

# *Lenten Devotional*

NASSAU PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
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All scripture quotations are from the *Common English Bible*.

The Vanderbilt Divinity Library offers an excellent online lectionary.  
[lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu](http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu)

## Preface

A journey, a pilgrimage! Yet, as we begin it, as we make the first step into the “bright sadness” of Lent, we see—far, far away—the destination. It is the joy of Easter, it is the entrance into the glory of the Kingdom.

—Alexander Schmemmann

The Season of Lent is a journey I look forward to each year. It’s an opportunity not only to let go of something that distracts us from our relationship with the Lord, but also to add something that will increase our devotion to the One who journeyed to the cross on our behalf. It’s an opening to consider the “bright sadness” of the pilgrimage of our Lord to Calvary.

Lent is composed of the 40 days before Easter (excluding Sundays, because Sundays are always celebrated as the Resurrection of our Lord). In the days ahead we spend time reflecting on scripture, prayer, confession, and renewing our relationships with God. Before you are devotions prepared by women, men, and youth from Nassau Church and we encourage you to find a daily quiet spot to read the scripture and to meditate upon it deeply. Reflect upon its meaning and ask yourself the question, “How then shall I live in light of the work of Jesus upon the cross?”

In addition to a meditation on a selection from the day’s lectionary and a prayer, each day includes the name of the writer. Short biographies of each author are listed alphabetically in the back of this booklet along with an email address. These devotions can be used as a resource for private or family devotion. Read the scripture. Light a candle. Take your time. Breathe and be led upon the road beside our Way, Truth, and Light.

With you on the journey,

Lauren J. McFeaters

Associate Pastor

Nassau Presbyterian Church

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## Ash Wednesday

### Jonah 3:1–4:11

The LORD's word came to Jonah a second time: "Get up and go to Nineveh, that great city, and declare against it the proclamation that I am commanding you." — *vs. 3:1–2*

Roz Anderson Flood

#### "A Dove Flies to Ninevah"

I, Jonah, Dove of the morning,  
arrive on tentative wings.

Imbued with God-voice,  
I bear a message for Ninevah.

*Nineveh* —

Serpentine streets iridescent  
with blood; shriveled gardens,  
pungent with rotting blossoms:  
A city — once majestic — folding in on itself,  
shrine of human heresy.

I long to reverse my steps,  
but He has fixed my path —  
He is my pole star amid the Pleiades.

I pray I may preach His Word  
with a voice compelling to angels.

Once I tried to flee,  
but now I know mercy.  
Caught in the belly of ferocity  
I clarified my fear  
with the magnification of water.

*God, give me strength*

to pluck the fallen from the shadows,  
to harvest the beams of dying stars.

I struggle to deliver the message:

Faith is on the other side of despair. †

*Dearest Lord, make us your agents to speak out against sin, hunger and want. As your messengers, bless us with voices to denounce injustice. Teach us to deliver words of peace to troubled humankind. In the name of your son, Jesus Christ, Amen.*

## Thursday

## Psalm 27

The LORD is my light and my salvation.

Should I fear anyone?

The LORD is a fortress protecting my life.

Should I be frightened of anything? — v. 1

Camille Scordis

**W**HEN I AM unsure of the future, God is a strong pillar ready to support me. God is there, willing to answer my prayer if I am having trouble in school or in life. I trust the Lord to keep me safe and calm when I am feeling stressed out. When God is with me, I fear nothing, not grades, nor tests, nor mean comments. I know God will not turn away from me or desert me in my darkest moments as I go through life eagerly. And, because of this, I praise and thank God. Going into this year, try to help others who are fearful, afraid or lonely. Listen to them, help them, encourage them, and be with them, just as God is with me and you. Also, remember that God is with you, and if you call out God will answer. †

*Dear Lord, open our hearts to help others and strengthen us so that we may strengthen others. Be with us always and keep our fear and worries at bay. Amen.*

## Friday

John 1:35–42

When [John the Baptist] saw Jesus walking along, he exclaimed, “Look! The Lamb of God!” – *v. 36*

Daniel Dorrow

**J**OHN THE BAPTIST is excited. As Jesus walks by, John exclaims to his disciples, “Look! The Lamb of God!” This seems like good news, but why this title for Jesus?

The fourth gospel is full of Passover themes. “Lamb of God” evokes the Passover lamb, symbolizing Israel’s deliverance from slavery in Egypt. Previously, John called Jesus “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (1:29), anticipating Jesus’ future “lifting up” – his crucifixion – that will draw all people to himself (12:32). In his death, Jesus represented all of humankind as the perfect Passover Lamb, overcoming the rift between God and all people caused by our enslavement to sin. This deliverance is good news, indeed! So, John’s disciples became Jesus’ disciples.

As Jesus’ disciples, let us bear witness to Jesus’ deliverance of the world from sin. Let’s give our full obedience and loyalty to the Lamb of God, not to ourselves, breaking our attachments to the false gods of worldly forces that separate us from God and from each other. We have hope because of the Lamb’s already accomplished sacrificial work and his providential rule today. So let us seek liberation from sin for all people and social structures everywhere. †

*Jesus, Lamb of God, we offer our lives to you in thanksgiving for your great sacrifice for us. Give us courage, wisdom, and strength to follow you as your disciples. Give us hope in the ultimate triumph of your liberating work despite the sin we see in our own lives and in the world around us. Amen.*



## Saturday

## Psalm 143

I remember the days long past;  
I meditate on all your deeds;  
I contemplate your handiwork. — v. 5

David E. Mulford

**T**HERE IS A TENDENCY, especially as one grows older, to reminisce about the “good old days” when life seemed to have been simpler and the world about us less threatening. While appealing, such an attitude is not very productive.

In Psalm 143, the psalmist encourages us to look at the past in a very different way. The author reminds us to recall the ways God provided help when we were discouraged, challenged us when we were smug, and opened doors of opportunity often when we least expected it.

Let us look at the past, not with nostalgia, but rather to remind ourselves that God has been a powerful presence in our lives all across the years, and to see this as a challenge to keep ourselves open and alert to what God is saying to us today, and as long as we live. †

*O God, help us to use our memories of your presence in our lives in years past as a source of strength, challenge and encouragement for today and for the future. Amen.*

## First Sunday

### Psalm 32

When I kept quiet, my bones wore out;  
 I was groaning all day long—  
 every day, every night!—  
 because your hand was heavy upon me.  
 My energy was sapped as if in a summer drought. — vs. 3–4

Mark Herr

**I**T IS ONE THING to read Psalm 32 when you are healthy and another when you fight cancer. Healthy, it seems almost biblical boilerplate; “Yeah, yeah, trust in the Lord. We get it.” Sick, well, it’s a whole new ball game. Six psalms later, David will attribute illness to sinfulness. Here in 32, David is once again sinful and, once again, sick: “my bones wasted away/ through my groaning all day long—/ every day, every night!—/ because your hand was heavy upon me./ My energy was sapped as if in a summer drought” (vs. 3–4). David repents, God forgives him, and David celebrates “you will protect me from trouble/ You surround me with songs of rescue!” (v. 7). Hmmm, you think. You mean I could have skipped the surgery, the chemo, the radiation? Just by repenting?

Modern science rejects sin as an infirmity-determinant; says cancer and illness have biological causes. So what does David know (besides Bathsheba)?

But David’s wisdom tumbles down through the ages and the forty days of Lent. Whether it is your prayers or your pharmaceuticals, “faithful love surrounds/ the one who trusts the Lord” (v. 10) and God “will protect me from trouble/ and surround me with songs of rescue.” It isn’t enough to know this, you must learn it, live it and teach it. “Rejoice in the Lord and be glad! All you whose hearts are right,” during these Lenten days, sing out in joy!” (v. 11). †

*Lord, our Lord, our bones are wearing out. Hear our groans and surround us with your unfailing love. Amen.*

## Monday

## Psalm 119, 121

Your hands have made  
and set me in place.  
Help me understand  
so I can learn your commandments...  
Let your compassion come to me  
so I can live again,  
because your instruction is my joy. — *vs. 119:73, 77*  
I raise my eyes toward the mountains.  
Where will my help come from?  
My help comes from the LORD,  
The maker of heaven and earth. — *v. 121:1*

Janine Edwards

**I**AM HERE because of you. I am created and placed by you. The morning weight of monotony presses my head to the pillow. Like a bird struggling to fly from an oil slick, burdened by this world's pollution, I am disoriented. Another day much like yesterday awaits. What is it worth when it all ends in ash? How can the wild bird be what it once was, feathers free-of-sludge, intrepid? It has been poisoned by carelessness. It cries out.

