

**LENTEN
DEVOTIONAL**

Lenten Devotional

NASSAU PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
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Preface

Members and friends of Nassau Presbyterian Church,

On behalf of all of you I want to extend my great thanks to the members of the Adult Education Committee, who have produced this Lenten devotional for at least six years. And they in turn want to thank the hundreds of writers who over those years have shared with the congregation their reflections on, and responses to, biblical texts. In doing so, they have revealed their lives of faithful discipleship.

Lent is an appropriate time for such reflection and revelation. In the early years of the church new Christians used Lent as a time to examine their faith, culminating in their profession of faith on Easter day. I can only imagine how profound such a sacred ritual was for those who joined the community and those who welcomed them. Hearing Christian testimony—and recognizing in those words one's own experiences, wrestling, and questions—draw us closer as a community.

I invite you to ponder these reflections as you get to know others in this faith community through their words, and through these timeless biblical texts selected for the season of Lent. Allow God to speak to you through them. Invite them to infiltrate your hearts and minds.

Your word is a lamp before my feet and a light for my journey.

Psalm 119:105

May your journey be long in God's light, and in the light of this community of faith.

Joyce MacKichan Walker
Minister of Education and Mission
Nassau Presbyterian Church
Lent 2018

Ash Wednesday

Joel 2:1–2, 12–17

Yet even now, says the Lord,
Return to me with all your hearts
with fasting, with weeping,
and with sorrow.
tear your hearts,
and not your clothing. – vs. 12–13a

Tom Coogan

Sackcloth and ashes
Would look good this time of year,

But Joel says: Get real

An outward gesture,
Without a real change inside,
Would be a new sin.

The beam in my eye
Will require forty days
Just to get measured.

Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on my soul. Amen.

Thursday

Psalm 25:1–10

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

Benjamin Yeh

IN HER POPULAR TED TALK on vulnerability Brené Brown defines shame as “the intensely painful feeling of believing that we are flawed and therefore unworthy of love and belonging.”

Our shame—or excruciating sense of guilty—comes from mistakenly equating our flaws, or imperfection, to unworthiness of love and belonging. All imperfect, and sinful, we will be forever trapped in this shame, fear, and insecurity, if we keep on believing this lie of equating our imperfection to unworthiness of love. Only by embracing our imperfection, or vulnerability, through our faith in God's grace and Christ's redemption, may we reconnect with the unquenchable source of love, regain the sense of security to face the uncertainty of life, and thus live an abundant life God promised us. God wants us to take heart and be courageous. Only faith allows us truly to embrace our vulnerability and live with our chin up, no shame!

Dear God, don't let me be put to shame! Strengthen my faith every time I am under attack, whether attack from my enemies or friends, from disappointment or pride, from public humiliation or self-accusation. Deliver me from the trap of guilt and unworthiness, so that I will be able to embrace my vulnerability and continue to have the security of God's presence and love to face uncertainties and storms, to bravely love and be loved. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Friday

Psalm 25:1–10

Make your ways known to me, LORD;
teach me your paths. – vs. 4

John Lane

PATHS ARE DIRECTIONS OR JOURNEYS we choose to take. Paths can also be directions or journeys on which we lead others. Parents and teachers lead their children and students on seemingly countless paths, and all too frequently we reach a crossroads when we have to decide which path to take next. Which path do we choose, or do we even choose just one? Who can help us make this choice? Who journeys with us?

We can research our choices before making them. Frequently, we seek input from those we trust. We can study seemingly innumerable sources in making these choices as well. Fear of making the wrong choice can freeze anyone into making no choice at all.

At any point, as we choose which path to take next, do we remember to seek God's input? God will provide the help we need if we ask.

Dear God, as we all choose which paths to take, please guide us in our decisions and come with us as we journey along. Amen.

Saturday

Psalm 25:1–10

Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions;
 according to your steadfast love remember me,
 for your goodness' sake, O LORD. – v. 7 (NRSV)

Elem Eley

AS OFTEN AS YOU DO THIS, remember me..." "Remember me when you come into your kingdom..." "Remember me..." Words of the Lord Jesus, of the thief on the cross, and of our fellow believer, the psalmist David.

Remember me. The Lord institutes the eternal meaning of the Feast.

Remember me. The thief claims eternal life.

Remember me. Along with the psalmist, we ask the Lord to see the essential, God-like, innocent souls that God breathed into our bodies at creation. We receive eternal life through faith in the same Jesus that the thief trusted.

Dear Lord, thank you for your steadfast love. Please see me, not my sin and transgressions. I trust you. And Lord, help me to see myself through your eyes. Amen.

First Sunday

1 Peter 3:18–22

Christ himself suffered on account of sins, once for all, the righteous one on behalf of the unrighteous. He did this in order to bring you into the presence of God. Christ was put to death as a human, but made alive by the Spirit. And it was by the Spirit that he went to preach to the spirits in prison. In the past, these spirits were disobedient – when God patiently waited during the time of Noah. Noah built an ark in which a few (that is, eight) lives were rescued through water. Baptism is like that. It saves you now – not because it removes dirt from your body but because it is the mark of a good conscience toward God. Your salvation comes through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. – vs. 18–22

Mark Edwards

THIS PASSAGE is actually quite famous as it is considered a major source for affirming Christ's descent to hell (notice v. 19 happens after his death). It has also been used by Christianity's critics (Mircea Eliade) and proponents (Karl Barth), to suggest that time itself is anchored in the "once for all" suffering and resurrection of Christ. Both see God's adoption of "all" time as being established and verified in Christ's submission to this "once." Additionally, this passage is significant for understanding baptism. For in the gentle waters of baptism we are spared the horrors of a wrathful flood and are washed clean by the redeeming waters of Christ. But perhaps the most powerful claim is its affirmation that "the righteous one" suffered "on behalf of the unrighteous." We are not worthy of this. And yet it has been done. By one and for all.

Lord, I believe you are patiently giving us this Lenten time to know the suffering, long-lasting, and redeeming love of Christ. Show us how you—who descends to the deepest prisons, who waits for just the right time to save, and who resurrects from the darkest floods—can guide our disobedient and unrighteous lives. Help us to trust that from droplets to clocks to prison doors: Christ rescues all of us. Amen.

Monday

Ephesians 2:1–10

Instead, we are God's accomplishment, created in Christ Jesus to do good things. God planned for these good things to be the way that we live our lives. — v. 10

Bill Wakefield

IN EPHESIANS 2:10, Paul writes that “we are God’s accomplishment, created in Christ Jesus to do good things.” In spite of the hate, racialism and other destructive elements that we experience in our daily lives, we should be encouraged by so many people doing “good things.” We see it in organizations that were created to care for the hungry, provide housing for the homeless, etc. We are also aware of the small, often unobserved things done by people alone, a Deacon visiting a person saddened by the death of a spouse or the person who befriends and supports a “stranger.” We need to spread the word to friends, family and others so they, too, will do those good things. Hopefully, over time, doing good things will overshadow the bad things and Christ’s message will be the way that more people live.

Help us all to do the good things Christ Jesus expects of us and to show others, by example, the way to follow him. Amen.

Tuesday

Psalm 77

I cry out loud to God—
 out loud to God so that God can hear me!
 You led your people like sheep
 under the care of Moses and Aaron. — vs. 1, 20

Val Matthews

OUR ANCIENT WRITER goes off on an enthusiastic pity-temper-tantrum:

“I cry out loud to God— out loud to God so that God can hear me! At night my hands are still out-stretched and don’t grow numb; I complain, my spirit grows tired” and on and on ad nauseam for 19 verses.

One modern Western view might be that ancient God enjoyed hearing from this cranky human about as long as God could stand it: “Always complaining!”

Finally, our writer remembers God’s dramatic parting of the Red Sea and, perhaps in ecstasy, he suddenly closes. He seems to have realized there really is a wonderful difference between fussing and appreciation. The Spirit knows when to stop talking, and that is a good thing.

Help us to appreciate and accept our reality, our positive relationships with others, our Christian heritage and faith, and God’s blessings. Amen.

