruth Andes

Day 25 Wednesday, March 25

“From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” [II Corinthians 5:16-21]

My Story: Paul wrote these words nearly two thousand years ago, but he continues to amaze: *“So if anyone is in*

Christ, there is a new creation; everything old has passed away; see everything has become new.” If anyone is in Christ – that means you – there is a new creation! Some of you read along in Bibles that are translated differently, so where I am reading *“new creation”*, you may be reading *“new being”*, *“new person”*, or, in one case, *“new world”* – which is the most amazing of all: if anyone is in Christ – that means you – there is a new world! Just think of it, when your heart moves towards Jesus Christ, the whole world changes. New being, new person, new creation, new world – no matter how you translate it, things are different when we turn to Jesus Christ. Paul has this exciting concept, that Christians can feel the new creation taking shape right in our hearts, and that as we step forward to become Christians, we see, feel, and taste that new world taking shape.

My Prayer: *“So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation; everything old has passed away; see everything has become new.”* Lord, help me experience the new!

Anonymous

Day 26 Thursday, March 26

Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. Jesus said, “Take away the stone.” Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, “Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days.” Jesus said to her, “Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?” So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, “Father, I thank you for having heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me.” When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Unbind him, and let him go.” [portion of the full story found in John 11:1-45]

My Story: Lazarus was a friend of Jesus who became sick. His sisters, Mary and Martha, sent an urgent, frantic message to Jesus who was only two miles away in a nearby village, but by the time Jesus arrived in Bethany, Lazarus had died. In fact, he had been buried in his tomb four days. No matter, Jesus went to the tomb and shouted: *“LAZARUS, COME OUT!”* And the dead man walked out of the tomb, peeling away the burial clothes, alive! Alive, like a spring day after a long winter. Alive, like a cure for depression. Alive, like peace treaty after a long war. Alive, like your deepest dream realized. It's a wonderful story that opens our hearts to the power and promise of resurrection. If Jesus can revive a man stone cold dead for four days, certainly he can bring any one of us back from the brink of disaster, from sickness, from suicide, from alcoholism, from violence.

The story illustrates an essential point about the Gospel of Jesus Christ: God will go to any length to save those in need. In Psalm 139, we hear that sentiment in expressed in the amazement of poetry: *“Lord, where could I go to escape from you? Where could I get away from your presence? If I went up to heaven, you would be there; if I lay*

down in the world of the dead, you would be there." God will go to any length to save those in need. And this means God will go to any length to save you and me!

My Prayer: The Word of God in scripture is like binoculars, for it shows how near at hand God really is. But we use it backwards, making it seem like God is further away than ever. The story about Lazarus shouts to us, "Hey! Use the binoculars the right way, not backwards. The truth of the gospel is this: "God will go to any length to save those in need." We witness to this truth as we begin to imagine the ways that our very lives bring encouragement and salvation to all who struggle. LAZARUS, COME OUT! ... and the dead man walked out of the tomb ... alive! God will go to any length to save those in need. God will go to any length to save you! Amen.

Anonymous

Day 27 Friday, March 27

When the Son of man comes in His glory, and all the angles with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them from one another, just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right, "Come, you who are blessed by My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world". [Matthew 25:31-34]

My Story: When I read this passage I visualize a long line that curves to the right and left ... folks being herded to their respective sides. I am also in this line. As I inch forward and closer to the front where the division begins, I am not certain on which side I will be placed. Am I a Sheep or a Goat? What qualifies me for either category? I have a scientific background that is compounded with my viewing the world in black and white. Would I believe someone who approached me and said they are Christ? I have to admit, probably not. I doubt, I challenge and I try to understand as best as I can. I just wonder on what side that puts me on. Right or Left?

My Prayer: Lord, I have so far to go. I pray that your patience with me will place me on the side I have earned. Amen.

Marie Andes

Day 28 Saturday, March 28

"Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us. For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person--though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. But God proves his love for us in that

while we still were sinners Christ died for us. Much more surely then, now that we have been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God. for if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation." [Romans 5:1-11]

My Story: How many of you have ever started a quick chore, only to suddenly realize in the middle of it that the chore is going to take a lot more time and effort than you expected? A friend of mine told me how he decided to wash the wall around his refrigerator, to remove all those sticky fingerprints left by his children. He thought it would take only a few minutes to do the complete job. But when he had wiped away the smudges and dirt in that one small section it made the rest of the kitchen walls look dirtier than ever. By the time he was done that quick chore took up the rest of the week!