I lift my eyes to the morning sun, up from the headlines, up from the task list, up from the frustrations and brokenness. From where will my help come? From the Lord who made heaven and earth. From a change in perspective. From a fresh bit of high-altitude air. From a bird's eye view. A bird recovered and rejoicing that it has been freed. Now circling and seeing the whole of Creation, it is no longer entrapped in a squalid patch of polluted pond. †

*Help me to rise above my stuckness and self-absorption with wings of Wisdom, Gratitude, Compassion and Obedience. I am here because of you. I am created and placed by you. Amen.*

## Tuesday

## Psalm 91

I say to the LORD, “You are my refuge, my stronghold!

You are my God—the one I trust!”

God will protect you with his pinions;

you’ll find refuge under his wings.

His faithfulness is a protective shield.

Because he will order his messengers to help you,  
to protect you wherever you go. — vs. 2, 4, 11

Holly Hardaway

**P**SALM 91 begins speaking about taking refuge and dwelling in God. Dwelling in the shelter of the most high God. Dwell in God. Rest in God.

We are reminded that God is faithful. Under God’s wings we can find refuge. God sends angels to guard us. Guarding us. Angels. Every day.

What a powerful image this creates. Imagine a week, a day, an hour, a minute in which you felt no worry, no fear, no feeling of lack of safety. How beautiful.

This is what God is calling us to do: To dwell in the shelter of God’s wings. To remember that God is holding us and taking care of us. Dwell in God. Rest in God. Take refuge in God this minute and always. †

*God, we thank you for your protection and for your guiding presence in all we do and in all the places we go. Amen.*

## Wednesday

## Psalm 147:1–11

God heals the brokenhearted  
and bandages their wounds. — v. 3

Pam Wakefield

**H**ALLELUJAH!

Several years ago I saw a chilling television attention getting spot. A voice asks, “What would you do if there were no food?” You then see a picture of a pantry with just a few items in it.

Then the voice again, “No, what would you do if there were NO food?” The camera pans the aisles of a super market and we see that all the shelves are bare. Unthinkable for us—unfortunately not unthinkable everywhere.

We are blessed here in our community that we can count on food both for our bodies and for our souls. We can’t conceive of the emptiness of “what if there were NO God.”

We witness pain, loss, fear, hunger and tragedy. Then we gather together to worship and sing praise to our God and have faith that God can heal the brokenhearted and bind up their wounds. †

*Hallelujah! Amen.*

## Thursday

## Hebrews 4:1–10

The one who entered God's rest also rested from his works, just as God rested from his own. — v. 10

Mani Pulimood

**I**N A GALLUP POLL, it was found that one-third of Americans do not take all their vacation days. Many experience burn out, broken marriages, and stress-related diseases due to lack of rest.

Our rhythms of work and rest strengthen us physically and spiritually. At church on Sundays, we experience the presence of God through a time of worship. On Sundays, we celebrate the gift of life with the Lord. In the company of a community of believers God restores our souls.

Jesus invited all of us to come to him and he promised to give us rest. Our rest begins when we allow Christ into our lives and lay our burdens at the cross. Our endless striving may lead to frustration and pain, but with Christ as our shepherd we find our place of quiet rest. Our challenge is to trust Christ and to do his will.

As pilgrims, we are heading toward the City of God. After all our work here on earth is done, we will celebrate the gift of eternal life and enter our eternal rest with God. †

*Lord, we surrender our hearts into your hands. Renew us with your love and fill us with your peace. Amen.*

## Friday

## Psalm 22

Please don't be far from me  
because trouble is near  
and there's no one to help. — v. 11

Patty Thel

**I**N THE FIRST VERSE of Psalm 22 we read, “My God, why have you left me all alone?” — the same cry of Jesus on the cross. In the midst of hardship, loss or grief, we cry the same cry. But this cry is really a prayer, a stopping place where we reach out in the darkness, arms extended and fingers spread. We ache in our own exasperation and loss of direction.

In a real way, we follow Christ in discipleship when we endure suffering. We know that the world is not as it should be, but needs redemption. Christ alone overcomes death in the resurrection. During Lent we await the resurrection, and we can do so in the midst of suffering. We can feel overcome by burdens seemingly too heavy to bear, but that does not change the resurrection hope that lives within us or the joy in redemption.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, “Only in such joy towards Christ, the Redeemer, are we saved from having our senses dulled by the pressure of human sorrow, or from becoming resigned under the experience of suffering.” †

*Dear God, in the midst of our anguish, we rejoice in the resurrection hope and joy in Christ. Amen.*

## Saturday

John 4:1–26

I Am—the one who speaks with you. — v.26

Cynthia Miller

**I**N A THEATRE, before a live performance, once we offer our tickets and proceed past the lobby, we find our seats. We wait with anticipation as the clock ticks down the final moments until the production begins. We wait for the curtain to go up or open outward. If our seats are close to the stage, we are probably even more breathless with anticipation because we are closer to being “at one” with the action.

Lights...camera...drama. Yet, with God and Jesus, it is not dramatic. It is not a comedy. And it is not a musical. It just is. We do not need to wait for the right situation or time for the curtain to go up. We do not need to provide a ticket to see or hear Jesus. He is there, always. Around us. In us. We do not need to wait for him to reveal himself to us. We need to open our hearts to allow him to come to us. We pray, hope, and have faith. And, when our hearts are open to welcome Jesus, he will come to us. No fanfare. No drama. No orchestra. No special lights or staging feats. He just is. †

*Oh God, please help us open our hearts to you and not wait for a special moment or sign. We know you are always with us, regardless of time or place. Amen.*



## Second Sunday

## Psalm 150

Praise God with the blast  
of the ram's horn!  
Praise God with lute and lyre! — v. 3

Sam Bezilla

**M**AKING MUSIC forms an essential part of my life and has for as long as I can remember—literally. Some of my earliest memories are of church choir when I was in preschool, singing, shouting, clapping, ringing, and banging along with Ms. Page and my friends. As I moved through the years of choir, my musical skills improved through her tutelage. Fast forward to today, where I sing weekly in three choirs, an a capella group, and private lessons. Music plays an equally large role, even with my busy schedule.

This psalm is all about praising God in any way you can. It doesn't matter if you're a three-year-old hitting a bongo as hard as you can in a church basement or a well-trained choir singing in eight parts in the sanctuary. All that matters is your expression of thanks and love for everything God has poured out for you. That was the first thing Ms. Page taught us, and it's what often gives me the greatest connection to music. †

*Praise the Lord! Amen.*

## Monday

## Psalm 119:73–80

Let your compassion come to me  
so I can live again,  
because your Instruction is my joy! — v. 77

Matthew Dodds

At times I feel as though  
I am submerged and slowly drowning,  
My eyes pressed shut  
Out of fear of seeing cold, unwelcoming darkness  
And nothing more  
ahead of me...  
Moving forward  
With the last of my momentum,  
Feeling the world move past me,  
Throw me underneath  
Another wave.  
But through you,  
I am enabled to withstand,  
To carry on, and to be someone who  
Is more and more someone worth being.  
May I improve myself, guided by your teachings,  
bolstered by unceasing compassion,  
sustained by inspired hope.  
May I resist the tumultuous swells of life  
And breach the surface once again  
As a small reflection of your light. †

*Dear Lord, may we honor that it is you who has molded us. May we obey you in your virtuous decrees and thrive in the light of your compassion. Amen.*

## Tuesday

Jeremiah 2:1–13, 29–32

Go and proclaim to the people of Jerusalem,  
The LORD proclaims:  
I remember your first love,  
your devotion as a young bride,  
how you followed me in the wilderness,  
in an unplanted land. — v. 2

Mary Beth Charters

**W**E ARE A COVENANTAL PEOPLE in an everlasting relationship with God; an elemental husband–wife relationship in a metaphorical marriage. As in any marital relationship, we have a propensity to disappoint and anger God. Yet, our metaphorical spouse continues to forgive and love us.