Wednesday

Matthew 4:1–11

[The devil showed Jesus] all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. He said, “I’ll give you all these if you bow down and worship me.”

— vs. 8b–9

Katharine Sakenfield

ALL THE KINGDOMS and all their glory, if you’ll just bow down and worship me. Jesus’ refusal of the Tempter’s offer seems so easy—after all, he is Jesus, so he should know that he already has what the devil is offering (even if the earthly powers will one day take his earthly life). But maybe I’m rationalizing, to keep the devil’s offer distant from my life—no one would offer me all the world’s kingdoms, and I wouldn’t want them anyway. With what cunning offer does the Tempter creep into my mind and heart? Maybe not to have everything, but to have “just a little more....” Of what? Of recognition by others, of economic security, of....”? What do I want when I look deep into my heart? May I follow Jesus’ example, to serve only the Lord my God.

Compassionate God, grant me grace and forgiveness when I succumb to the Tempter’s power, and renew my strength and courage to follow Jesus in serving you alone, that the world may know your justice, mercy, and love. Amen.

Thursday

Romans 3:21–31

God's righteousness comes through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ for all who have faith in him. There's no distinction. – v. 22

Mari Pearlman Walthall

IN THIS PASSAGE, Paul engages a central paradox of Christian belief: an individual's faith in Jesus is itself sufficient to earn a place in the ranks of God's righteous people. Really? Despite bad behavior? Repeated disobedience? Downright cruelty? Paul simply asserts that a person "is treated as righteous by faith, apart from what is accomplished under the Law," and ends the passage with a Pauline Zen comment: "Do we then cancel the Law through this faith? Absolutely not! Instead, we confirm the Law." But what if we just ignore the Law completely? That is, we might profess—and believe—absolute faith in Jesus, but find it very difficult to sacrifice much to make those who suffer more comfortable, or muster the will to be tolerant to those so very unlike us in belief and behavior. Does how we actually behave each day really matter if we believe in Jesus?

Send light into our darkness. Order our steps every day in the path of faithful action. Teach us what grace abounding really means. Amen.

Friday

Psalm 22:23–31

Every part of the earth
 will remember and come back to the LORD;
 every family among all the nations
 will worship you. — v. 27

Bill Creager

SOME BIBLE CLAIMS are, to put it mildly, a stretch. I used to stumble and grumble around tales of miracles or assertions about how the world started or may end, but these days I find it harder to wrap my mind around claims about everyday human life, like this one in Psalm 22.

Really, psalmist? Every family, every part of the earth? How, exactly, is that going to happen?

With every passing day, aren't we further from agreeing on anything, much less on agreeing to come back to the Lord? In politics, 51% is a winning coalition, and the losers be damned. In conversation, it's easy to talk with those with whom we mostly agree, and wish that others would hold their tongues or, frankly, disappear and stop bugging us.

A bold claim like this—that the Lord will build a joyful consensus—is both hard to swallow and incredibly inspiring. Clearly, it's not going to happen through the types of persuasion we've become so used to. Compelling messaging and convincing arguments won't be enough. It won't occur through damning losers or silencing disagreeers. It can't involve anyone disappearing, or being coerced, or being left out of the conversation.

Ambitious God, the scale of the reconciliation you have in mind is staggering. Help us to imagine it too. Help us to come back to you. Amen.

Saturday

Genesis 16:7–15

Hagar thought, “Have I really seen God and lived to tell about it?”

So from then on she called God “the God Who Sees Me.” – v.13

Jonathan Shenk

HAGAR is an Egyptian slave who has fled into the desert to escape the harsh treatment of Sarai, her owner. She is pregnant with Abram’s child. She has been used and then abused by the household of Abram and Sarai. I expect she feels desperate and unloved and perhaps unworthy of much.

And in this desperate place God meets her and calls her by name saying, “Hagar, where have you come from, and where are you going?”

This is a question that emerges for each of us during this season of Lent: “Where have I come from, and where am I going?” And it comes to us not from a remote God or an inquisitor God; rather it springs forth from the God who sees us—and loves us—in all our brokenness and courage, in all our insecurity and glory. God seeks us out even in our desert and calls us by name.

Loving God Who Sees Us, show us where we have come from, and where we are going that we might more truly align our walk with you. Amen.

Second Sunday

Romans 4:13–25

When it was beyond hope, [Abraham] had faith in the hope that he would become the father of many nations, in keeping with the promise God spoke to him: That's how many descendants you will have. – v. 18

Eric Barreto

HOPE. FAITH. What if we use these terms while rarely plumbing the depths of their meaning? Here, Paul points to the hope Abraham embodies when he believes the promise God made. He believes the unbelievable. He hopes for the impossible. He trusts a God who does not swerve from a promise. Hope then is not just naive optimism. Belief is not just assent.

Hope and faith: these are radical embodiments in a shattered and shattering world. Perhaps the center of these radical embodiments is trust. We trust the God who creates, shapes, and loves us. Because we trust such a God, we can also trust our neighbors with our very lives. “Impossible!” we might say. And we would be right. Such trust is impossible. Such hope is folly. Such faith is delusion.

Yet, in Christ, the impossible is ordinary.

Hope, believe, and trust, for in Christ, God's promises are sure.

God of every promise kept, teach us to hope like your beloved Sarah and Abraham, Elizabeth and Zechariah, Mary and Joseph. And when our hope runs short, draw us into your embrace and surround us with those who can bear those hopes we can no longer carry on our own. In Jesus' blessed name. Amen.

Monday

Hebrews 1:8–12

But God says to God's Son,

“God, your throne is forever
and your kingdom's scepter is a rod of justice.”

And God says,

“You, Lord, laid the earth's foundations in the beginning,
and the heavens are made by your hands.” – vs. 8, 10

Mani Pulimood

LORD OF ALL. Can we really begin to conceive who Jesus is, for, through, and in whom the whole universe was created? Science tells us that the universe is more than 13 billion years old and the observable universe is 46 billion light years in length. This makes us conscious that God is outside the dimensions of time and space.

The Hebrew Christians were under persecution for their faith in Jesus. So the author of Hebrews says that the Jesus they worship is greater than the Romans, Moses, prophets, and all the heavenly beings. He is our Messiah, Son of the living God.

At the center of the universe is Jesus our creator, sustainer, and redeemer. He is the invisible God made visible in whose being we see love, joy and peace. Jesus wants to be the center of your life and guide you through your life on earth and on to eternity.

As a small reflection of your light.

Heavenly Father, we adore you with our hearts and minds for the gift of life and this beautiful world you created for us to live in. Please forgive us for the times we don't live according to your will. Thank you for sending Jesus down to earth to redeem us from our sins. Lord, we surrender our hearts into your hands. Be the center of our lives, and fill us with your love, joy, and peace. Amen.

Tuesday

Genesis 22:1–19

God said, “Take your son, your only son whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah. Offer him up as an entirely burned offering there on one of the mountains that I will show you.” – v. 2

Greer Imbrie

IN THIS VERSE God tests God’s servant, Abraham, by commanding him to sacrifice his son, Isaac, in the wilderness.

Remember that Abraham and Sarah couldn’t have children. Then, miraculously, when Abraham was 100 years old, Isaac was born. How could God’s promise be true that Abraham’s descendants would be more numerous than the stars or the sand, if Abraham sacrificed Isaac?

What must have gone through Abraham’s mind? What must have gone through Isaac’s mind when he realized he was to be a human sacrifice? We can learn much about the nature of faith, obedience, and sacrifice from this story.

Finally, what did God think when he saw that Abraham and Isaac were ready to obey his command? We know that Jesus was amazed at some of the examples of faith he witnessed. Is it possible God was so moved by Abraham and Isaac’s faith that he decided to sacrifice his only son?

Lord, we pray you will deepen our understanding of unquestioning faith, of obedience unto death, and of sacrificing what is most precious to us. Amen.

Wednesday

John 12:36–43

[Jesus said,] “As long as you have the light, believe in the light so that you might become people whose lives are determined by the light.”