All of us want to have cleaner kitchens, garages, and basements. But let's not stop there! Let's admit to wanting to clean up our worst behaviors, our most hurtful habits, and, sometimes, our whole troubled lives! All of us want to improve something in ourselves, but it's hard to begin to clean up your act when you find more layers of dirt than you were prepared to deal with after the first few minutes of scrubbing. To change lives takes more than the five minutes of a quick chore. I've heard it said that it takes 21 days of practice to change a bad habit. In the Gospel reading, it took Jesus 40 days to face down the seductive reasoning of the Devil.

40 days, 21 days, sometimes even 40 minutes seems too big a challenge to make the changes we want to make, even when we know how important it is, to preserve my health, to secure your family, to save our lives. But I find a lot of encouragement in scripture: *Christ died for sinners like us, not for the perfect.* And there's more to it than that: *Jesus died for us when we were at our worst.*

My Prayer: O God, we focus too much on what we should do and not enough on what God has done. As these forty days proceed, help us to appreciate how much you have done to find, us, heal us and rescue us in Jesus Christ. Amen.

Resurrection! Sunday, March 29



Day 29 Monday, March 30

“If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a Noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 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. 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. Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.” [1 Corinthians 13]

My Story: Welcome to the most popular wedding reading in the Bible! Was it in your wedding service? What do you remember about that day? Does Paul’s reading on “love” fit your experience of marriage? See if there is something in this reading that you’ve forgotten, neglected or never tried!

My Prayer: Let us pray for new and old marriages, that all may find fresh sparks of love and commitment this day!
Amen.

Anonymous

Day 30 Tuesday, March 31

“to do good, to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share, thus storing up...the treasure of a good foundation for the future.” [1 Timothy 6:18-19a]

My Story: I recently came across this verse and it caught my eye because it talks about the treasure of a good foundation for the future. Many are wrapped up in looking at financial shortcomings right now—retirement accounts having large deficits due to the faltering economy. But God offers the opportunity to us to have greater treasures beyond wealth.

My Prayer: I pray that I see the daily treasures that God has made possible for me, through my family and friends, through my church family, and through the possibilities He gives to me each and every day—to reach out to others, for the opportunities to do my best to make our community and our world a better place.

Pam Kenward, Elder

Day 31 Wednesday, April 1

After this there was a festival of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate there is a pool, called in Hebrew Bethzatha, which has five porticoes. In these lay many invalids--blind, lame, and paralyzed. One man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had been there a long time, he said to him, “Do you want to be made well?” The sick man answered him, “Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; and while I am making my way, someone else steps down ahead of me.” Jesus said to him, “Stand up, take your mat and walk.” At once the man was made well, and he took up his mat and began to walk. [John 5]

My Story: Notice how the man dodges Jesus’ question! “Do you want to be healed?”, Jesus asks. The man launches into his explanation that he has been stuck for 38 years by the side of the pool, but he misses a golden opportunity to simply say “yes!”.

My Prayer: Dear God, help us to find the courage to say “Yes!” Amen.

Anonymous

Day 32 Thursday, April 2

“A new commandment I give to you: love one another, As I have loved you, so you must love one another. If you have love for one another, then all will know that you are my disciples.” [John 13:34-35]

My Prayer: Pray for those who are preparing to become members of the church during the Easter season, that more than any other lesson this one about love becomes the most important in their lives: love for themselves, love for their families, love for their friends and neighbors, love for their church and community, and – especially – love the those who are not easy to love. Amen.

Rev. James Renfrew

Day 33 Friday, April 3

Jesus looked around and saw rich men dropping their gifts in the temple treasury, and he also saw a very poor widow dropping in two little copper coins. He said, “I tell you that this poor widow put in more than all the others. For the others offered their gifts from what they had to spare of their riches, but she, poor as she is, gave all that she had to live on.” [Luke 21:1-4]

My Prayer: Show us, O God, how to be generous from the heart during these days leading up to Easter, in One Great Hour of Sharing, in kindness to friends and strangers, and in sharing your love. Amen.