We are also sinners. We are easily distracted away from justice and righteousness. Instead, we are attracted to the shiny objects of our consumer culture. Despite our failures and sins, God sustains the covenantal relationship, is faithful and patient, and continues to love and bestow mercy and grace upon us. †

*Dear God, our Creator and Sustainer, we give you thanks for all the benefits bestowed upon us, which we do not deserve. We strive, but struggle to be your covenantal people. We ask that you forgive our acts of omission and commission. Help each of us to recognize our purpose, character and reason for being by responding to your will and purpose in this world. Amen.*

## Wednesday

## Psalm 147:1–11

God counts the stars by number,  
giving each one a name.  
Our LORD is great and so strong!  
God's knowledge can't be grasped! — vs. 4–5

James Takasugi

**T**HESE VERSES DESCRIBE omnipotent God the creator of the universe, of everything seen and unseen. As a scientist I'm constantly amazed by discoveries into how the universe works. As humankind unravels the mysteries of God's creation, it's incredible how complex and how beautiful that creation is. It is awe inspiring and humbling to realize how our understanding of God's creation is so incomplete and that God's understanding is truly infinite. †

*God, I pray that as we strive to understand your amazing creation that we use the knowledge we gain to help raise people out of poverty, heal the sick and infirm and preserve the beautiful world you've given us. Amen.*

## Thursday

John 5:19–29

“I assure you that whoever hears my word and believes in the one who sent me has eternal life and won’t come under judgment but has passed from death to life.” — v. 24

Lynne Seidel

**A**T THE BEGINNING of this chapter of John, Jesus has healed a sick man on the Sabbath. The Jewish leaders challenge him. In the long speech that follows, Jesus tries urgently to explain himself to them (to us): that he is God’s son and the power is given him by God; that whoever hears what he says and believes in God has eternal life. All those verbs are present tense. Eternal life now! Wow!

Later (vs. 37–40) he confronts them (and us) for diligently searching the scriptures looking for eternal life, but not looking at him, the source of new life, a changed life. †

*God, we thank you for the witnesses, writers, scholars, and teachers who enable us to study the Bible. Help us remember to listen for Jesus, look for Jesus, in our daily life. We need to experience the sparkle of a transformed life. Amen.*

## Friday

## Psalm 22

Because he didn't despise or detest  
the suffering of the one who suffered—  
he didn't hide his face from me.  
No, he listened when I cried out to him for help. — v. 24

Sharon Park

**T**HIS VERSE IS TESTIMONIAL. The psalmist says that he was not only heard but also helped by God. Such an experience serves as his reason for encouraging his congregation to worship God, who does not despise or detest the suffering of the vulnerable. Sometimes we face our deep resentment toward, or reluctance to engage with, the suffering of the other. Living in the world where pathological inattentiveness to others is rather a norm, we habitually make ourselves deaf to the suffering of the weak. Yet, we know there is nothing more painful than experiencing not being heard when in need. The psalmist's testimony tells us that God is our great sympathizer, the one who listens willingly and acts decisively. †

*Your son was oppressed and afflicted, pierced and crushed for our transgressions and iniquities. Yet we praise you for your deliverance, the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.*

## Saturday

## Hebrews 13:1-3

Don't neglect to open up your homes to guests, because by doing this some have been hosts to angels without knowing it. — v. 2

Bob Wells

**I**T WAS A CRISP FALL SATURDAY MORNING and I was completely engrossed in volunteer project at Marquand Park. A group of us had been working hard to rebuild the wisteria pergola there and it was nearing completion. At some point I became aware of someone standing very close and turned to find a young man with an enormous smile who asked in a West African lilt, "What you doing?"

Within a few minutes I came to know Oghogho Ikponmwosa or "Ike" who is an electrical engineer from Landmark University in Omu-Aran Kwara, Nigeria who was at the University for a Conference. "Do you love the Lord?" he asked in the most disarming manner as he told me of his home church, The Lost Gospel Evangelistic Ministry of Nigeria.

I felt completely at ease and peaceful in the presence of this man and soon found myself inviting him to join our family on a picnic and hike that afternoon as well as dinner that evening. Ike endeared himself to each of us over the next few hours, first speaking with my sister-in-law Liz about her ministry in Malawi and then her minister husband about evangelism. Ike flew back to Africa the following day and wrote a wonderful warm note thanking us for our hospitality and openness. I thought how easily I could have missed the opportunity to get to know this remarkable man had I not had this bit of scripture in mind. †

*Lord, help us to have the courage to welcome and show hospitality to those that no one loves or that may be different than people that we are accustomed to dealing with. We do so in the knowledge that you are our protector and have a purpose in all things. Amen.*

## Third Sunday

Mark 5:1–20

Jesus asked him, “What is your name?” He responded, “Legion is my name, because we are many.” — v. 9

Katherine Scott

Free me, Lord, from sin  
Create in me a new heart  
That I may praise you

This haiku is something the man behind Legion may have been pleading. This haiku is something we can all pray during periods of our life. Throughout Lent we are invited to see what “demons” are causing us to be removed from God. Just as the Legion was removed from the demoniac, God can heal us from our personal sin and cause in you and me a change of heart that leads us to praise God to everyone around us. Everyone can be amazed by the change Jesus Christ can perform in our hearts and, therefore, with how we live our lives with all those people around us. Let us all reflect on this prayer and see how God is trying to move within us and through us. †

*Gracious God, who is able to perform amazing acts, help me to see what you are doing within me so that I may live a changed life that draws me closer to you and those around me. In the Holy Name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*



## Monday

John 7:14–36

Jesus went up to the temple and began to teach....Many from that crowd believed in Jesus....The Pharisees heard the crowd whispering such things about Jesus, and the chief priests and Pharisees sent guards to arrest him. — vs. 14, 31a, 32

Val Matthews

**S**OME PEOPLE find it difficult to accept the truth about a subject and to understand what is true versus what is politically correct. Sometimes simple truth is painful to the person hearing it and may also be painful to the speaker. Truth can upset the established order.

On the other hand, clearly-presented truth can reinforce well-structured insights and properly operating organizations. Politically correct speech can be frustrating when it obscures the raw taste of truth and coats it with happy-sweet sugar.

The challenges and yes, the opportunities for us, are to recognize what is true and good and useful, and to act accordingly with faith. †

*Following the model established by Jesus, we ask for courage and insight to determine what is true and good and useful—and to honor that reality with positive action. We also ask for courage to recognize that for us and for others, truth may sometimes be uncomfortable. We respect other peoples' sensitivities and their own values and their own truth. Amen.*

## Tuesday

## Jeremiah 31:27–34

The time is coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and Judah....I will put my instructions within them and engrave them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. — vs. 31, 33b

Larry Alphs

**L**IKE JEREMIAH I am troubled by the direction my country has taken. The events of this past year have filled me with confusion and anxiety. I once believed that America was “a city set upon a hill,” a nation evolving as model to the world for diversity and freedom. A place where the immigrant is welcomed, the widow and orphan cared for, the dignity of all humans recognized and nurtured. But this past year’s national debate forces me to wonder, “Is America guided by any uniting vision?” It seems that “truth” has become relative and determined by the most powerful. Our discourse has become coarse. We do not listen to others, but easily berate—even destroy—them with our tweets. We focus on the trivial while letting fundamental problems languish. Are we lost as a nation? Is there no balm in Gilead?

In this context Jeremiah brings hope and comfort. He weeps for his nation, as many do for ours. But despite his experience, Jeremiah reaffirms his conviction that truth, justice and righteousness will prevail. Indeed, because these emanate from our covenant God, we cannot be abandoned. Ultimately, we are God’s people. God dwells within us, engraving God’s image on our hearts.

In this Lenten season, this restoration of ultimate Truth is our resurrection hope. We can build on this. †

*Lord, in this Lenten season, send your Spirit among us to engrave our hearts with your Truth... your Way...your Life so that we may ever more fully become your people. Amen.*

## Wednesday

John 8:12–20

You judge according to human standards, but I judge no one. Even if I do judge, my judgment is truthful, because I'm not alone. My judgments come from me and from the Father who sent me. —vs. 15–16

Andrew Takasugi

COUNTLESS TIMES A DAY people find themselves interacting and forming judgments based on their own biases. This passage from John helps to draw an important distinction between those personal judgments and judgments made by God. It implies that we cannot be nearly as confident that our judgments, based on human standards, are as true as God's. Every opinion we hold is partly a reflection of our own biases, formed off of inherently human standards. It may be impossible for us to accurately reflect the truthfulness of God's judgments and understanding this fact should push us to continually confront how we treat and how we view others. While this idea may be self-evident, it is all too easily forgotten. In a community that is largely affluent and white, and in a country that seems to be increasingly divided along political, racial, and religious lines it is important to remember that the biases such conditions may inspire within our psyches are not reflected within God's. Perhaps then the best we can do on a daily basis is look inward and seek to confront our own biases in an attempt to avoid forming judgments based on our flawed human standards. †

*Dear Lord, thank you for your love and understanding. Please help us to remain open to people of all faiths, races, political viewpoints and economic circumstances as we look to make sense of the world around us. Amen.*

## Thursday

## Jeremiah 10:11–24

Everyone is too foolish to understand;  
 every goldsmith is dishonored  
 by his idols,  
 for their images are shams;  
 they aren't alive. — v. 14

Bart Jackson

**I**N THE KING JAMES VERSION, Jeremiah says humankind is “brutish” in its knowledge. What an arrow-piercing indictment. Snouts down, filled with purpose, we grub through our days discerning a need—ah-ha; cogitating and inventing a solution; then we profit from it, and move on to the next seeking new truffles. (Just as the sacred business texts teach us). Getting and spending we progress from one idol to the next newer one.