— v. 36

Emily Liu

HAVING FAITH in God is easier when God demonstrates miracles and I am bathed in light and the warmth of love. The challenge is usually when I am in darkness, without God’s voice directing me, without miraculous signs to cheer me up, keep me going. I seem to easily forget that when we were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, and believing his salvation power, we already had the Holy Spirit take residence inside us, his light burning inside us. As long as we seek God’s voice, keep meditating on his words, we should be able to stoke the fire, passion and faith inside, letting our inside light burn bright, no longer afraid of the darkness outside, or dependent on the miraculous signs to keep us up. Therefore, we need not depend on people’s praise, but on God’s promise and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ’s redemption and unfailing love.

Dear Lord, strengthen our faith in your power and glory and make our lives determined by your light, so that your unfailing love and omnipresent wisdom will be with us forever. Amen.

Thursday

Psalm 19

The heavens are telling the glory of God;
 and the firmament proclaims God's handiwork.
 Day to day pours forth speech,
 and night to night declares knowledge.
 There is no speech, nor are there words;
 their voice is not heard;
 yet their voice goes out through all the earth,
 and their words to the end of the world.
 In the heavens God has set a tent for the sun,
 which comes out like a bridegroom from his wedding canopy,
 and like a strong man runs its course with joy.
 Its rising is from the end of the heavens,
 and its circuit to the end of them;
 and nothing is hid from its heat. — vs. 1–6 (NRSV)

Ned Walthall

WHEN I BECAME an art photographer the first thing I had to learn was to do without words. This was hard for me. At Nassau Church we don't talk about ourselves much, but we like to talk about our faith. For us, it's about language.

In the beginning was the word.

But the first thing you have to learn as a photographer is to shut up, be quiet, let the picture talk. It might be worth a thousand words even if it doesn't have any. If you have to speak for it, it's probably a failure and you need to try again.

Which, oddly, is kind of how God's own creation works, isn't it? The heavens are *telling* the glory of God, they *proclaim* God's handiwork, day *pours forth* speech, night *declares* knowledge, and *yet there is no speech, nor are their words, their voice is not heard.*

The rising sun proclaims God's presence.

Without saying a word.

*God, teach me to listen for you in the silence of your creation.
 Amen.*

Friday

Psalm 19

The heavens are telling the glory of God;
 and the firmament proclaims God's handiwork.
 Day to day pours forth speech,
 and night to night declares knowledge.
 There is no speech, nor are there words;
 their voice is not heard;
 yet their voice goes out through all the earth,
 and their words to the end of the world. — vs. 1–4a (NRSV)

Keith Mertz

PSALM 19 is such a clear and strong faith statement. It is immensely important to me as a scientist who also believes in unscientific things: God the Creator, the virgin birth, Jesus' resurrection, the resurrection of the body, divine inspiration, eternal life.

The faith statement of this psalm inspired many hymns and choral scores. Verse 4a tells of the “music of the spheres,” the sound of the creation telling its own story day after day and night after night. That story is creation's silent witness to the glory and majesty of God the Creator.

In Romans 10:18, Paul repurposes the psalmist's voices of the cosmos, turning those eternal voices into our human voices telling the Gospel story and calling the world to believe. Charles Jennens, the Messiah librettist, used Paul's perspective to celebrate our call to evangelism when he wrote, “Their sound has gone out into all lands and their words unto the end of the world.” How blest we are to be called to witness to God's Glory, to tell the Gospel story!

Lord, Lent is a good time to tell the story, your story of creation, your story of renewal, your story of everlasting life. Help me to tell your story with words and songs and actions. Amen.

Saturday

Mark 9:2–8

Six days later Jesus took Peter, James, and John, and brought them to the top of a very high mountain where they were alone... Then a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice spoke from the cloud, “This is my Son, whom I dearly love. Listen to him!” – vs. 2, 7

Bart Jackson

HOSANNA! SAVE US! Each individual in every generation imbues Jesus with his/her own ideals and hopes. Peter, a powerless Galilean sea fisherman, pressed hard by foreign tyranny and an empty, rule-ridden religious leadership at home, climbs the mountain with Jesus. At the summit, he witnesses a savior embraced by the strong, revered prophets of the past and the mountain-shaking authority of God. Jesus is transformed in Peter’s eyes and Peter briefly tastes the deliverance for which he has longed.

Climbing with Jesus today, how do we idealize him? What deliverance do we seek? Perhaps we behold the shattered human community, loveless and fragmented—find ourselves tormented to distraction by prescribed goals and persuasions frenzying us down paths we don’t truly want. We discover our Jesus warm, loving, intimately caring—hoping he’ll offer us God’s grace. Can our new Jesus deliver? He has for every age thus far.

Dear Lord, as we envision in Jesus all that we would be, and seek from him all that we so desperately require, help us to lift our eyes and find that spark of Christ glowing in each of our fellow travelers. And may we share your light which you have planted within us. Amen.

Third Sunday

Psalm 19

Heaven is declaring God's glory;
 the sky is proclaiming God's handiwork.
 One day gushes the news to the next,
 and one night informs another what needs to be known.
 Of course, there's no speech, no words—
 their voices can't be heard—
 but their sound extends throughout the world;
 their words reach the ends of the earth. — vs. 1-4

Jacq Lapsley

CREATION SPEAKS TO US of the glory of God, but “their voices can't be heard”—there's too much din. “Be still and know that I am God!”—few things are harder to do.

In a few places the silence lasts long enough to hear. In worship. In poetry (Wendell Berry's “The Peace of Wild Things”). In the woods (the poetry walk at Greenway Meadows). And if one pays close attention, in the city, in the office, in line for coffee.

“Their words reach the ends of the earth.”

To love is to pay attention.

Gracious God, forgive us our inattention, our lack of love, for all you have done and are doing in the world. Open our ears to you. Amen.

Monday

1 Corinthians 3:10–23

No one can lay any other foundation besides the one that is already laid, which is Jesus Christ. So, whether someone builds on top of the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, grass, or hay, each one's work will be clearly shown. The day will make it clear, because it will be revealed with fire—the fire will test the quality of each one's work. — vs. 11–13

Monisha Pulimood

PAUL REMINDS US that Jesus laid a strong foundation for us; he provided the blueprint for our interactions with others. We can depend on this foundation when we are faced with tough questions, when fear rules our lives, or when we find it difficult to embrace those who look different from us. However, we must be careful about how we interpret and apply Jesus' teachings.

Do we feed the hungry without reservation, or do we help only those who “pull themselves up by the bootstraps”? Do we make it possible for everyone to get the healthcare they need? Or do we limit aid to those who fit certain parameters of race, nationality, or religious background?

We are reminded not to gild Jesus' teachings with the “gold” or “silver” of our own biases and desires, or to insert caveats that conform to the worldly views of justice and equity.

Dear Jesus, help us to build our lives on the strong foundation you have given us, without embellishments or limitations. Amen.

Tuesday

Psalm 84

Better is a single day in your courtyards
 than a thousand days anywhere else!
 I would prefer to stand outside
 the entrance of my God's house
 than live comfortably
 in the tents of the wicked. – v. 10

Eileen Moffett

WHEN SAMUEL SCHERESCHEWSKY, a young Jewish-Christian, was told by a classmate that he could never get into China as a missionary he replied, "I'd give my life if I could but oil the hinges of its door." In 1859 the American Episcopal Church sent him to China. He became a great linguist and Bible translator. He mastered between nine and ten thousand Chinese characters working tirelessly to improve translations in classical Mandarin. But he soon felt a greater need for a translation of "a Bible for the poor." Before beginning he suffered a stroke and had to leave China severely paralyzed. After seven years he was able to type with one finger and resolved to continue the work he had planned much earlier. Using that finger he hit the keys one at a time and when the finger failed he took a stick to strike the keys. Working eight or nine hours a day for six years he finished the entire Bible in a language of the people. By 1900 it was used by two-thirds of the Chinese people. Spreading also to Korea, Indochina and even Japan, it became the written language of one-fourth of the world's people.

Our Heavenly Father, let our weakness be saturated with thy power to accomplish in the Holy Name of Jesus that which seemed at first impossible. Amen.