Anonymous

Day 34 Saturday, April 4

"He always had the nature of God, but he did not think that by force he should try to become equal with God. Instead of this, of his own free will he gave up all he had, and took the nature of a servant. He became like a human being and appeared in human likeness. He was humble and walked the path of obedience all the way to death – his death on the cross. For this reason God raised him to the highest place above and gave him the name that is greater than any other name. And so, in honor of the name of Jesus, all beings in heaven, on earth, and in the world below will fall on their knees and all will proclaim that Jesus is Lord, to the Glory of God the Father." [Colossians 2:6-11]

My Story: In the Lord's Prayer we conclude with this phrase: "For thine is the kingdom". It refers to a place and time where God is honored, where God's will is a joy, where there is bread for everyone to eat, and forgiveness becomes the foundation of peace. And if there's a kingdom there needs to be a king, right? The people lining the streets in Jerusalem shouting "Hosanna!" knew who the king was ... Jesus! And they shouted out his name. And we are excited to shout along with them.

Over the centuries, Christians have magnified Palm Sunday, imagining 1000's of happy, cheering people waving palms as Jesus entered Jerusalem. Something very different from that is what really happened on that day. I suspect that to most onlookers Jesus looked ridiculous, riding a donkey, surrounded by a few poorly clothed followers. He looked ridiculous, because who ever rode to power riding a donkey, with palm branches waving? In most of human history, the ones riding to power do so with armies, tanks, battleships or fighter jets, with guns blazing!

Paul, in his Letter to the Philippians, says that Jesus did not grasp for power, as most people seeking power do, but emptied himself. He gave of himself in every way, for you and for me. To empty oneself, as Jesus did, is not usually encouraged in our society. Jesus was, riding to power on Palm Sunday, not the kind of power that is measured by greed, but the kind of power that is characterized by giving, by emptying himself for everyone, emptying himself for you.

My Prayer: Can we empty ourselves, O God? We live in a society that glorifies filling up, with food, fuel, wealth and power. Help us learn how to empty ourselves of all the things that block us from loving, giving and serving. Amen.

Rev. James Renfrew, Pastor

Resurrection! Palm Sunday, April 5



Day 35 Monday, April 6

When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, "Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, just say this, 'The Lord needs them.' And he will send them immediately" This took place to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet, saying, "Tell the daughter of Zion, Look, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey." The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!" [Matthew 21:1-11]

My Story: These people along the road to Jerusalem were shouting for Jesus to save them from almost everything you can think of: save us from war, save us from poverty, save us from sickness, save us from fear. Slaves were shouting save us, as they thought of freedom. Poor people were shouting save us, as they hoped for an end to hunger and homelessness. Sick people were shouting save us, as they dreamed of the healing of disease and an end to the demons of the mind. They were all shouting save us, as they dreamed that their country would be liberated from the Roman soldiers who had taken it over. Perhaps when Judas shouted "Hosanna!", with the 30 coins in his pocket, he was thinking "Jesus, save me from myself".

People in the crowd responded in different ways, as Jesus passed by. Some ran and hid. Some complained about the noise, or went tattling to the authorities. Some just looked, curious, but afraid to get closer. Others did get closer, and joined in the shouts. And still others actually stepped off the curb and joined the parade. I hope that you are one of those drawn from spectating to participating. As you hear the shouts of those people long ago, you want to join with them: "Hosanna! Save me from the landlord who's about to evict me. Save me from my boss, who treats me like dirt. Save me from my addiction, which tears away at my soul. Save me from a spouse who beats me. Like the men in jail, save me from my friends! Save me from the violence of the street, so I can walk outside at night without fear. Save us from ourselves, for we are destroying our own environment and future, with the garbage, the pollution. Save us from the delusion that war will bring peace. Hosanna!" It's not a day to be quiet.

My Prayer: As the Easter story begins, help us become less spectators and more participants! Amen!