“But Dad, cannot I lift my sights toward something loftier?”

“Of course, my son. “Just focus. Focus. Follow your passion. Shape your career and you will find your inner CEO.”

In despair junior, snowboard under his arm, lifts his eyes to the hills.

Why don't I more often place my face in Christ's hands—let him draw soul and intellect into that richer, rarer air of Sweet God's mysterious feast? Would not I and others grow stronger if I sought to dress the wounds Christ came to heal? Maybe it's time to make a humble appointment with God and beg divine aid in finding a less brutish employment for my God-inspired knowledge. †

*Dear Lord, creator and knower of all, please guide my thoughts that they may ever more center on you, and fill my words with the spark of your Holy Spirit. Amen.*

## Friday

## Romans 6:1–11

Therefore we were buried together with him through baptism into his death, so that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too can walk in newness of life. — v. 4

Brandon Watson

**T**HE LITURGY OF BAPTISM speaks to the symbolic nature in which we are baptized into Christ's death and raised with him to new life. The passage before us today expresses the way we, as Christians, are to walk with Christ. We are not capable in and of ourselves to "walk in newness of life." The power of the glory of God that raised Jesus from the dead, is the same power that allows us to participate in the new life of Christ. God's claim on us is that we no longer live under the impossibility of sin. But rather, through our participation in the death and resurrection of Jesus, we can live into the possibility of new life. Let us be reminded today of the power of God's glory. The power of resurrection hope that is grounded in the goodness, mercy, and love of God is made known to us in Christ Jesus. †

*All powerful and loving God, we bow before you in recognition of our complete dependence on you. Remind us of our baptism so that we might recognize your presence today. May the death and resurrection of Jesus be made known to us afresh. Reveal to us your glory, the glory of the Triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—which grants us the power to walk in newness of life. In your mighty and holy Name. Amen.*

## Saturday

## Psalm 91

God says, “Because you are devoted to me,  
I’ll rescue you.  
I’ll protect you.”  
because you know my name.” — v. 14

Beth Coogan

**T**HESE DAYS IT SEEMS more and more challenging to block out aspects of our society and culture that are contrary to what I believe to be good and true. These words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., seem most appropriate: “Where do we go from here – chaos or community?” The petition for help in this verse is most timely, and has been helpful to me during meditative hikes and when trying to ease into sleep. Like the psalmist, many of us are struggling to retain a sense of hope and safety amidst personal and societal crises. As believers, we look to God for comfort, wisdom, and guidance.

God is our refuge. God also responds to our plea for relief by calling on us to act on our faith and find ways to promote peace and justice and be of service to those in need rather than focusing on our own distress. When the noise all around us saps our energy and hopefulness, it is time to give thanks for God’s love and grace, and to live as Jesus taught us. We must listen for God’s call and share our gifts through service and action. †

*Thank you, O God, for the light and truth that you make known to us. May we watch and listen with care in order to better know your love and live to best serve you. In Christ’s name we pray, Amen.*

## Fourth Sunday

## Psalm 42

Why, I ask myself, are you so depressed?

Why are you so upset inside?

Hope in God!

Because I will again give him thanks,  
my saving presence and my God. — v. 5

Michael Brothers

**R**EAD PSALM 42 aloud. Did you hear a shift of tone in verse 5? The psalmist begins by talking directly to God during troubled times. While drinking only tears of sorrow, the speaker thirsts for the presence of God. Others ask (or we ask ourselves), “Where is God now?” However, the speaker does not attempt to answer “where?” or “why?” or “why me?” Silence. The reply is a silent remembering of the ruckus of better times—shouts of joy, songs of thanksgiving, a noisy celebration of God’s people, in God’s house, in the presence of God.

Now we hear the shift of tone. The speaker does not address the skeptics (without and within); the speaker does not address God. The speaker addresses the speaker, self to self, soul to soul: Why are you so depressed? Why are you so disquieted and noisy inside? Hope in God! Remember when you were surrounded by people of faith singing God’s praise? Remember your voice? You will join in again. Remember the sound of God’s presence. Remember the deep thunder of God’s salvation. Hope in God!

Sometimes we need an honest heart to heart conversation... with ourselves. Sometimes each of us needs a word of encouragement... from our self. Sometimes I need to remind myself to hope... in my Savior and my God. †

*Saving God, help us remember that you are the God of our past, present, and future. When hope seems a distant memory, remind me now that you are our hope, that you are my God. Amen.*

## Monday

John 6:1–15

Then Jesus took the bread. When he had given thanks, he distributed it to those who were sitting there. He did the same with the fish, each getting as much as they wanted. — v. 11

Lisa Burke

**G**OD HAS BLESSED ME with two beautiful children. As a new mother, I was overjoyed and overwhelmed by caring for my first child, Laura. Two years later, anticipating the birth of my son Morgan, I questioned my capacity not only to care for, but to love, this child as much as my first. At the sight of my new baby, however, my heart swelled with emotion. I am so grateful for the expansive nature—and power—of love.

Today's story reminded me of the moment I wondered if I had enough love. Here, the disciples were overwhelmed at the crowd and knew they did not have enough food to share. With little drama, and with love and compassion, Jesus resolved the issue, providing more food than they needed. He provides and his love knows no bounds. †

*Gracious Lord, how grateful we are for your endless love, grace and compassion. Guide us in your ways and help us to strengthen our faith. Amen.*



## Tuesday

## Psalm 25

I offer my life to you, LORD.

My God, I trust you.

Please don't let me be put to shame!

Don't let my enemies rejoice over me! — vs. 1–2

Colleen Toole

If I could pour my soul out of my body,  
I would cup it in my hands, and hold them out to you, my Lord. I would  
give you the very essence of me, for you to have and to hold...but as I did  
so I would bite my lip.

Lord, I trust—help my distrust.

I fear them,  
who mock my hope, who scorn my love,  
who laugh at my devotion,  
and standing here with my arms outstretched to you  
is not a position from which I can defend myself.  
They could trip me,  
topple me,  
my life spilling from my hands:  
will you catch it?

Lord, I trust— help my distrust.

Let my eyes be filled with your smile, not their grimaces.

Let my ears be filled with your song, not their laughter.

Let my mouth be filled with your praise —  
yes, this above all.

Let my mouth be filled with your praise. †

*Everlasting God, in whom we live and move and have our being, assure us  
of your presence with us in every moment. Help us to feel the truth — that  
our lives are held by none other than you, who love us, lived with us, and  
save us. Amen.*

## Wednesday

## Romans 8:1–11

People whose lives are based on selfishness think about selfish things, but people whose lives are based on the Spirit think about things that are related to the Spirit. — v. 5

Fiona Christano and Iksan Lewono

**I**T'S PROBABLY SAFE TO SAY that we are living in a society where one's needs are often of higher priority than others. A recent national survey conducted by the Making Caring Common Project shows that “a large majority of youth across a wide spectrum of races, cultures, and classes appear to value aspects of personal success—achievement and happiness—over concern for others.”

As Christians we are called to follow Christ who came into the world to redeem us by sacrificing himself on the cross. According to Romans 8, thanks to Christ's sacrifice we are free from the law of sin and death. The question is then, what are we to make of it? Verse five offers us a clue in that we are to live our lives based on the Spirit that bears the fruits of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (all things that are not selfish). When we base our lives in those good things, we will think about other good things related to the Spirit. Wouldn't the world be a wonderful place if each of us spiraled out God's selfless love? †

*God who came into this world to redeem us, help us to no longer live our lives based on selfishness, rather to follow your will by remembering Jesus' sacrifice and living our lives based on the Spirit. Amen.*

## Thursday

## Psalm 102

LORD, hear my prayer!

Let my cry reach you!

Don't hide your face from me  
in my time of trouble!

Listen to me!