Wednesday

Psalm 84

Yes, the sparrow too has found a home there;
 the swallow has found herself a nest
 where she can lay her young beside your altars,
 LORD of heavenly forces, my king, my God! – v. 3

Cynthia Miller

HOME SWEET HOME. Those words conjure ideal images of serenity, tranquility, peace, comfort and calm. Humans and animals alike feel a potent urging to hold onto what is most precious to each of us...birds hold a wing over their hatchlings; sheep enfold their little lambs in the protective warmth of their motherly wool; cats swathe their small kittens tightly against their soft fur; dogs envelop their small puppies; and humans wrap their little ones in soft blankets. We are all similar and yet individual in our preferences, personalities and desires. We aim to protect our children against the outside world, to give them a safe environment to start their own life journey. But, are we not all God's children? For is not that distinct, palpable hold we have on our children the same as that which God has on us, all animals, creatures of air, land and sea, adults and children alike? As infinite as time, God and Jesus will protect us all. *Every one of us.* In a warm blanket of faith, love, hope and blessings for all the days to come.

Oh God, please be with us as we enfold your soft blanket around our minds and hearts both today and every day. Amen.

Thursday

Genesis 9:8–17

God said, “This is the symbol of the covenant that I am drawing up between me and you and every living thing with you, on behalf of every future generation. I have placed my bow in the clouds; it will be the symbol of the covenant between me and the earth.” – vs. 12–13

Sarah Tel

WHEN I READ THIS PASSAGE I was struck by all the repetition. “I am setting up my covenant...” “I will set up my covenant...” “This is the symbol of the covenant...” *The covenant, the covenant, the covenant...* Covenant means promise. After the storm there is a rainbow. After the flood there is a promise. After the testing there is peace. God shows that at the end, when we have survived, there is a positive outcome. Maybe even something beautiful.

Last summer I walked the Camino with other youth and adults of Nassau Presbyterian Church. Our feet were blistered. Our muscles ached. We didn’t smell too good. Before the day was over we were ready to be done. And in my own soul, throughout this pilgrimage, a storm seemed to be raging. But I learned that hardships and trials could result in peace at the end. I came through this pilgrimage strengthened in my body, my mind and my faith.

When the storm is over, we dwell on the promise. The covenant. The rainbow. The peace. It is beautiful. It is worth repeating.

Dear Heavenly Father, Thank you for promising a rainbow after all of our storms. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Friday

Psalm 107:1-3; 17-22

Give thanks to the LORD because he is good,
 because God's faithful love lasts forever!
 Let them thank the LORD for the LORD'S faithful love
 and God's wondrous works for all people.
 Let them offer thanksgiving sacrifices
 and declare what God has done in songs of joy! – vs. 1, 21-22

Kim Kleasen

IT SEEMS EASY to thank the Lord for the Lord's goodness and wondrous works. For me, it's clear to see God's grace in nature and art, in music, or in the acts of connection and compassion displayed by others, compellingly displaying God's wondrous works. But, what about seeing the Lord's love for all people, even those with whom I may disagree, may be distant from, those who puzzle me by their perspectives or those whom I simply don't know? How am I thankful for God's wondrous works for those people? I keep an "inspiration book," filled with thoughts, quotes, hymns and reflections that help me discover the wonder of God's work for all people. I am not perfect in this, but practicing daily acts of kindness, seeking to understand another or simply listening are things I do with God's help. These words of Sherwin Newland grace one page of my book: "Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a great battle." May God open our eyes once again.

Dear God, help me to open my eyes to all of your people, to practice compassion and love so that I can be freed from the chains that I have made for myself. Amen.

Saturday

John 3:1–13

[Nicodemus] came to Yeshua by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know it is from God that you have come as a teacher; for no one can do these miracles you perform unless God is with him.”

— v. 2 (Complete Jewish Bible)

Karen Shahbazian Berliner

THE SCENE IS SET. It is the elegant juxtaposition of the world’s dark night and the Divine Light; ruler of the law and ruler of the heart; Nicodemus, a Pharisee, and Jesus, our Savior. Transformation is in the midst.

Although the text doesn’t tell us, I believe Jesus invited Nicodemus to come talk with him, because really, why wouldn’t he? Clearly Nicodemus is wrestling with the knowledge of scripture and law he has with what he has seen with his eyes and heard with his ears—this rabbi, Jesus. He meets Jesus with his opening line, a statement of truth, a fact that he has come to believe.

Jesus affirms Nicodemus’ statement and goes on to introduce him to being “born of the spirit.” Like a film reel of the past, we the readers can see a few frames of the change happening within him. He is actually in the process of moving toward the new birth of his spirit. Jesus meets him right where he is and his light pulls Nicodemus closer and closer and closer.

As the church, we are called to be the light of the world—to be like Jesus. At the same time, we, the church, are like Nicodemus and the light of our Lord calls us closer and closer and closer. Transformation is in the midst.

God, let us yield to the light of our Lord that shines through us to welcome those who are in the midst of transformation, moving toward their new spiritual birth. All the while, draw us closer and closer and closer to you as we too are in the midst of transformation. Amen.

Fourth Sunday

Psalm 107:1-3; 17-22

“Give thanks to the LORD because he is good,
because the LORD’S faithful love lasts forever!”
That’s what those who are redeemed by the LORD say,
the ones God redeemed from the power of their enemies,
the ones God gathered from various countries,
from east and west, north and south. – vs. 1-3

Sam Bezilla

NASSAU PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH represents for me a perfect microcosm of the unifying power of God’s love described in this passage. Just look around the youth room on a Sunday night of fellowship, and you’ll see everyone from athletes to mathletes united in fellowship. Friendship and love at our church cut across the arbitrary boundaries of high school because there’s something so much greater uniting us: our shared love of God.

God of all, bring your unifying presence to our communities. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Monday

John 6:1–15

Every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything.

— v. 4

Karen Brown

THIS VERSE REMINDS US That what God builds in this world must be built through us, God’s imperfect servants. “Every house is built by someone.” God has no physical presence in today’s world. God must rely on us to do God’s will and build for God, whether it involves nudging a child to give a quarter to a homeless person or speaking for peace through the voice of the church. Yet, at the same time, “...God is the builder of everything,” including us. God created us to be servants, and placed in each one of us a unique combination of abilities that God can draw on as needed. Our job as Christians is to develop those abilities into something God can use, and keep our hearts open so we can say “Yes, Lord!” when the call comes for us to start building the house we were born to build.

Dearest Lord, please remind us to develop those talents you have given us wisely and to listen for you always in our hearts, so that we can be less imperfect servants and build houses that reflect your glory more perfectly. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.

Tuesday

Psalm 107:1–16

“Give thanks to the LORD because the LORD is good,
because his faithful love lasts forever!”

Let them thank the LORD for the LORD’s faithful love
and the LORD’s wondrous works for all people,
because God has shattered bronze doors
and split iron bars in two! – vs. 1, 16

Kelsey Lambright

“A Continuation of Psalm 107”

Some muddled on in faceless streets,
looking down at horrendous scenes on screens;
desperately searching for authentic love,
for something, anything, real.

Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble,
and the Lord delivered them from their distress,
leading them into a warm embrace,
into a community of joy and peace.

Let them thank the Lord for steadfast love,
for wonderful works to humankind.
For the Lord breaks into a weary world,
and gives us something—someone—real.

When they are overwhelmed and angered
by swirling chaos, injustice, and pain,
the Lord does not watch and shrug,
or try to help and fail;
but the Lord comes completely into their mess,
and sits and prays and cries and dies.
And comes to life, bringing justice, righteousness,
rightness, making all things new.
Let those who are wise give heed to these things,
and consider the steadfast love of the Lord.