Anonymous

Day 36 Tuesday, April 7

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.” [II Corinthians 13:13]

My Story: This is the way Paul concludes his letters. It is also the way that worship services conclude. It is a reminder of what is important in our faith: the grace of Jesus Christ, which means that what he offers to us is not for those who deserve it because of their own effort, but is, instead, his gift to those who need it. It reminds us of God’s motivation: love, which means that God is far more interested in loving us than in judging us or punishing us. It reminds us of something called fellowship: which means that we best experience the power of the Holy Spirit best in the company of other believers. Grace, love and fellowship – have you experienced these today? If you experience the opposite of them – worry, guilt and loneliness – what steps can you take to reverse course?

My Prayer: I pray for myself - to discover anew the power of the grace of Christ whenever I feel guilty or afraid, and I pray for others so that I can begin to imagine how the grace of Christ might become real in their lives, too. Amen.

Anonymous

Day 37 Wednesday, April 8

“He who gives his testimony to all this, says, “Certainly so! I am coming soon! So be it. Come, Lord Jesus! May the grace of the Lord Jesus be with all.” [Revelation 22:20-21]

My Story: These are the final words in the final book of the Bible, the Book of Revelation. In a way, the final verse challenges us: now that you’ve read it, what will you do about what you have read and learned? Does the book get put away on a high book shelf, or does it remain open in your heart and in your life, as you ready yourself to join with Christ in this world and beyond?

My Prayer: Encourage me in every way, God, as I try to bring your word into my life. Amen.

Anonymous

Day 38 Maundy Thursday, April 9

While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is my body.” Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will never again drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.” [Matthew 26:26-29]



Day 39 Friday, April 10 – Good Friday



It was nine o’clock in the morning when they crucified him. The inscription of the charge against him read, “The King of the Jews.” And with him they crucified two bandits, one on his right and one on his left. Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying, “Aha! You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself, and come down from the cross!” In the same way the chief priests, along with the scribes, were also mocking him among themselves and saying, “He saved others; he cannot save himself. Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down from the cross now, so that we may see and believe.” Those who were crucified with him also taunted him. When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. At three o’clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?” which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, “Listen, he is calling for Elijah.” And someone ran, filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink, saying, “Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down.” Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. Now when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, “Truly this man was God’s Son!” [Mark 15:25-39]

Day 40 Saturday, April 11

“For God love the world so much that he gave his only son, so that whoever believes in him will not die, but have eternal life. For God did not send his son into the world to be its judge, but to be its savior.” [John 3:16-17]

My Story: Please make a list on a 3 x 5 card of all the things you’ve ever done wrong. Not enough room? Use a full sheet of paper. Still not enough room? How about a poster board? A chalkboard. A highway billboard? All the things you’ve ever done wrong? That could be a very long list! A list as long as the distance from the earth to the moon? Maybe you are the one in the church who is admitting, “my list is even longer than that!” Well God bless that person, and all of us because our hope in Jesus Christ is bigger than that list is long, even if it stretches to the moon ... and beyond!

So make a list of all those things we do that are hurtful, damaging, unhelpful, violent, and wrong. These are the things we do to hurt other people. These are the things we do that hurt our own selves. These are the things that hurt God. All the things we’ve ever done wrong are the things we actually did, but also the things we didn’t do when we should have done something.

In Sunday School I learned that God is all-powerful, stronger than anything. I still believe it, but I also believe that all the things we’ve ever done wrong make God to cry. Even so, the real end of the story is that Christians are people who

believe with their whole heart that God is doing everything possible to rescue us from the things we do to hurt one another, to save us from all the things we've ever done wrong. Yes, I believe God cries over the long list of all the things we've ever done wrong. But the word that God speaks in reaction to the long list is not "punishment". It's "rescue"! That's the whole purpose of Jesus, summed up in one word, "rescue". It lies at the heart of the reading from John's Gospel.

My Prayer: God, when I think of that long list, I want hide in a cave or worse. But when I think of you, knowing of your deep desire to rescue me, I lift up my head in hope. Amen!

Rev. James Renfrew, Pastor

Easter Sunday Sunday, April 12

16 When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. **2** And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. **3** They had been saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?" **4** When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. **5** As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. **6** But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. **7** But go, tell his disciples and Peter

that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you." **8** So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

[Mark 16:1-8]