Answer me quickly as I cry out! — vs. 1–2

Rebekah Sterlacci

**A**S A CHILD, I learned a song at church entitled, “Hear My Cry, O God.” The song began, “Hear my cry, O God, attend unto my prayer. From the ends of the earth, will I cry unto thee. And when my heart is overwhelmed, lead me to the rock that is higher than I.” The power of music and poetry bring me calm in a chaotic, unpredictable world. These words—tied to this psalm—have resonated with me throughout my life and comforted me in times of pain.

This psalm focuses on a prayer that is cried out in a time of devastation. In our lives, we find ourselves throwing up our hands and saying, “I don’t know what to do, or where to go from here.” Our world and lives can feel uncertain and unmanageable. The psalmist reminds us that God will outlast even the most debilitating devastation and that unity and calm is possible in the Lord. If we put our focus and faith in God, he will quell our anxieties and give us the strength to take on a world that can be unforgiving, unresponsive, and oppressive. God, you are the “rock that is higher than I.” †

*Heavenly Father, you are the one! Your years never end! Help us to remember to put our faith and trust in you, even when we feel at our worst. We pray that you will continue to guide us and remind us that all of this will pass away, but you will remain constant. We thank you for your loving guidance and the knowledge and warmth of your presence in our lives. Amen.*

## Friday

## Romans 8:28–39

We know that God works all things together for good for the ones who love God, for those who are called according to his purpose. — v. 28

Karen Brown

**I**GRIEVE FOR OUR NATION, for a country torn apart by a bitter and divisive election. The 2016 election was not politics as usual—the divisions between the two candidates were deep and wide, and only served to highlight the stark differences in the experiences of Americans from various walks of life. The path to healing is shrouded in uncertainty. Where, I asked myself, is God in all the political rhetoric, all the anger and hatred? But, as the psalmist says, I also hope. I hope, and I wait, because I know in my heart that God is Lord even of this mess, and in God's own time, God will turn fruits of this ugly and difficult period to God's purpose, and use them to create good. God will need God's people to be ready, to be willing to be instruments of healing in this world, to accomplish this. So I will be ready, and I will wait and hope for the Lord with all my heart, all my mind, and all my being. †

*Dear Lord, help us to remember that you are capable of bringing good out of even the most difficult and painful times. Remind us to hope, to wait on you in the midst of our nation's current troubles, and to serve as agents of healing when the time is ripe. Amen.*

## Saturday

## Psalm 149

Praise the LORD!  
Sing to the LORD a new song;  
sing God's praise  
in the assembly of the faithful! — v. 1

Elizabeth Gift

**W**HEN TIMES ARE GOOD and we are meeting with success, or when life is easy and we are happy, it is very easy to join with others and praise God. What about those times when our hearts are troubled because of things going on in our own lives or the world around us? What then? Even then we are invited to praise God. When we are able to praise God even in the midst of pain and suffering, we can experience God's presence and comfort in a way that is like no other. When we praise God in the midst of our darkest times, our eyes can be opened to the miracles that God is performing all around us. No matter how deep the darkness is around us, we can be assured of Jesus' promise to us that we have eternal life in him. Not only is he the propitiation for our sins so that we may have life eternally with God, he is also our companion, with us day by day, and shining his light into our times of darkness and bringing healing, restoration, and life. This is indeed something for which we can sing praises to God. Hallelujah! †

*Loving God, we praise you for the gift of life, for the mercy and grace you show to us through the sacrifice of your son Jesus, and for your faithfulness to us always. Amen.*

## Fifth Sunday

## Psalm 84

LORD of heavenly forces,  
those who trust in you are truly happy! — v. 12

Anne Thomsen Lord

**L**ATELY, I’VE BECOME a bit of a happiness junkie. When I feel it, I recognize it and want it to last. My main source of happiness tips come from Gretchen Rubin’s “Happier” podcast I listen to each week. She and her sister have an intimate banter I love, and after an episode concludes, I excitedly remove my headphones, ready to implement the take-aways. (Set a bedtime alarm—it will make you happier!)

When I divulge how I actively work for happiness, I get mixed reactions. Some applaud the self-care, but, more often than not, people scoff at the idea of trying so hard to be happy. Shouldn’t happiness be effortless? The psalmist suggests as much: we can be truly happy if we just trust in the Lord! It sounds so easy. Yet, giving our complete trust in God is a formidable task and one I doubt I will ever achieve. However, this realization doesn’t mean I will stop trying. While I have no “Trusting God” podcast saved on my Spotify, each year I encounter more people nudging me further along on my journey to total trust in God. Funny how these same people seem to make me truly happy. †

*God, help us learn to trust you and be happy. Amen.*

## Monday

## Psalm 121

I raise my eyes toward the mountains.  
Where will my help come from?  
My help comes from the LORD,  
the maker of heaven and earth. — vs. 1–2

Nina and Bob Seaman

**P**SALM 121 is affirmation for any traveler (see verse 8). We hear the words and are encouraged any time we travel through dangerous territory. Or it is a song we sing in our lifelong journey through many ups and downs. This year, let it leaven our Lenten journey as we look from Ash Wednesday to Easter.

Life is full of many dangers. The physical: disease, injury, accident, infirmity. The economic: recession, unemployment, downsizing, debt or theft. The spiritual: a nagging conscience, despair, lack of joy, hopelessness.

The natural question is: Where will my help come from? And the psalmist's answer will challenge us and comfort us to travel on. It helps us remember who we are and whose we are. "My help comes from the Lord" is our most basic and profound affirmation when all other things we rely on fall away. When we are down, we look high and know we are never alone. "My help comes from the Lord." God is with us always. †

*Gracious God, bless us on our journeys. You know our deepest need, fears and hopes. We trust your promise to be with us always. Amen.*

## Tuesday

## Romans 10:1–13

The scripture says, All who have faith in him won't be put to shame. There is no distinction between Jew and Greek, because the same Lord is Lord of all, who gives richly to all who call on him. All who call on the Lord's name will be saved." —vs. 11–13

Morgan Burke

**T**HIS EXCERPT is quite important in the idea that God accepts all people who have faith in God, regardless of the differences in their heritage. It takes on a special meaning in today's politically charged world, where countless arguments and biases are built upon differences and conflicts in ideologies. To me, it shows that these kinds of conflicts are irrelevant in the end because God accepts all who believe in God equally. †

*Dear Lord, thank you for your unconditional love of all believers. Help us to strengthen our faith and follow your ways. Amen.*



## Wednesday

## Psalm 5

But let all who take refuge in you celebrate.  
Let them sing out loud forever!  
Protect them so that all who love your name  
can rejoice in you. — v. 11

Marshall McKnight

**S**O MANY SAINTS have gone on before us. If we are blessed to be among those who celebrate their gifts through song and music, we learn over time from their leadership that when they sing in worship they are truly celebrating God's love. I am thinking of Sue Ellen Page as I write this and will still be thinking of her as you read this during Lent. I know generations of people join me in celebrating her life and legacy. She touched so many souls and preached the Gospel through so many songs that she led in worship over the years. Her presence in our lives was a calming, loving refuge. There is truth of God's love through Christ's redemption that can only reach us by songs brought to us by gifted saints like Sue Ellen. Though to be clear, there was no saint quite like Sue Ellen. She was proof of God's love any time she walked into a room.

We might not always feel like celebrating. There are days when that is well beyond our reach. There is awful news, suffering and despair seemingly around every corner. Sometimes when I need cheering up, I pop the "Glory to God" CD into my car stereo and take refuge in what Sue Ellen described as her magnum opus. My personal favorite is the song "Listen" that contains the line, "Listen even when you don't understand." The good news during this Lenten season is that refuge is not gone and that singing will go on forever. The chorus of saints singing in celebration of God's love has a gifted conductor who will never tire and never stop singing. †

*God, thank you for the life and memory of Sue Ellen Page who reminds us to keep singing and celebrating your love. Amen.*

## Thursday

Romans 8:14–16

With this Spirit, we cry, “Abba, Father.” The same Spirit agrees with our spirit, that we are God’s children. — vs. 15b–16

Keith Mertz

**U**P TO THIS POINT IN MY LIFE, I don’t think I have seen a more clear contrast between those who are led by God’s spirit and those who are not. Every day I meet people who deny God. Every day I meet people who will only worship God if God does and grants what they want. Every day I meet people who have no compassion for the other members of God’s creation, or for the creation itself. It is so hard for me to remember that we are all God’s children, even those who have not claimed their inheritance.