*We cry out to you in our distress, God our Savior and Deliverer.
Amen.*

Wednesday

Psalm 107:1–16

Some of the redeemed had wandered
 into the desert, into the wasteland.
 They couldn't find their way to a city or town.
 They were hungry and thirsty;
 their lives were slipping away.
 So they cried out to the LORD in their distress,
 and God delivered them
 from their desperate circumstances. — vs. 4–6

Martin Tel

WE ALL KNOW people who only pray to God in a crisis. People who don't even believe in prayer—or in God, for that matter—often yield to a primal instinct to pray to God when they are in really dire straits. *Oh God, if you would only save me this once.* I've been conditioned to think less of such people. In other psalms they are called fools, and we are not inclined to suffer fools gladly. But looking at Psalm 107, in crisis after crisis, sinners and fools cry out for rescue, and God responds! In mercy God hears and delivers. With each tale of rescue, there is a refrain of thanks. Psalm 107 offers a glimpse of the mercy of a God that would die to save us. Thank you, Jesus. Praise to the Lord. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so!

Thank you, God, for your steadfast love endures forever. You suffer the fool. You rescue me. Thank you. Thank you. In Jesus' name, thank you. Amen.

Thursday

Isaiah 30:15–18

Therefore, the LORD God, the holy one of Israel, says:

In return and rest you will be saved;

quietness and trust will be your strength—but you refused.

— v. 15

Camille Scordis

THERE IS MUCH TURMOIL and fear throughout our nation, and in panic we flee from the way of righteousness and goodness. When we are afraid we seek out distractions rather than remain steadfast in the Lord. However, the Lord is seeking us seeking him, always with open arms to welcome us. God is there for when we stop running and turn towards God's ways again. I am learning this on my journey with faith, that, the Lord is never distant and will offer forgiveness and comfort if you simply ask. So, let us face fear with tranquility and trust in the strength the Lord gives us, for the Lord has our back.

Dear Lord, please help us to understand that you will always welcome us, no matter how far away we have run. Be with us always and guide us through the fears and trials of life. In your name we pray. Amen.

Friday

Psalm 51:1–12

Hide your face from my sins; wipe away all my guilty deeds!
 Create a clean heart for me, God; put a new, faithful spirit deep
 inside me! – v. 10

Cynthia and Jim Moorhead

HAVE MERCY ON ME, GOD... I've sinned against you—you alone... Yes, I was born in guilt, in sin, from the moment my mother conceived me.

The psalm cuts against the grain of contemporary culture that encourages us to think positively about ourselves. Several decades ago a best-selling book exemplified the current view: *I'm OK, You're OK*. William Sloane Coffin, then pastor of the Riverside Church in New York City, quipped that a theologically better title would be *I'm Not OK, You're Not OK—and That's OK*. Coffin's wit captured the spirit of Psalm 51. Our hope does not lie in the fact that our misdeeds are so minor or our moral wounds so superficial that they can be mended by a thin coat of self-affirmation or optimistic thinking. The psalmist points us to the only source of real healing: God's "faithful love" and "great compassion," which alone can "create a new heart" within us.

Holy God, please surround us with your abundant mercy every day. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Saturday

Psalm 51:1–12

Have mercy on me, God, according to your faithful love!

Wipe away my wrongdoings according to your great
compassion!

Wash me completely clean of my guilt;
purify me from my sin! – vs. 1–2

Ann Bryant

THIS PSALM and especially the first two verses tell us of God's abundant mercy and steadfast love. We are reminded that we are all sinners in need of God's forgiveness. Only God can cleanse us from our sins and create in us a clean heart and a joyful spirit.

Dear God, have mercy on us, forgive our transgressions, and create within us a new and right spirit. Amen.

Fifth Sunday

John 12:20–33

Some Greeks were among those who had come up to worship at the festival. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and made a request: “Sir, we want to see Jesus.” – vs. 20–21

Nancy Prince

THIS SCRIPTURAL PASSAGE tells us there were folks in the crowd who were of a different ethnicity than Jesus. What was it like for them to make the request of Phillip to see Jesus? What did they already know about Jesus? What had they heard Jesus say? It seems as though this may have been a first experience encountering Jesus.

The Greeks were fortunate to meet Phillip and Andrew who knew Jesus, knew him well, who knew his teachings and could fulfill their request. The Greeks were received with hospitality. They soon were in the presence of Jesus.

Perhaps they felt an openness throughout the crowd that they might not only see Jesus but that they would be close enough to hear Jesus’ words. The words that Jesus spoke could have been received as disturbing from this beloved teacher. Yet his closing comment in his address to the crowd conveys reassurance. He tells them to believe in the light and to walk in the light.

Living in the light is the inspiration and way of Jesus.

Gracious and Loving God, thank you for your abundant love and sure guidance always. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Monday

2 Corinthians 3:4–11

This is the confidence that we have through Christ in the presence of God. It isn't that we ourselves are qualified to claim that anything came from us. No, our qualification is from God.

God has qualified us as ministers of a new covenant not based on what is written but on the Spirit. – vs. 4–6

Dean Foose

FROM TIME TO TIME we tend to question our competency as Christians. Are we good enough? Do we have sufficient faith? Do we believe the right doctrine? Are we capable, credible, articulate Christians? All kinds of such doubts creep into our thinking and affect our confidence. The Imposter Syndrome takes hold and we start thinking that we are inadequate, incompetent, and unqualified as Christians. In short, are we frauds? We think we do not measure up. Sometimes we are especially hard on ourselves during the season of Lent.

As we begin the next-to-the-last week of Lenten Devotions, this text asks us to take stock of our understanding of our qualifications to bear the Gospel. It is liberating to hear Paul tell us that nothing in us makes us capable or qualified; rather, our capacity to bear the love of God comes from God. We have been reading these texts and meditations and prayers from day to day, week to week, seeking to hear what the Spirit has to say to us. We are learning that we are indeed empowered, made credible, capable, and qualified by the life-giving Spirit of God. The Law is fixed and rigid, the Spirit is fluid and gives life. Thanks be to God!

Gracious God, guide our thinking and living this day and every day so that our lives might reflect and manifest your love. Amen.

Tuesday

Acts 2:14–24

“These people aren’t drunk, as you suspect; after all, it’s only nine o’clock in the morning!” – v. 15

Marshall McKnight

ON A WEEKDAY MORNING last fall, I walked past a plaza to where I work in Trenton. I heard the familiar pop of a can opening and turned to see a man sitting on a bench drinking from a tall boy, slang for a 24-ounce can of beer. I looked at the clock on the street corner. It was 9:00 a.m.

On the streets it seems especially tough, any time of day, to feel the giddy excitement of Pentecost. It often seems as empty as the high pile of tall boys discarded in the plaza.

Through God’s grace, I experience it. Sometimes, it is right in my face. People ask me for money. Over time, the Holy Spirit, working through the top-notch preaching at Nassau Church, has inspired me to give. I open my wallet to people on the street who ask. I often hear in return, “God bless you.”

Dear God, thank you for giving us your Son so that we may have life and know the joy of the Holy Spirit. Help us to share your love every chance we get. In gratitude, we say, Amen.

Wednesday

John 12:34–50

Jesus replied, “The light is with you for only a little while. Walk while you have the light so that darkness doesn’t overtake you. Those who walk in the darkness don’t know where they are going. As long as you have the light, believe in the light so that you might become people whose lives are determined by the light.” – vs. 35–36

Barbara Edwards

IN MAY 2017 I went on a medical mission trip with Villages in Partnership (VIP) to Malawi. I was excited to bring healthcare to those who rarely have access to it. As I look back on that trip now, I realize that in the end I received so much more than I gave. I was blessed to be welcomed into villages and to be given a glimpse into people’s lives.

What I saw was amazing! I saw VIP live out the promise of God’s love and give hope for a better tomorrow. In a country where most people do not have electricity or running water, I met people with the light of God in their eyes. I came home with a renewed promise to hold onto that light and to let it determine my life going forward. In a world with so much darkness, we need to show that light to the world every day in what we do and how we treat each other.

Loving Mother and Father of us all, help us to be people whose lives are determined by your light, not by the darkness. Help us to have faith that you will show us the way and let us open ourselves up so that we may recognize your guiding hand in everything we do. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.

Thursday

Philippians 2:1–11

Don't do anything for selfish purposes but with humility think of others as better than yourselves. Instead of each person watching out for their own good, watch out for what is better for others. – vs. 3–4

John Kelsey

WITH HUMILITY comes the willingness to give of what we have and what we are right now, without waiting until we are more eloquent or more accomplished. What we have to share is what someone else needs to receive. By focusing more on the needs of others and less on the imaginary concept of ourselves, which is our ego, we learn to overcome our fear of giving. What we have to give now is enough for today.