Those of us who have claimed this inheritance and not denounced it, we must exemplify our obligation to live by the Spirit and not be driven by greed and envy. We must be God’s love to all. We must give our shirts to the ones who would take our coats. This is hard when we are faced with so much hatred and animosity in the world today. The Spirit is the answer. The Spirit helps us to remember who we are. †

*Holy Spirit, strengthen our faith, our love, our hope, our charity. Let us be a light shining brightly, showing the way to God’s love and justice for all of God’s children. Amen.*

## Friday

John 12:1–10

Then Mary took an extraordinary amount, almost three-quarters of a pound, of very expensive perfume made of pure nard. She anointed Jesus' feet with it, then wiped his feet dry with her hair. The house was filled with the aroma of the perfume. — v. 3

Bart Jackson

**W**ould you like this wrapped as a gift?”  
“No, I’d like it wrapped as an obligation.”

What if we all gave only in ways that made us happy? No hair-shirt, sacrificial giving performed in pain that makes the deed even more “noble.” No cautious, statistical gift with well-weighed outcomes. And no gifts because Dad, Christ, or Culture commands. What if our non-deductible giving exuberantly gushed forth from that God-planted seed within, because of the anticipated thrill of the feeling that comes with the gift—like the second and third lick of an ice cream cone?

Doubtless a legion of stern and legendary saints (reveling in their own disapproval) would get very upset. But I’ll bet 300 pence that God’s globe would fill with a lot more smiles—and just maybe a lot more giving. And I’ll bet God would like it. †

*Sweet Lord, please guide us in finding the promised pleasures and fun that strew the path Jesus opens wide before us. Amen.*

## Saturday

## Psalm 43

Because you are my God,  
my protective fortress!  
Why have you rejected me?  
Why do I have to walk around,  
sad, oppressed by enemies? — v. 2

Jason Sterlacci

**I**THINK THERE ARE MOMENTS in just about every person's life when they feel like they have been cut off from the love of God. In some cases, this is brought on by feelings of disillusionment or because of misplaced priorities—being too busy for spiritual fulfillment. However, there are also times when it feels as though God is not there for us; that God is indifferent, has abandoned us when we needed God most. I feel as though this is the pain this psalmist feels.

That said, it is important to remember that despite his distance from God (both spiritual and physical) and despite his depression, the psalmist maintains feelings of hope throughout his ordeal. Even as the psalmist is in a foreign land, far from the holy temple, filled with a sense of abandonment by God, he asks only for a chance to return so he may sing God's praises.

I must always remind myself that even when I feel that sense of separation from God—no matter how downtrodden I may feel—that God is here for me. God will never abandon me, and God is always deserving of my praise. †

*Heavenly Father, we ask that you always help us to remember that no matter how far we may drift from you, you are always here for us and always listening. No matter the circumstances of our lives, you are worthy of our praise. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

## Palm Sunday

### 1 Timothy 6:12–16

Compete in the good fight of faith. Grab hold of eternal life—you were called to it, and you made a good confession of it in the presence of many witnesses. — v. 12

Eliot Daley

**M**USCLE. This passage is all about muscle: “Compete!” “Grab!” “I command you!” “Obey this order!”

Yes, it is the Prince of Peace who makes his frightful way to Jerusalem this day, and we don’t associate him with those combative words. On Palm Sunday, then as now, he is cheered along by people who adore him, adorn his pathway with fronds, and surely do not expect to have to go to battle in his name. But as they and we soon learn, making good on our “good confession” means we have our hands full in the daunting struggle to heal God’s creation and establish the Kingdom of God here on earth.

Let’s not kid ourselves. If it were easy, it would have been done by now. Can we compete day in and day out with corrupted earthly powers? Can we strive “without fault or failure” to create joy and demand justice and live generously? More to the point, will we even try? Those earthly powers are monumental, and hopelessness is so seductive. Will we just look the other way and hope no one notices?

“Grab hold of eternal life—you were called to it...”

We really were, you know. †

*God, you know all too well how unlikely we are to follow through on our promises to you. Please help us to feel you right here at our side, so we know we have a fighting chance. Amen.*

## Monday

## Psalm 121

I raise my eyes toward the mountains.  
Where will my help come from? — v. 1

Thomsen Lord

**E**VERYONE NEEDS HELP. I have three younger siblings — one sister, Vinnie, and brothers who are three-year-old twins whose names are Lee and Neddy. It can be hard for our mom because there're four kids. If you're a role model to the people that are younger, they'll probably follow you. Then it would be easier for the mom and the dad. I can teach my little siblings how to handle situations. For example, if you really want to go to a park, but you have to do your homework first, I'd teach them to do the homework first. The park is fun and homework is work, and it's important to do the work before fun. †

*Lord God, thank you for all the good people on earth that show us how to be good and help. Amen.*

## Tuesday

## Psalm 91

God says, "Because you are devoted to me,  
I'll rescue you.  
I'll protect you  
because you know my name." — v. 14

Josie Brothers

**A**S WE GO THROUGH OUR EVERYDAY LIVES, we face many obstacles we must overcome, and at times we feel we live in complete darkness. Sometimes we are scared of losing loved ones, and we are scared for ourselves and for others. Or sometimes we are terrified of facing the harsh reality that surrounds us in times of suffering. But Psalm 91 reminds us that God will always rescue us from our darkest hour.

God will comfort, hide, and protect each of us in the midst of disaster. God will never forsake us. I know that sometimes in the midst of pain, I lack communication with God. It can be simple to forget God's love and compassion when many are suffering around me, but God emphasizes that God is always beside us. If we go to God with our struggles, we will have refuge and no harm will overtake us. We can always trust in God, for God is always with us now and forever more. †

*Dear loving Lord, help us to come to you with our sufferings so that we may find refuge in you. Thank you for rescuing us in our darkest hour, and thank you for protecting us in times of trouble. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*

## Wednesday

## Psalm 27

Hope in the Lord!

Be strong! Let your heart take courage!

Hope in the Lord! — v. 14

Melissa Martin

**P**SALM 27 provides us with a liturgical road map for Holy Week. Beginning with bravado, the psalm opens with “The Lord is my light and my salvation. Should I fear anyone?” This Palm Sunday shout carries on for half of the passage, confidently articulating trust in God. But, like darkness on Good Friday, questions seem to seep into the psalmist’s mind: Is God still there? Still, the psalmist insists: “Lord, listen to my voice when I cry out—have mercy on me and answer me!” and “The Lord will take me in.” Even in the hour of darkness, trust is present. But then comes silence. Between verses 12 and 13, something—or nothing—has happened. God has not responded. As if for comfort we hear the psalmist state:

*But I have sure faith that I will experience the Lord’s goodness in the land of the living!*

In a Holy Saturday sort of moment, the psalmist is confident. In this confidence, the psalmist gives the audience a liturgical devise, a word to repeat in the silence. The psalmist writes:

*Hope in the Lord! Be strong! Let your heart take courage! Hope in the Lord!*

At this midpoint in Holy Week, we have the privilege of knowing what’s coming. So for the terror of Friday and the silence of Saturday, we can start on Wednesday with the psalmist and commit these words to memory. †

*Holy Spirit, fill us with trust this week: a trust that is jubilant, a trust that is insistent, and a trust that is habit, so that we may wait for the Lord. Amen.*



## Maundy Thursday

## Psalm 126

Yes, the Lord has done great things for us,  
and we are overjoyed. — v. 3

Martin Tel

**P**SALM 126 comes to us in six verses, but my eye sees only two stanzas: one of joy (vv. 1–3) and one of longing (vs. 4–6). I wonder, are these stanzas out of order? Maybe the psalmist simply acquiesced to the demands of getting the two stanzas onto a scroll. One had to come first, after all. What shall I give to show you thankfulness,

It might be more satisfying to imagine these two stanzas on two sides of a coin. Unnumbered. No beginning and no conclusion. My life feels like this sometimes. But this is no fatalistic odyssey; no cosmic flipping of the coin. Rather, the psalmist invites me to find comfort and purpose within the ups and downs of life. My tears water fertile soil. The seeds I sow in sorrow are not dead.

Today we stand on the liturgical precipice of Maundy Thursday. We stare into the darkest day of the church year. We weep purposefully, prodigiously. (In fact, there may be enough tears to wash one another's feet.) And we hope. In the seed there is Life and it will surely break forth with resurrection joy. We know. We've been here before.

Weep. Sow. Joy will come. †

Note, the prayer below is adapted from the fourth stanza of the hymn "Now the Green Blade Rises" by John M. Crumm, copyright 1928 Oxford University Press, no. 247 in the hymnal *Glory to God*.

*When our hearts are wintry, grieving, or in pain,  
Your touch can call us back to life again;  
Fields of our hearts that dead and bare have been:  
Love will come again like wheat arising green.  
We pray in the name of Jesus, our Lord and Savior. Amen.*

## Good Friday

John 19:38–42

After this Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate if he could take away the body of Jesus. Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but a secret one because he feared the Jewish authorities. Pilate gave him permission, so he came and took the body away. — v. 38

Nancy Prince

**J**OSEPH WAS VERY COURAGEOUS to ask for Jesus' body. This passage speaks of Joseph's fear. His fear did not prevent him from taking on significant responsibility. He had companions to help him. Nicodemus and a few women were present. What was it like for them to carry out this most awesome mission? How far did they have to walk? What did they say to each other? How did they care for their broken hearts?

But they seemed to know what was required to care for Jesus' body. The grave site was in a garden in the area where the crucifixion had taken place. Joseph knew they could use this grave for Jesus' body. This burial place was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid.

This passage has relevance for me. For the first time in my life I am pondering the intersection of Advent and Good Friday. I thought about this passage leading up to Advent. I knew I would be writing thoughts about Good Friday as I planned for and installed a beautiful holiday wreath at my family's grave site on the second day of Advent 2016. The inscription on the grave stone is "In God's Care." These words continue to give me comfort and a sense of trust. Thanks be to God. †

*Gracious and most loving God, thank you for your abundant and steadfast love. Keep us close to you and your loving care. Help us feel courageous when we feel vulnerable and afraid. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

## Holy Saturday

## Psalm 139

“Where could I go to get away  
from your spirit?  
Where could I go to escape  
your presence?  
If I went up to heaven,  
you would be there.  
If I went down to the grave,  
you would be there too!  
If I could fly on the wings of dawn,  
stopping to rest only  
on the far side of the ocean—  
even there your strong hand  
will hold me tight. — vs. 7–10

Janet Anderson

Where shall I flee your presence? To what place  
should I retreat, that would not find you there?  
If I rise up, to seek for heaven’s grace,  
then of your Spirit I am well aware;  
if I pursue the dawn, the morning light,  
the far horizon of the shining sea,  
still you are there, and with me day and night.  
Your hand will lead, your right hand comfort me.

So much I know. But what of hell’s domain?  
If I go down to darkness and to fear,  
within the walls of sorrow and of pain,  
I still am not alone; you still are near.  
In height, in depth, in distance great or far,  
I have your word and promise: here you are. †

*Lord, we flee to you. Keep us. Amen.*

## Easter Sunday

Luke 24:13–35

Then Jesus said to them, “You foolish people! Your dull minds keep you from believing all that the prophets talked about. Wasn’t it necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and then enter into his glory?” — vs. 25–26

Robert C. Dykstra

**J**esus responds to Cleopas’s question on the road to Emmaus with a Bible study that speaks not of Jesus’ heavenly glory but of his earthly suffering. He reads scripture through the lens of his shame.

Rembrandt painted this Emmaus story more than any other biblical scene. He grappled with how to depict the risen Jesus, ultimately—and scandalously for the 17th century—veering from idealized classical portrayals to instead use as models his neighbors from the Jewish section of Amsterdam.

What compelled Rembrandt to return often to Emmaus and to reject religious decorum by rendering a rough and flawed Jesus? Perhaps it was desperation born of suffering. Within a year of his first Emmaus painting, Rembrandt’s father would die, followed not long thereafter by deaths over six years of three of his infant children, then of his mother, and finally of his wife, Saskia, just 29. She died in a room in their house only steps removed from his studio, a space brimming with light where he would paint his darkness again and again, paint Emmaus and hope against hope again and again, paint a Jesus tangibly human and present, with whom he could walk in sorrow in the neighborhood. †

*Merciful Lord, we thank you that on the road to Emmaus we find courage to view our own suffering, as the risen Jesus perceived his, as caught up in the triumphant story of God. Amen.*

**ALPHS, LARRY**

larryd349@comcast.net

Larry Alphas continues his Lenten pilgrim journey as husband, father and grandfather; as a psychiatrist/pharmacologist; as an employee of Janssen Scientific Affairs; and as an elder and co-moderator of the Adult Education Committee.

**ANDERSON, JANET**

dorigen@hotmail.com

Janet Anderson is a researcher, copy editor, writer and an occasional poet. She has lived in Princeton for 28 years.

**ANDERSON FLOOD, ROZ**

randerson.flood@gmail.com

Roz Anderson Flood is a member of Session and serves on the Worship and Arts Committee. She also sings with the Adult Choir.

**BEZILLA, SAM**

srb2000@icloud.com

Sam Bezilla is a Princeton High School sophomore who has been involved in Nassau and its choirs since he can remember. Music, theatre, and the social sciences keep him occupied when not at school or church. He is a proud member of NPC's High School Choir, PHS Choir and Chamber Choir, and Around 8.

**BROTHERS, JOSIE**

ljmcfeaters@hotmail.com

Josie Brothers is fifteen years old and has been a part of Nassau Presbyterian Church for her whole life. She participates in church choir, fellowship, and enjoys working with youth mission trips.

**BROTHERS, MICHAEL**

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An ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Michael Brothers is a member of the faculty of Princeton Theological Seminary where he teaches Speech Communication in Ministry. He is best known at Nassau as "Lauren's Husband" and "Josie's Dad" — titles he accepts with gratitude and distinction.

**BROWN, KAREN**

ksbjjt@gmail.com

Karen Brown is clinical researcher and long-time Nassau member who is currently on the Adult Education Committee. She lives with her husband, James Takasugi, and their two cats in Lawrenceville.

**BURKE, LISA**

lburke@princeton.edu

Lisa Burke is an active member of the Adult Education Committee and

serves as a Ruling Elder on Nassau's Session. She lives in Princeton with her family.

**BURKE, MORGAN**

mobu99@gmail.com

Morgan Burke is a senior at Princeton High School. He serves as a deacon and an usher at Nassau, and enjoys helping with the Adult Education classes as well.

**CHARTERS, MARY BETH**

marybeth.charters@ptsem.edu

Mary Beth Charters, her husband David and daughters, Megan and Kristen, have been Nassau members for more than twenty years. After more than a quarter century working for the State of New Jersey, Mary Beth retired July 1, 2016, and is currently a full-time student at Princeton Theological Seminary.

**CHRISTANO, FIONA**

fionalc@yahoo.com

Fiona Christano and Iksan Lewono are husband and wife of 13 years who are blessed with two children (Ian and Isabel). They live in the Princeton, NJ area. Iksan works in the pharmaceutical industry. Fiona is a music teacher, a part-time teacher assistant in an early childhood program at the Wal-

dorf School of Princeton, and one of the substitute teachers for the pre-school church school at Nassau.

**COOGAN, BETH**

btcoogan@gmail.com

Beth, her husband Tom, and children, Grace and John, have been members of Nassau for 14 years. She currently serves as a Deacon and member of the Small Groups Committee and the Guatemala Committee. She is a school psychologist in Franklin Township. She looks forward to retirement so she and Tom can join the Nassau-sponsored pilgrimage trips abroad.

**DALEY, ELIOT**

eliotadaley@gmail.com

Eliot Daley and his wife Patti and children Alison, Shannon, and Jad have been nurtured by this congregation for fifty years.

**DORROW, DANIEL**

daniel.dorrows@ptsem.edu

Daniel Dorrow recently became a Candidate for Teaching Elder in New Brunswick Presbytery. He feels called to serve God as a pastor-theologian with special attention to the Bible's mandate for economic justice. Dan is husband of Joanne and father of two adult daughters, Nouelle and Na-

talie. He has been a member of Nassau Presbyterian Church since May 2014.

**DODDS, MATTHEW**

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Matthew is a junior at Princeton High School who moved to Princeton two years ago after living in South Carolina and the UK.

**DYKSTRA, ROBERT C.**

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Robert Dykstra is a minister of the Presbyterian Church (USA) and professor of pastoral theology at Princeton Theological Seminary.

**EDWARDS, JANINE**

nonsunblob@gmail.com

Janine Edwards was swept into Presbyterianism when she encountered life-giving preaching and soul-piercing music on Queen Anne Hill in Seattle, 20 years ago. She finds joy in Princeton by looking for beauty and planning adventures with her husband Mark and children, Adeline and Elias. She founded and maintains Princeton Writing Academy.

**GIFT, ELIZABETH**

eagift@verizon.net

Elizabeth Gift lives with her husband Kevin in Washington Crossing, PA.

They have four children, Daniel (22), Sarah (20), Rachel (11), and Jonah (9). Elizabeth currently serves the people of Nassau as a Deacon and a member of the Nominating Committee. She also serves as secretary of the board of the Westminster Foundation and actively participates in the Breaking Bread community.