Lord, help me to be humble, to surrender, to give up trying to change people or circumstances, to give up trying to force my will upon others. Grant me humility to be quiet, at rest, and confident that God is present in every situation. Humility is being at peace, always. Amen.

Friday

Philippians 2:12–18

Do everything without grumbling and arguing so that you may be blameless and pure, innocent children of God surrounded by people who are crooked and corrupt. Among these people you shine like stars in the world because you hold on to the word of life. — vs. 14–16a

Rebekah Sterlacci

FOR THE PAST FEW YEARS, I have given up Facebook for Lent. It is a little hard at first, but as I finish the Lenten season each year, I feel calm and positive—free from the “grumbling and arguing” that the mask of a keyboard and screen provide. It can be so challenging to face each day in a world that celebrates judgement, pettiness, false truths, and hatefulness. Sometimes I read a post or overhear a conversation that contains words and thoughts that I never imagined would escape a friend’s lips. It’s easy to give up, or become apathetic. As God’s children, we are called to “shine like stars in the world”—to show kindness, speak love, celebrate truth, and help others. Every day is a chance to start over, to show others Jesus’ love through our words and actions, and to spread calm and positivity wherever we go to whomever we meet.

Heavenly Father, help us to be beacons of light in our homes, places of work, and our communities. Help us to be glad in your promise of salvation and to share this gladness with others. Amen.

Saturday

Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29

Open the gates of righteousness for me
so I can come in and give thanks to the LORD!
This is the LORD'S gate. — vs. 19-20a

Julia Hill

GOD DESERVES the thanks we give God. God does so much for us. In this passage, I think the psalmist is saying once we are inside the gates of God's kingdom, we are free to ask for salvation on anything. I asked for God's help with a huge presentation in my French class that's worth a big portion of my grade. I remember just breaking down and crying because the pressure to do well and get a good grade on it was heavily weighing on me. There was a moment when I was walking to eighth period, when I had French, and realized that because God was with me, I could do well on my presentation. God's the only one who's with us besides our best friends and, of course, our families. Whenever you're feeling sad, ask for salvation from our Heavenly Father because God will always love and care about us.

Good and Gracious Father, thank you for giving us salvation for all the things in our lives. Whether it's something major or minor, you have an unlimited supply of love and righteousness that you distribute to all of your children. We couldn't imagine doing certain things that we've been able to do without your endless belief in us. So we thank you and will continue to praise and love you whether we're in your kingdom or beyond. Amen.

Palm Sunday

Psalm 118:1–2, 19–29

Give thanks to the LORD because the LORD is good;
because God's faithful love lasts forever." – v. 1

David Mulford

PALM SUNDAY is a day of rejoicing. It was on this day that Jesus rode into Jerusalem, acclaimed by the crowds. Yet it is tinged with sadness as we contemplate the awful days that followed—betrayal and crucifixion. However, we know the outcome: the resurrection of Jesus—God's great affirmation.

We are grateful for the “high holy days” of the faith and the reminders they provide. Yet we also need to remember that God is with us every day – loving, strengthening and challenging us. What a blessing that is. Someone once said we should live our lives with an “attitude of gratitude,” not only for what God has done in the past, but because we are assured that “God's faithful love lasts forever”—today and as long as we live.

“God of our life, through all the circling years, we trust in thee. In all the past, through all our hopes and fears, thy hand we see. With each new day, when morning lifts the veil, we own thy mercies, Lord, which never fail.” Amen.

Monday

Psalm 121

But here is my servant, the one I uphold;
my chosen, who brings me delight.
I've put my spirit upon him;
he will bring justice to the nations. – v. 1

Michael Ryan

THE IDEA OR NOTION of servanthood through and with the Lord could mean many things. Are we servants of the Lord? Or does the Lord serve us? Maybe a little bit of both. I think the idea of servanthood is a mutual value. If we serve the Lord and each other humbly and kindly, we will be “served” through prayers, offerings, and miracles. Although the Lord forgives sin out of God’s unconditional love, God’s servanthood must be matched with our gratefulness and generosity towards the good of all people. It is harder for a person of no equal servanthood to the Lord to be let into heaven. To quote Jesus in Matthew: “In fact, it’s easier for a camel to squeeze through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter God’s kingdom.”

O Lord, let our servanthood be known to you, as we faithfully accept yours. Amen.

Tuesday

Psalm 71:1–14

My God, rescue me from the power of the wicked;
 rescue me from the grip of the wrongdoer and the oppressor
 because you are my hope, LORD. — vs. 4–5a

Jim McCloskey

MY COLLEAGUES AND I at Centurion Ministries work to free innocent men and women serving life or death sentences for the crimes of others. This verse reflects their plaintive cry for help and justice. A recently written hymn sadly expresses a lament they all share during their decades of false imprisonment, “We have but stoness to serve as bread and tears to quell our thirst.”

As the years turn into decades they wait for God to send someone to undo the Gordian knot of lies that was tied by callous and ambitious agents of the state who put them there in the first place. Sustained by the knowledge that the truth is the rock upon which they stand and their faith that God will dispatch someone to help rescue them, the flickering candle light of their hope somehow never goes out.

And, finally, when the truth does set them free, the Lord’s light of vindication and freedom shines brightly for all to see. Thanks be to God, the innocent are redeemed and no longer forsaken.

Gracious God, words don’t come easily when we are awed by your acts of mercy and justice. All I can offer is a modest thank you for those of us who would be lost without your Word. Amen.

Wednesday

Isaiah 50:4–9a

Morning by morning God wakens – wakens my ear to listen as those who are taught. – v. 4b (NRSV)

Shari Oosting

MORNING BY MORNING God is the steadfast rhythm of life we depend on. That same season-initiating, day-creating God wakens us. God pries open our ears to “listen as those who are taught.” God opens our ears. And if we’re honest, our ears have some issues. Our ears don’t want to hear the one we deem ignorant, the one whose protest sign offends us, the one who refuses to listen back, the one who isn’t networked, the one who isn’t educated enough. Yet God wakens us for the purpose of listening. Are we also called to act? Absolutely. But first God wakens us for the hard work of hearing others. Morning by morning let’s wake up by the grace of God and listen well.

God, daily arise to waken us and teach us by your persistent saving grace. Amen.

Maundy Thursday

Psalm 116:1-2, 12-19

I'll keep the promises I made to the LORD
in the presence of all God's people,
in the courtyards of the LORD'S house,
which is in the center of Jerusalem.

Praise the Lord! – v. 19

Janet Anderson

I love the Lord, for He has heard my voice;
He, God on High, to me inclined his ear;
therefore my whole life long will I rejoice
that He has deigned my humble prayers to hear,
forever praise His Name, and hold Him dear.
In thankfulness before Him I will stand,
His blessed cup uplifted in my hand.

Within your courts, Jerusalem, I bow, LORD
and raise my prayers within you day and night;
a cloud of witnesses behold my vow,
which daily I have lifted to the height
of God's own throne, the mercy of His sight.
Sons, daughters, servants, handmaids, rest assured:
our life and death are precious to the Lord.

Thank you, Lord, for hearing our voices. Amen.

Good Friday

Psalm 22

But you, LORD! Don't be far away!
 You are my strength!
 Come quick and help me! – v. 19

Roz Anderson Flood

“Out of the Undertow”

- I The undertow claims me: a vortex embrace, plunging spiral.
 Menacing forces tug my legs, insistent tentacles drag me limp
 amid the strata of marine muck, my thrashing
 abandoned. Jellyfish avoid my descent
 toward bleached, barnacle bones.
 I am caught in the euphotic zone,
 where transfigured, translucent
 plankton weave through
 crumbling coral
 architecture.
- II Blooming unseen from emerald depths, Your palm lifts me
 in a celestial crest, neither dead nor living: do I balance
 on cradle or cross? Passing through precincts
 of doubt and black despair I give You
 my body and the shreds
 of my spirit.
- III Your hand, magnified, magnificent, propels me to a pinnacle,
 thrusts me to an arc against mercurial waters,
 against the planetary cycle, back
 to earthly form to carry home
 the Word from the place
 where horizons bleed
 into the sea.