**HARDAWAY, HOLLY**

independentdomain@comcast.net

Holly Hardaway is an elder and has been an active Nassau member for almost 30 years. She and her wife Claire own an occupational therapy practice specializing in productive aging.

**HERR, MARK**

mark.herr@point72.com

Mark Herr is a 30-year member of Nassau Presbyterian and an elder not currently on the Session. He served on the Pastor Nominating Committee that called Dave Davis to our pulpit. Married to Rachel, his wife of 28 years, Mark is the father of Sarah, Brooks, Cheeky and Gardiner.

**JACKSON, BART**

bjackson2@comcast.net

Bart Jackson, to his own delight, sings in the Nassau Church Choir, pontificates ceaselessly at the Men's Break-



fast, and has heartily rejoiced in the companionship of Nassau Church's warm folks these last 14 years. By trade, Bart writes books, publishes other people's books, and hosts The Art of the CEO radio show. He is best known as Lorraine Jackson's husband.

### **LEWONO, IKSAN**

iksan.lewono@gmail.com

Iksan Lewono and Fiona Christano are husband and wife of 13 years who are blessed with two children (Ian and Isabel). They live in the Princeton, NJ area. Iksan works in the pharmaceutical industry. Fiona is a music teacher, a part-time teacher assistant in an early childhood program at the Waldorf School of Princeton, and one of the substitute teachers for the pre-school church school at Nassau.

### **LORD, ANNE THOMSEN**

altlord@gmail.com

Anne Thomsen Lord has been attending Nassau for seven years and is a ruling elder and deacon. Her husband Errol and their four children—Thomsen (9), Lavinia (6), Lee (4), and Neddy (4)—make her very happy. She also takes great joy in lifeguarding. Much of her reflection and prayers happen poolside on Tuesday and Thursday mornings from 5.30 to 8. All are wel-

come to join the Princeton Y and experience the magic of a morning swim.

### **LORD, THOMSEN**

altlord@gmail.com

Thomsen Lord is nine and plays soccer. He is a fourth grader at Riverside School.

### **MARTIN, MELISSA**

melissa.martin@ptsem.edu

Melissa Martin is a third-year student at Princeton Theological seminary and an adult education intern at Nassau. She also works in the church office as the Administrative Assistant for Pastoral Care.

### **MATTHEWS, VAL**

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Val Mathews' first career was in Electronic Warfare, designing "big-boy toys" to sink the Soviet navy if war began. He moved for an MBA and career in telecommunications/IT, then with a Russian-American company, then with a company serving the US Federal Government. He retired twice, and enjoys volunteer roles for a military high school and for the US Government, guiding individuals starting new small businesses. His wife Martha is in the Nassau Choir. Most important accomplishments are three



children with six successful grandchildren.

**MCKNIGHT, MARSHALL**

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Marshall McKnight works for the state of New Jersey. He celebrates God's love while serving at Nassau Presbyterian Church as a deacon.

**MERTZ, KEITH**

keithdmertz@gmail.com

A life-long Presbyterian, Keith Mertz loves to contemplate and sing about God's Word. "I love to tell the story, 'Twill be my theme in glory."

**MILLER, CYNTHIA**

cmiller@braunresearch.com

Cynthia Miller lives in Lawrenceville, works in international market research and is a member of the Nassau Church Adult Education Committee. Most-ly, she is a lover and writer of history, believing that it is only by knowing our history, our past that we guide ourselves properly, morally, and spiritually in the future.

**MULFORD, DAVID E.**

dmulford19@comcast.net

David E. Mulford is a Presbyterian minister, now retired, who served churches in New York, New Jersey and

Florida. He and his wife Nancy have been a part of Nassau Church since 2006.

**PARK, SHARON**

shalon.park@ptsem.edu

Sharon Park is a native of South Korea, a PhD student in History and Ecumenics (MEHR) at Princeton Theological Seminary.

**PRINCE, NANCY**

princenancy4@aol.com

Nancy Prince has been a member of Nassau Presbyterian Church since 2003 and she sings in the adult choir. She has been blessed to have experienced many of life's opportunities with her daughter, Jennifer and her husband, David. She lives at Stonebridge in Skillman.

**PULIMOOD, MANI**

mani\_pulimood@yahoo.com

Mani Pulimood worships at Nassau, with his wife Monisha and two sons, Nikhil and Philip. He has authored a book, *Spiritual Dimensions – Musings on Life and Faith*. One of his favorite ministries is online evangelism (<https://twitter.com/ManiPulimood>).

**SCORDIS, CAMILLE**

Camille Scordis is an eighth grader at Princeton Day School. She enjoys singing, rowing, reading and having fun with friends.

**SCOTT, KATHERINE**

katherine.scott@ptsem.edu

Katherine Scott is a senior M.Div. student at PTS. She is under care of Nassau and the Presbytery of New Brunswick and her calling is in parish pastoral ministry. She feels so blessed to be part of this congregation. Even though she cannot attend often because of field education requirements, she is always happy to be at church when able. She looks forward to the day when she can be even more involved in the life of Nassau.

**SEAMAN, NINA AND BOB**

bonal@comcast.net

Nina Seaman is a fiber artist and retired teacher of world history. Bob Seaman is a retired Presbyterian clergy with experience in pastoral and executive service. They summer in Nova Scotia and winter in New Jersey.

**SEIDEL, LYNNE**

seidellynne8@gmail.com

Lynne Seidel has been part of Nassau Church since 1976. Thankful for

family and friends, she loves studying, loves singing hymns, and loves people.

**STERLACCI, JASON**

jason.sterlacci@gmail.com

Jason Sterlacci and his wife Rebekah have been members of Nassau Presbyterian since 2012. Their son Jonas is being raised at Nassau. Jason serves as a member of the Adult Education Committee and spends most of his Sundays with the amazing high schoolers and middle schoolers in Nassau's Upper Room.

**STERLACCI, REBEKAH**

rebekah.sterlacci@gmail.com

Rebekah Sterlacci is a middle school vocal music and drama director, as well as the artistic director of the Rutgers Children's Choir. At Nassau, Rebekah serves on the Deacons and the Worship and Arts Committee. Rebekah, her husband Jason, and their son Jonas have been members of Nassau for four years and are grateful for such a loving, inclusive, and supportive faith community.

**TAKASUGI, ANDREW**

ksbjjt@gmail.com

Andrew Takasugi grew up attending Nassau Presbyterian church. He is now a junior at Tufts University in

Boston majoring in economics and environmental studies.

**TAKASUGI, JAMES**

james.takasugi@gmail.com

James Takasugi is a second-term deacon at Nassau Church and has been a member since 1995. He lives in Lawrenceville with his wife Karen Brown. They have two adult children, Alan and Andrew. He has a degree in chemistry and works at a small biotech company.

**TEL, MARTIN**

martin.sharilyn.tel@gmail.com

Martin Tel is the spouse of Sharilyn and father of Theodore, Sarah and Kathryn. He is the Director of Music at Princeton Theological Seminary and organist at Dutch Neck Presbyterian Church. (There's a reason he's always slipping in late to the 11 o'clock service!) Martin and Sharilyn both grew up on dairy farms, but are adjusting well to life "in town."

**THEL, PATTY**

pthel@comcast.net

Patty Thel is the Interim Director of Choirs for Children and Youth at Nassau.

**TOOLE, COLLEEN**

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Colleen Toole is a recent graduate of Princeton Theological Seminary who loves worship and congregational song. Their primary work involves outreach to LGBTQ+ youth and helping churches more fully welcome people of all gender identities. They have been a member of Nassau since early 2014 and sing in the adult choir.

**WAKEFIELD, PAM**

pamwakefield0@gmail.com

Pam Wakefield is a deacon and an elder and a member of Nassau's Mission and Outreach Committee.

**WATSON, BRANDON**

mrbrandon.watson@gmail.com

Brandon Watson and his family (Cherry and Abrianna) arrived in Princeton from Texas almost three years ago. Brandon is a member of Nassau Church and a student at Princeton Theological Seminary. He hopes to continue his work in theology in, from, and for the church. He enjoys spending time with his family, reading, and writing.

**WELLS, BOB**

wells452@aol.com

Robert Wells is a 50-year member of Nassau Church, where he and Loretta have raised their four children: David, Matt, Marcia and Joe Mac. He is a consulting arborist and educator at Morris Arboretum in Philadelphia. His father, the Rev. Mac Wells, was on staff of Nassau Church from 1968 to 1975.