We praise you, O God, for the gift of Jesus, your Son, who sacrificed his humanity to save ours – to keep us from drowning in our own sin. Thank you for answering our cries for help, desperate as we are. Amen.

Holy Saturday

Lamentations 3:1–9, 19–24

Even though I call out and cry for help,
[God] silences my prayer. – v. 8

Carol Wehrheim

GOD SILENCES MY PRAYER. The writer of this long lament is bereft of God's presence. Perhaps that is an appropriate place to sit on this day between the gloom of Good Friday and the joy of Easter morning. It's easy to ignore Holy Saturday, to concentrate on preparation for Easter, to forget the horror of Jesus' death. Maybe we should dress in sack cloth and ashes on this in-between day.

For many years I wrote and edited church school curriculum for children. Every year we talked about ways to help children move from the parade on Palm Sunday to the joy of the empty tomb on Easter. What did they need to know of the Holy Week story in order to appreciate the outlandish joy of Easter? What do we need to know? What were Jesus' friends doing and thinking? How do you get through a day with Jesus gone, a day when God has silenced their hearts and prayers? Before you jump to the bright news of Easter Sunday, take a few minutes to sit with this verse of lament. When have you felt that God didn't hear your prayers, when God silenced you?

Certainly the faithful love of the LORD hasn't ended; certainly God's compassion isn't through! They are renewed every morning. Great is your faithfulness. I think: The LORD is my portion! Therefore, I'll wait for God. Amen and amen.

Easter Sunday

Isaiah 25:6–9

They will say on that day,
 “Look! This is our God, for whom we have waited—
 and God has saved us!
 This is the LORD,
 for whom we have waited;
 let’s be glad and rejoice in God’s salvation!” – v. 9

Josie Brothers

AS I READ this verse, I think back to my days as a young singer in the Joyful Noise choir, clapping, singing, and moving along to the song, “This is the day the Lord has made; We will rejoice and be glad in it.” Today when I sing this melody, I sing with delight and joy to know that all people are saved through our redeemer, Jesus Christ, who loves us dearly.

On this Easter Sunday, we are reminded by Isaiah that Christ has forever delivered us and the world from sin. Isaiah declares we are called to celebrate and rejoice in our savior with jubilee and exultation. For God has faithfully delivered us from our own sins, and we are forever thankful.

Christ is risen! Christ is risen! Christ is risen!

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for saving us from the sins of the world, for you are a magnificent and loving God. Allelujah! In your wonderful name we pray. Amen.

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Janet Anderson has lived in Princeton for more than two decades. She is and has been a writer of articles, reviews, and poetry.

ANDERSON FLOOD, ROZ

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Late in life, Roz is embarked on a project to produce and publish a poetry chapbook. When she isn't writing or fundraising for Princeton University, she enjoys singing in the Adult Choir and serving on the Worship and Arts Committee.

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Eric Barreto teaches New Testament at Princeton Theological Seminary. His wife Holley is an avid baker and writer at 48sugarstreet.com. Their children, Elena and Nico, love learning Scripture and song in church school and children's choir.

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Karen Shahbazian Berliner is the wife of Jeff Berliner, mother to Rachel and Sarah. The Berliner family has been at Nassau Church for seven years. She is an active domestic

engineer with many interests, and unpaid jobs and likes to say she's living the dream!

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Sam is an 11th grader at Princeton High School, raised at Nassau his whole life.

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Josie Brothers is sixteen years old and has been a part of Nassau Church for her whole life. She participates in church choir, fellowship, mission trips, and enjoys working with the children's choirs. She serves as a Deacon.

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Karen Brown is a clinical researcher and long-time Nassau Church member who has served as a Deacon and is currently on the Adult Education Committee. She and her husband James Takasugi raised their two boys in Nassau Church and now live with their two cats in Lawrenceville.

BRYANT, ANN

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Ann Bryant and her husband Gordon have been worshipping at Nassau Church for more than

20 years. Their twin sons have grown up and been confirmed in the church.

COOGAN, TOM

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Tom Coogan and his family have been Nassau Church members for 10+ years. Tom has served as Deacon, Elder, Small Group leader, and softball coach.

CREAGER, BILL

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Bill Creager lives in Princeton, loves opera, speaks passable German, and is passionate about long-distance touring by bicycle. He is a member of the Adult Education Committee. He's been a deacon and taught high school Sunday School for many years, but pledges to keep the family stories your children shared in class a secret.

EDWARDS, BARBARA

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Barbara Edwards sings alto in the Adult Choir at Nassau Church. She is also a primary care physician and teacher at the University Medical Center of Princeton at Plainsboro and the medical director of the Bristol-Myers Squibb Community Health Center. She and her husband Tom have been involved with Nassau Church

for more than 14 years and her children, Theresa and Will, were raised in the church.

EDWARDS, MARK

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As Director of Youth Ministry at Nassau, Mark is privileged to spend great times in great places with youth and adults. He once spent a long time working on a theology of time at Princeton Seminary and is now happy to chop wood and be with his family in Kingston, NJ.

ELEY, ELEM

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Elem Eley and his wife Miriam are long-time members of Nassau Church. Elem has served on the Session and as a Deacon, and is currently bass section leader and soloist in the Adult Choir. He is professor of voice at Westminster Choir College, an experienced performer in opera, concert, and on recordings.

FOOSE, DEAN

d.foose2@gmail.com

Dean and Sandy Foose have been active in the life of Nassau Church since 1987. Their daughter, now 40, was in the fifth grade when they moved to Princeton and is grateful for her Nassau upbringing.

HILL, JULIA

kristina.h.hill@gmail.com

Julia Hill lives in Princeton and is a member of the Nassau Church Middle School Choir and Youth. She enjoys helping out with Vacation Bible School and the Advent Craft Fair along with many other events at the church. She enjoys school. In her spare time, she enjoys reading, riding her bike and listening to music. While at Nassau Church, she has decided to make her relationship with the Holy One even stronger.

IMBRIE, GREER

greerimbrie@gmail.com

Greer Imbrie is a retired Presbyterian minister and Director of Earth House. Earth House is a model residential treatment center for people with major mental illness located in East Millstone, New Jersey.

JACKSON, BART

bjackson2@comcast.net

Bart Jackson, to his own delight, sings in the Nassau Adult Choir, pontificates ceaselessly at the Men's Breakfast, and rejoices heartily in the companionship of Nassau Church's warm folks these last 15 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.

KELSEY, JOHN

jkelsey@kelseyfamily.com

John Kelsey and his wife Pam have been part of Nassau Church community since the mid-70s and have been blessed to have both of our children grow up, baptized and married at Nassau. Lisa Kelsey Pisano and her husband Bob have also raised their three children at Nassau. John is recognizable as the last one to sit back down when we pass the peace at the earlier service each Sunday.

KLEASEN, KIM

kjkleasen@comcast.net

Kim Kleasen lives in Belle Mead, works in organizational and leadership development and is a soprano in the Adult Choir, a flautist, and member of the Human Resources Committee at Nassau. She is a board member for the Trenton Children's Chorus. She is guided by her sense of call to use her creative and organizational talents and skills to make the world a more beautiful and just place.

LAMBRIGHT, KELSEY

kelsey.lambright@ptsem.edu

Kelsey Lambright is a PhD student in Practical Theology at Princeton Seminary. In addition to her studies, she works with middle and high school students at Nassau Church.

LANE, JOHN

flutejpl@gmail.com

John Lane lives with his wife Christianne and daughter Sarah in Hamilton. He is a private instructor and performer of flute, maintaining studios at several locations for teaching students of all ages and levels of interest. He frequently plays in Nassau Church's worship services and also performs as principal flutist with Sinfonietta Nova. He serves the National Flute Association as the coordinator of its High School Soloist Competition.

LAPSLEY, JACQ

jacqlapsley@mac.com

Jacq Lapsley wears many hats, including being mom to Emma and Sam Bezilla. She has loved traveling with the church youth on their adventures—Appalachia Service Project, Beyond Malibu, Camino de Santiago—because those are places where it is easier to hear what the heavens are telling.

LIU, EMILY

liuhiya2013@gmail.com

Emily Liu lives in Princeton with her husband Benjamin, and children Jonathan (19 at Rutgers) and Symphony (9 at PDS). They moved from Taiwan to Princeton in 2014 summer. A fashion forecaster by career, a trilingual speaker, and a self-taught and admirable chef and photographer, Emily savors every moment of her life in the community of Princeton and Nassau Presbyterian Church. Emily and husband Benjamin can be easily spotted at Small World sipping coffee and at the public library snooping for books.

MATTHEWS, VAL

val2mathews@gmail.com

Val Mathews has enjoyed adventurous careers in electronic warfare and telecommunications. In a life-changing move, he worked with a Russian-American company and lived with a family in southern Russia, and then retired a second time. He and his wife Martha, who is in the Adult Choir, enjoy three children and six grandchildren.

MCCLOSKEY, JIM

jim@centurionministries.org

Jim McCloskey founded Centurion Ministries at the age of 41 upon graduating with a Master of Divinity degree from Princeton Theological Seminary in 1983. Prior to that he spent three years as a naval officer in Japan and Vietnam and then 12 years as a management consultant in Tokyo and his hometown of Philadelphia. He joined Nassau Church in the mid-1990s and is a current member of the Session.

MCKNIGHT, MARSHALL

marshallmcknight48@gmail.com

Marshall McKnight has served God as a member of Nassau Presbyterian Church since 2011. He currently serves as a deacon, a member of the Small Group Committee and the Mass Incarceration Task Force. He works for the State of New Jersey.

MERTZ, KEITH

keithdmertz@gmail.com

Keith Mertz has been a member of Nassau Church and its Adult Choir since 2000. Keith can often be caught with a tear in his eye while singing songs of God's love, Christ's sacrifice, and the Spirit's inspiration. Keith loves to hike and camp

and stare at the sky and listen to the heavens declaring the glory of God.

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. She loves to read and write, and her forté is eighteenth-century history, focusing particularly on Colonial America, Great Britain and the rest of Europe. She loves searching for meaning in hymns and enjoys visiting European cathedrals, castles and museums for inspiration in the novels she pens.

MOFFETT, EILEEN

eileenmoffett@comcast.net

Eileen Moffett served for many years in South Korea as a PC(USA) missionary with her husband Dr. Samuel Moffett. After retirement they were among the founders of Christian Friends of Korea, which seeks to demonstrate the love of God in Jesus Christ in North Korea by providing much-needed medical supplies, technical help, food, disease control and Christian friendship.

MOORHEAD, CYNTHIA

csmoorhead@yahoo.com

MOORHEAD, JIM

james.moorhead@ptsem.edu

Cynthia Moorhead is a retired nursery school teacher and teaches the three and four year old class in Nassau's Sunday School. Jim is professor emeritus of American church history at Princeton Seminary. They have three grown children who are Nassau members.

MULFORD, DAVID

dmulford19@comcast.net

David Mulford is a Presbyterian minister, now retired. He and his wife Nancy have been a part of Nassau Church since 2006.

OOSTING, SHARI

shari.l.oosting@gmail.com

In her work at Princeton Seminary Shari Oosting directs programs and develops resources for Christian leaders. Shari and her husband Jason spend their hours outside of work cooking and playing with their four children: Asher, Ezra, Elia, and Ada. On Sundays they help keep the "active" in Nassau Church's worship life.

PRINCE, NANCY

princenancy4@aol.com

Nancy Prince has been a member of Nassau Church since 2003. She is a member of

the Adult Choir and is a Deacon. 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 and his wife Monisha have been worshipping at Nassau Church since 2004. They have two sons: Nikhil is a junior in college and Philip is in the sixth grade.

PULIMOOD, MONISHA

monishapulimood@gmail.com

Monisha, her husband, Mani, and their older son, Nikhil, have been worshipping at Nassau since 2004; then their younger son, Philip, was born and baptized in this church. They have all been blessed by being involved in the church in various capacities through the years.

RYAN, MICHAEL

ryanm@rider.edu

Michael Ryan is currently the organist of Nassau Church. He is a senior at Westminster Choir College and is very much looking forward to getting to know each and every one of you.

SAKENFIELD, KATHARINE

katharine.sakenfeld@ptsem.edu

Kathie Sakenfeld retired in 2013 from Princeton Seminary, where she taught Old Testament for 43 years. In retirement she continues working on behalf of women in church leadership and volunteers at the Seminary library. She has participated in the life of Nassau Church since 1970.

SCORDIS, CAMILLE

frances215@comcast.net

Camille Scordis is a member of the 2018 confirmation class and regularly attends services with her family. She is looking forward to being a member of Nassau Church.

SHENK, JONATHAN

jshenk@greenleafpainters.com

Rev. Jonathan Shenk, a former pastor, is the owner of Greenleaf Painters, a local painting company. In addition to his business involvement he is a certified spiritual director and a social justice advocate devoted to ending mass incarceration. He lives in Princeton Junction with his wife, author Cynthia Yoder. They have a college-age son, Gabriel.

STERLACCI, REBEKAH

rebekah.sterlacci@gmail.com

Rebekah is the supervisor of visual and performing arts for the Piscataway Township Public School District and the artistic director of the Rutgers Children's Choir. In her "free time," Rebekah is finishing up the last bit of coursework and beginning her dissertation project (Middle School Theater Programs: Sense of Belonging & Self-Efficacy) as part of the educational leadership doctoral program at Rowan University. Rebekah and Jason (and 3 and a half-year-old Jonas) have been a part of Nassau Church for almost six years and Rebekah has enjoyed being a Deacon, serving on the Worship and Arts Committee, and assisting with the Christmas Pageant.

TEL, MARTIN

martin.sharilyn.tel@gmail.com

Martin Tel is the director of music at Princeton Theological Seminary. He and his wife Sharilyn, with their children, Theodore, Sarah, and Kathryn, have been members at Nassau Presbyterian Church for the past 10 years.

TEL, SARAH

sarah.t.tel@gmail.com

Sarah Tel is a senior at Princeton High School. She is a member of the Youth Choir and serves on the Youth Ministry Committee.

WAKEFIELD, BILL

bill.wakefield0@gmail.com

At Nassau, Bill Wakefield is an Elder and Deacon, co-chair of the Mission and Outreach Committee, Chair of the Immigration Committee, member of the Mass Incarceration Task Force and member of the Property Committee. In the community, Bill is active in immigration and mass incarceration issues.

WALTHALL, MARI PEARLMAN

mapearlman@comcast.net

Mari Pearlman Walthall lives in Lawrenceville and is a member of the Nassau Adult Choir. She is often confused and exasperated by Paul, who seems so much more certain than she feels.

WALTHALL, NED

nwalthall@comcast.net

Ned Walthall and his wife Mari have been members of Nassau Church since 1987. He is currently a Deacon and a photographer and has led several Small Groups at Nassau

in the study and practice of photography.

WEHRHEIM, CAROL

carolaw1218@hotmail.com

Carol Wehrheim is clerk of the Session and leads a Bible study on Wednesday afternoons for parents of children in choir rehearsal. She is the co-editor of a children's story Bible, Growing in God's Love, published this year by Westminster John Knox Press.

YEH, BENJAMIN

byeh65@gmail.com

Benjamin Yeh lives in Princeton with wife Emily, children Jonathan (19, at Rutgers) and Symphony (9, at PDS). They moved here from Taiwan in the summer of 2013 because of Benjamin's work as business executive for an Asian technology public company. A Harvard MBA and first generation Christian and US immigrant, Benjamin enjoys immensely the Princeton community and Nassau Church's activities. Benjamin and Emily can be easily spotted at Small World sipping coffee or at the public library snooping for books.

Your word is a lamp before my feet and a light for my journey.

Psalm 119:105

NASSAU PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH