

**DAILY**  
**DEVOTIONAL**

**JUNE 2020**

**NASSAU PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

## PREFACE

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In March 2020, during the season of Lent, Nassau Church was closed because of the Covid-19 crisis. As our congregation transitioned to worshipping online, we continued to share our usual Lenten Devotional online; but we realized that both the readers and the writers wanted to keep sharing daily meditations after Easter.

This Devotional for June 2020 contains a scripture reference and a meditation for each day of the month, written by a host of Nassau Church members and friends. The scriptures are from various translations and paraphrases of the Bible, and were selected by Carol Wehrheim, Nassau's Clerk of Session and an award-winning Christian educator. Each author was assigned one scripture on which to write a personal reflection.

While these Devotionals were originally shared online, this document was created in order to collect and record this special event. Instead of printing hard copies to pass out at church, we offer this document to you to read and keep, electronically or by printing.

We hope you will continue to use it as you worship by yourself and in your family group. Please know that others are sharing this experience with you.

Grace and Peace,

The Lenten Devotional Team  
Nassau Presbyterian Church  
July 2020

*June 1, 2020*

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## Psalm 91

***You who live in the shelter of the Most High,  
who abide in the shadow of the Almighty,  
will say to the Lord, “My refuge and my fortress;  
my God, in whom I trust.”  
For God will deliver you from the snare of the fowler  
and from the deadly pestilence;  
God will cover you with his pinions,  
and under God’s wings you will find refuge.  
Because you have made the Lord your refuge,  
the Most High your dwelling place,  
no evil shall befall you,  
no scourge come near your tent.  
Those who love me, I will deliver;  
I will protect those who know my name.  
When they call to me, I will answer them;  
I will be with them in trouble,  
I will rescue them and honor them  
(Psalm 91:1–4, 9–10, 14–15 NRSV).***

As a child I was given a book of Christian-focused true stories, and one of them featured Psalm 91. The story was set in rural Lebanon in a time when some deadly and contagious disease was overwhelming the area and killing many children. According to the story, the women operating a Christian orphanage led the group in praying Psalm 91 daily, and because of their prayer no children in this orphanage got sick. “God will deliver you from the deadly pestilence,..no scourge shall come near your tent” were the focal phrases of the psalm highlighted in the story.

I decided immediately that I did not like this story or this psalm. As a twelve-year old, I thought that the isolated location of the orphanage probably had much to do with the children’s health, and that the story did not speak well for a God who let others die just because they hadn’t recited this psalm. That story and Psalm 91 continued to haunt and trouble me for decades, well into my years of teaching at Princeton Seminary.

Finally one afternoon I took my concern to my dear friend and wise Old Testament colleague Prof. Patrick Miller, now of blessed memory, a world expert on the Psalms whom some readers may remember from his participation in the life of Nassau Church. Pat responded not with some academic theory, but by telling me the story of his uncle, whose favorite and most-beloved psalm was exactly Psalm 91. His uncle recited the psalm every day throughout his life, in sickness as well as in health; it was the psalm he turned to daily and asked others to read with him in his difficult last months of life; it was on his

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lips as he gave himself finally into God's everlasting arms. And through this new story I became able to experience Psalm 91 differently: "You who abide in the shadow of the Almighty; God is your refuge; you will not fear; God's angels will bear you up...." In life and also in death, I belong to God. And in that assurance I can cry out my laments when pestilence and scourge assail not just me but any of God's beloved children across this hurting globe.

*Dear God, thank you that in life and in death you give refuge to every one of your beloved children under your protecting wings. Day by day help me to experience your care and to trust you more. Amen.*

### **Katharine Sakenfeld**

Kathie retired in 2013 from teaching Old Testament at Princeton Seminary. She enjoys reading and classical music and has participated in the life of Nassau Church since 1970. In ordinary times you are likely to spot her in a back pew of the sanctuary, in the Early Bird Women's Bible Study Group, and in adult education programs.

*June 2, 2020*

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## **Psalm 20:6–9**

***Now I know that the LORD will help his anointed;  
he will answer him from his holy heaven  
with mighty victories by his right hand (Psalm 20:6 NRSV).***

When I first read this passage, I thought about Jesus or David as anointed to carry out victories by God's hand. On further reflection, I think that at Pentecost, each person was anointed by the Holy Spirit to carry out victories by God's hand.

After Pentecost, those anointed by the power of the Holy Spirit began energetically spreading the gospel in word and deed. Despite persecution, hunger, disease and all kinds of difficulties they gained mighty victories for God. I was amazed to learn that by the time Christianity became the official religion of the Roman empire, early in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, Christianity spanned the Roman Empire and beyond. It was as far east as India, as far northwest as modern Germany and as far northeast as Armenia and Georgia, and as far south as Ethiopia. I am amazed that, by God's help, a small group of Jesus's followers in Palestine launched a global movement.

Today, I think about disease, hunger, disease, poverty and cruelty spreading worldwide during this pandemic. Unlike those early evangelists, who spread the gospel worldwide, I am at home so I do not spread the COVID-19 virus. I feel overwhelmed and powerless. Then, I remember that we are all anointed by the power of the Holy Spirit to carry out mighty or, more often, small victories for God's mission. I remember the mighty victories of healthcare workers, essential workers, clergy, and wise government leaders and the many small victories of kind people worldwide.

*Lord, help me to remember that each of us are anointed to be part of your global movement of healing, kindness, justice and love. Lord, help me to see how I am anointed by the Holy Spirit this Pentecost. I pray for courage to carry out your mission and, with your help, gain victories for your reign. Amen.*

### **Frances Katrishen**

Frances is a deacon and sings in the adult choir. She is part of the deacon's group prayer ministry. She is the wife of Nicos Scordis and mother of Camille. She is a retired international business analyst and professor. She began a seminary degree in 2018 but is taking a break until Camille goes to college. She is matriculated in the General Seminary in New York City, where she will earn a Master's in Arts with a concentration in Spirituality.

*June 3, 2020*

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## **Romans 8:12–14**

***We are not debtors to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh, you will die, but if by the spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For those who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God (Romans 8:12–14 NAB)***

Today's passage from Paul, at a first reading, feels prescriptive and overly simplistic. Several months into lockdown, it even feels a little tone-deaf.

*“Live according to the spirit, not the flesh.”*

*“Be led by the Spirit, and demonstrate that you are indeed a child of God”*

Are you kidding me, Paul? This child of God is tired and hungry, anxious and frustrated. How am I supposed to avoid living according to this flesh, with all its weakness? How am I supposed to live in the spirit when my mind won't be still?

At this point in my writing I take stock of my frustration and attempt to regain perspective. I take a few deep breaths and stretch my legs. I try to remember that my body is still healthy and functioning, that I have enough to eat, that I have a warm place to rest. I remember too that my spirit continues to be nourished by my wife, my family, my friends, and my community. As I remember these things I am grateful; and yet I'm still unsettled.

In a verse that precedes today's passage (v. 6), Paul invites us to look away from the flesh, whose concern is death, and turn to the spirit, whose concern is life and peace. And a verse following (v. 15) reminds us not to be slaves to fear but rather to take comfort in the warmth of God's parental love. Perhaps my feelings of uncertainty, of being unsettled, are enough for now. Here in the present we're both body and spirit, and with that comes struggle.

Fortunately, we don't have to struggle alone.

*Lord, help us to live according to the spirit and find balance amidst our struggles.  
Amen.*

### **Tim Flood**

Tim is a member of the Adult Education Committee and leads a small group with his wife, Kate Torrey. They began attending Nassau two years ago and became members last year, and they're continually amazed at the welcoming spirit of the Nassau community. While they look forward to returning to the Sanctuary balcony, for now you can see them during Virtual Coffee Hour, smiling at you from their living room couch.

*June 4, 2020*

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## **Psalm 29**

***The voice of the LORD flashes forth flames of fire.***

***The voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness (Psalm 29:7–8 NRSV).***

In my Bible this psalm is titled “The Voice of God in a Great Storm”. We are in a storm that seems to be stripping us bare. At times it feels like the human race is being leveled. We are used to having the power.

I have spent my past five summers with Appalachia Service Project (ASP), either serving as a volunteer with Nassau or working for ASP. I have seen entire community’s foundations crumple as their economies fall apart due to circumstances they cannot control.

God has contradicting traits. Sometimes we forget about God’s stormy side. The reality is that the people of Appalachia have been experiencing this storm much longer than us. Parts of our new normal have been their reality for a while.

The Lord calls us to suffer and serve. There are times others are in a storm when we are not. This time allows us to find empathy for people in a more constant storm. It is important to note that the last word of the psalm is peace. I pray for the time everyone will be in peace.

*Lord, as we share this time of suffering, help us to remember those for whom such suffering is nothing new. Let us embrace all the different phases we must walk through. Thank you for your everlasting promise of peace. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

### **Sarah Tel**

Sarah has just finished her sophomore year at Whitworth University in Spokane, Washington. She has been attending Nassau Church since she was eight. She has been a part of and enjoyed many of the trips that Nassau has offered, including volunteering for Appalachia Service Project, backpacking in British Columbia on Beyond Malibu, and hiking the Camino de Santiago.

*June 5, 2020*

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## **Romans 8:15–17**

***...and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us (Romans 8:17–18 ESV).***

As I prepared this piece I read several translations of this passage before settling on the one that contains the phrase “sufferings of this present time.” This was written nearly 21 centuries ago and I’m sure the writer had never heard of Covid-19. He probably couldn’t imagine what we are going through at this present time when thousands suffer physically from the disease and nearly everyone suffers financially and socially from its effects. Yet, I believe it speaks beautifully to our current world.

As Paul points out in the epistle, we are children of God and disciples of Christ. Those are priceless gifts, but they aren’t free. Christ charged his followers to feed the hungry and clothe the naked. He taught us that we must love others as much as we love ourselves. Those are challenging admonitions even in times of plenty. During times of crisis, which is what we face today, the need to help others increases even as our ability to meet those needs seems to decrease. As children of God, we must always bear in mind the needs of others in good times and bad times, even if that means self-sacrifice. As Paul states, those sufferings are trivial compared to the glory that is to come.

*Father, as your children, please reveal to us the way in which we might help others. Give us all the strength and the will to do our small part. Amen.*

### **Jay Dunn**

Jay is a semi-retired sports writer whose baseball column appears weekly in The Trentonian.



*June 6, 2020*

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## **John 3:1–8**

***Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. He came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God.” Jesus answered him, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.” Nicodemus said to him, “How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother’s womb and be born?” Jesus answered, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I said to you, ‘You must be born from above.’ The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So, it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit (John 3:1–8 NRSV).***

Nicodemus, a ruling scholar and teacher among the Jewish leadership, saw something in Jesus, even as his colleagues feared Him and his growing influence. Jesus was making a believer out of many, including in time even Nicodemus. Jesus responds to his questions, “You must be born again and this time born of the Spirit or you will *not see or enter* the kingdom of God.” It is not about scholarship or works or wealth. It is about *faith*. He chides Nicodemus, “Why haven’t you listened and heard God’s words in Numbers 21 and Ezekiel 36? Listen to me now and let the Spirit of God fill you. *You must be born again.*”

As a 12-year-old child at Newman Memorial Methodist Church in Brooklyn, I recall my confirmation day and public affirmation that I had accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. Years went by. I didn’t think much more or deeply about my childhood profession of faith. I certainly did not nourish or tend to my faith. There came a time, however, when my life was very nearly ended. God has a wondrous way of making us pay attention. That challenging time forced me to stop and listen to God’s *wind*. What I heard transformed me. I came to believe in God and in the power and grace and sacrifice of the Cross. We all know and see people who carry Jesus with them in their daily walk. Once the Bell of Belief has been rung, it cannot be un-rung, certainly that has been true in my life. I accept God’s will with thankfulness and let it be God’s will not mine. I pray on my knees each morning that I can be useful that day and help another one of His children in need of His Word and loving spiritual guidance. I allow myself to be curious and teachable and when someone is speaking to me, I listen. It may well be God’s Word I need to hear.

*Precious Lord Jesus, please hear my prayer that we will have the curiosity of Nicodemus, and that when asked our God will kindly and wondrously reveal the way to*

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*eternal life. Even as we are quarantined, we remain hopeful that everyone will stay home and help end this pandemic. We are astonished by the senseless killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis and the complete lack of humanity of four Minneapolis police. We pray for the Floyd family, for the 100,000+ Americans whose lives have been cut short by Covid-19 and in some cases by suicide from despair. We pray for our troubled country and world. May the peace of the Lord God be with us today and always. Amen.*

### **Denyse Leslie**

Denyse has been a Witherspoon Church member since 2007. She has served as clerk and is currently a member of Session, secretary of Witherspoon Presbyterian Women, and a founding member of the Witherspoon/Nassau Joint Mission Committee. This collaboration is expanding the reach of Presbyterian ministry, and building and deepening relationships Denyse has enjoyed with Nassau sisters and brothers in Christ. Joint service enlarges the heart of a beloved community.

*June 7, 2020*

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## **John 3:9–17**

***For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life (John 3:16 NRSV).***

Arguably one of the most famous verses in the Bible, this verse is perhaps more relevant now than ever. We are apart physically from those we worship with; we are barred from exploring and seeing the beauty of the Lord in nature (where I personally feel closest to God); we are separated from those who remind us of God's love with their own affection. One might even feel it is as if this pandemic was designed to weaken our faith, but those feelings of isolation make John 3:16 only more important. John 3:16 does not advise acquiescence to fate; on the contrary, it reminds us that God's incalculable love will always carry us through. As I reflect on my own family's sources of frustration, whether political, financial, or relational, John 3:16 emerges as a refrain for trust. If the Lord's love for us is so unbounded that He would have Jesus crucified for us, no earthly stress is so overwhelming that it is not but a pebble next to the monolith of the Lord's love for us.

*Dear Lord, I thank you for the ways in which you are working in us, to bring us closer to you through processes we cannot hope to comprehend. I pray that you will remind all of us that no matter what ordeals we are enduring, you are with us and your love makes us strong enough for truly anything. Let us remember with every frustration that there is one truth you made more evident than any other: you love us. You love us more than a parent loves a child, more than a sibling loves a sibling, or a best friend loves a best friend. Let us never forget that you love us, you love us, you love us, you love us, you love us. Amen.*

### **Christian Martin**

Christian is a rising sophomore at Stanford. A classics major, he spends his free time hiking and riding horses in the surrounding wilderness. He graduated from Princeton High School in 2019 and was a member of the Nassau Church confirmation class of 2016. During quarantine, he's been going on daily walks and enjoying spending time with his family.

*June 8, 2020*

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## **1 Samuel 15:34–16:13**

***Samuel never saw Saul again before he died, but he grieved over Saul. However, the LORD regretted making Saul king over Israel (1 Samuel 15:35 CEB).***

This afternoon a friend texted me and asked if Vinnie, my nine-year-old daughter, would like to ride her bike to the shopping center with her son and another friend. It is Memorial Day weekend, the sun is shining, and today starts the eleventh week of lockdown. This year we're not at North Bay with our church family or enjoying opening weekend at Broadmead Swim Club. Everything is different. I knew Vinnie would love to see her friends and get a treat at the newly opened Rita's. I texted back, "Great. She'll be there."

As soon as Vinnie rode away, my stomach began to hurt. Why did I do this? Why did I let her go? Would she wear her mask? Keep her distance?

Regret is haunting and so powerful even God cannot escape it.

Yet, we must try to move past our regrets. God regrets choosing Saul and later has David anointed king of Israel. I regret making a decision based on my nostalgia for pre-lockdown. However, like most of my regrets, there seems to be no obvious way to correct it. Sometimes all I can do is take my regret to God and pray for wisdom.

*Dear God, help us free ourselves from regret. Amen.*

### **Anne Thomsen Lord**

Anne is a deacon, ruling elder, and mother of four. She has a lot of experience with regret and is very much a work in progress.

*June 9, 2020*

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## **Psalm 20:1–5**

*May the Lord answer you in the day of trouble;  
May the name of the God of Jacob defend you;  
May He send you help from the sanctuary,  
And strengthen you out of Zion (Psalm 20:1–2 NKJV).*

What these verses trigger in me is the realization that we are living “a day of trouble” because of the pandemic. It triggers in me past days of troubles when I seemed to be living in a dark tunnel with seemingly no light at the end of it.

During those days, if I had silenced my anguish and looked hard, I would have realized that there was really a light at the end of the tunnel. This light was the light of God. He seemed to be sending me “help from the sanctuary” when I experienced His light in the symbolisms of my dreams or when I became the recipient of the unexpected kindness of strangers.

Lately, I have been living in my own dark tunnel, witnessing my daughter daily commute to her social work job in the emergency department of a major New York City hospital, exposing herself to the virus. It seemed the tunnel darkened even more when she caught the disease. When her symptoms turned out to be of the mild type, it did seem that God answered our prayers and sent us “help from the sanctuary.”

*God, I thank you for helping me get through my own dark tunnel. God, please help me surrender to Your will so that I remember that I am never alone and that You will be there to guide me in my day of trouble. God, please help me remember that all my tribes and tribulations are just Your way of helping me open my heart to the tribes and tribulations of those less fortunate than me. God, please help me strengthen my faith that You will always answer me in my day of trouble, and that You will always help me in a way that You and only You will judge to be the right way. Amen.*

### **Lina Genovesi**

Lina Genovesi has been a member of Nassau Church since April 2019. She is an intellectual property attorney with a law firm in Greenwich, Connecticut. She spends her free time working on her memoir of growing up in Beirut, Lebanon.

*June 10, 2020*

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## **1 Samuel 17:32–50**

***...so that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, and that all this assembly may know that the LORD does not save by sword....(1 Samuel 17:46b–47a NRSV).***

This popular Bible story of David and Goliath has everything a reader could want. A young, ruddy shepherd boy in a death match against a grizzled giant of a man as tall as an NBA center and as powerful as an NFL lineman seasoned with years of battle and his gods on his side. How could he lose to this child toting a stick and what else does he have there? We have comedy, drama, action and spoiler alert: triumph!

It is no wonder Hollywood has borrowed from this story for more than a century for every type of action movie from the Star Wars franchise to the sports classic Hoosiers. That film includes a brief reading of 1 Samuel 17 in the form of a prayer to psyche up a basketball team of country boys against tall burly young veteran players in a legendary Indiana state championship game. Spoiler alert: Victory!

I never grow tired of reading this story which is so much more than “the underdog wins.” David, it is assumed, will need armor and a king’s sword to win this fight. He tries it on and clanks around, stumbling. Forget it, he returns the sword to Saul, dumps the chain mail and helmet and takes his shepherd’s staff and sling. He arms himself with five smooth stones that he finds along the way. But he has something more, much more. He has his love for the Lord.

Many times have I skipped over David’s most important line: “that all this assembly may know that the Lord does not save by sword.”

Fade to a Garden where Jesus is betrayed. In every Gospel version, at least one sword appears with someone swinging it, perhaps imagining he is just like young David against the giant of Gath who brags of his gods and blusters on of his might.

In every Gospel scene Christ dismisses the sword as David does. Matthew 26:52 reads, ‘”Then Jesus said to him, ‘Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword.’”

From the garden to the trial to the sentence through the empty tomb and on down the road to Emmaus and way beyond the Pentecost, we find sword and armor remain useless. God’s tender mercies through Christ’s love and grace is all we need to bring us victory forever and ever and ever. Thanks be to God.

*Gracious God, we thank you for each and every day that comes with your love, mercy and comfort. Help us to always remember that our strength comes from Christ. Amen.*

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### **Marshall McKnight**

Marshall is currently working remotely at home for the State of New Jersey. He lives in Princeton Junction in a little farm house next to the Northeast Corridor rail line. A member of Nassau Church since 2011, he currently serves as a deacon, and works with the Adult Education and Membership Committees.

*June 11, 2020*

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## **Psalm 9:9–12**

*The LORD is a refuge for the oppressed,  
a stronghold in times of trouble.*

*Those who know your name trust in you,  
for you, LORD, have never forsaken those who seek you.*

*Sing the praises of the LORD, enthroned in Zion;  
proclaim among the nations what he has done.*

*For he who avenges blood remembers;  
he does not ignore the cries of the afflicted.*

Psalm 9 tells us that while those who do evil might profit in the short run, in the long run righteousness will triumph. Especially in times of trouble the Lord is a refuge to the oppressed. If we only keep the faith, our Lord will not fail us. Or in the words of the old spiritual: “Trouble Don’t Last Always.”

That is a comforting thought, is it not? In a time when safeguards and standards seemingly fail us, when the wicked seem to prosper while the poor die while serving as “essential” workers, it can be tempting to wish for the swift sword of God’s justice to clear away all the wickedness and start afresh. Sometimes as we eye the online comments section we might even feel tempted to mete out a little of that justice ourselves!

But who are the oppressed and who are the oppressors in today’s world? Sometimes I think we should practice a little more humility and be careful what we wish for. God’s justice is not our justice and, frankly, if God cleans house we have no guarantee that we will end up on the right side of the broom.

So what should be our response? The Psalmist has some advice for us: “Sing praises of the LORD. Or perhaps we might turn again to the familiar words of Micah 6:8: “He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God?”



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*Dear Lord, in these trying times still in us the call for retribution or revenge. Help us to find and remove the logs in our own eyes before pointing out the splinters in someone else's. And most especially, help us to discover new ways to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with You. Amen.*

### **John Parker**

John is a member of Nassau Church, where he has served as ruling elder, deacon, church school teacher, and youth advisor. He is grateful for his many blessings and for the witness of the Nassau Church community to the eternal Word of God.

*June 12, 2020*

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## **Psalm 9:18–20**

***Strike them with terror, LORD; let the nations know they are only mortal (Psalm 9:20 NIV).***

I think you immediately know that this meditation is not going to hold your hand in verdant green pastures with sheep roaming around. Nope.

I had a strict Baptist upbringing where I was taught never to question God but only to seek His wisdom. What I have thankfully come to understand as an adult is that we, as Christians, can and should do both. More so than at any other time most of us can draw memory of, the nations of the world are collectively brought to their knees—not by threat of one another, but by an enemy that cannot be destroyed through the use of any arsenal currently in existence. God has our attention now, doesn't He? We are all praying for a cure, praying for some form of medicinal intervention in the interim, and praying hard for our “normal” to return.

Certainly, the forced “standstill” we are all operating in these last months has allowed much time for reflection, and may have even resulted in our recognition of the absence of God in much of our daily lives. We “are but mortal” and neither the power of politics, academic title nor money can jockey one person into a greater position than another. The pandemic is an equal playing field as it were. While I question why the fear, isolation, anxiety and loss of innocent life are necessary, the truth exists that our “normal” will never look quite the same again. For some it might have taken the terror of a pandemic to do it, but a reset button has been hit and God is in the forefront of our thoughts multiple times each day. The challenge moving forward is to keep Him there.

*Gracious God, we are scared. Help us to understand that you are with us always. Teach us the importance of your presence after all of this is over as we move through our days, make important life decisions and raise our children. Guide us through this difficult time and keep us safe. Amen.*

### **Lois Foley**

Lois has been a member of Nassau since March of 2018. She enjoys her participation in the Church Mouse program and began teaching 2<sup>nd</sup> grade Sunday School with a wonderful team earlier this year. She loves distance walking with her daughter, Meghan, and is also Mom to grown children, Rachel (husband Adam) and Bryan. Lois is looking forward to the day when we can all worship together again at 61 Nassau Street.

*June 13, 2020*

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## **Mark 4:35–41**

*And they were filled with great awe and said to one another,  
“Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?”  
(Mark 5:41 NRSV).*

In their panic, and as Jesus slept peacefully, the disciples said, “Teacher, don't you care that we're perishing?” Jesus wasn't worried, of course, but they were overwhelmed with fear. Once the Lord took care of the situation dramatically, quickly, and effectively, they pivoted from panic to shock—we might say, they were clueless. “Who is this man, that he can control the waves and the winds like this?”

Finding myself daily more “chronologically mature,” it's often not the case that I'm learning something new; more frequently, I'm learning truth again (or remembering it...again). Rather than smugly criticizing the disciples—“Those idiots, how did they not know who Jesus was?”—maybe we should cut them some slack. Of course, they knew Jesus and his power, even though he didn't routinely go around declaring that he was God. But they surely knew who he was and they had seen him perform other miracles, so why should they have been so confused by this one?

Things that seem outside the natural order are not normal. Again and again, we respond emotionally to these out-of-the-ordinary things (the super-natural), surprised every time. Yes, we probably would have behaved just like the disciples, had we been the ones in the boat with Jesus. Maybe we're not so different, we forgetful 21<sup>st</sup> century believers.

*Dear Lord, give us a better memory, the ability to recall who you are and what you do. Amen.*

### **Elem Eley**

Elem and his wife, Miriam Eley, have been Nassau Church members since 1997. In addition to singing as bass soloist/section leader in the Adult Choir, Elem is professor of voice at Westminster Choir College and an active performer.

*June 14, 2020*

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## **2 Corinthians 6:3–7**

***...as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, truthful speech, and the power of God...(2 Corinthians 6:4–7a NRSV).***

Sometimes scripture speaks prophetically right into the current moment. As I write these words, beatings, imprisonment, riots and sleepless nights have become our new heartbreaking reality. As a black woman, I am mourning the deaths of innocent black people now and the long, sinful history of racism over centuries in our country. I'm sickeningly aware that Christians have too often been active agents of injustice or complicit in ignoring it. In my distress, I'm afraid that I am failing at Paul's patience and kindness, much less genuine love.

Yet Paul insists that the hardships and the wonderful fruits of the life of the spirit are one and the same. Afflictions, calamities, labors, and purity, knowledge, patience, kindness... all of these are woven together by the power of God. God reminds us that facing hardships and acting in love are the same thing. By the power of God, as a community we can repent, lament, pray, vote and protest. We must practice truthful speech, even though it is uncomfortable. Alone, we are overwhelmed and unsettled, but by the power of God, we are where we have been called to be.

*Spirit of God, we confess that we have not done enough of the hard work of justice. Weave us together as a community that faces hardship and speaks truth, confident of your power and genuine love. Amen.*

### **Michele Minter**

Michele worships at the Witherspoon Street Presbyterian Church, works at Princeton University and lives in Plainsboro with her family.

*June 15, 2020*

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## **Mark 5:21–34**

***Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and, when he saw Jesus, fell at his feet and begged him repeatedly, “My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live.” So Jesus went with him” (Mark 5:22–24a NRSV).***

The healing of Jairus’ daughter involves touch, faith, and human connection. And persistence. Jairus falls at Jesus’ feet and begs him repeatedly. His neighbors lack his faith, but Jairus believes his daughter can be healed—and she is healed.

Healing prayer in the church is often accompanied by the laying on of hands. The physical contact, the human touch, is essential to our healing. How odd it is to live in a time when human touch can bring with it sickness and, even, death. What would Jesus’ ministry have looked like without the pressing crowds, the banquet tables, and the healing touch?

When Jesus encountered someone, he called forth the beautiful child of God within. And when someone encountered Jesus, they suddenly saw and believed that they had found peace and acceptance. And they were made whole.

The surprising discovery of now is that we are seeing how much human connection and healing we can experience in the absence of human touch. Our entire globe is faced with the same human condition and so we are more intently tuned into “How are you today?” “Are you okay?” “I care about you.” “I don’t want to lose you.” “You are special to me.”

In reality, this cherishing we have for one another is no different from any other time in history. But now our bond is harder to ignore. We must come to terms with it. And either barricade our hearts to block out the world, or courageously embrace our sacred humanity.

*God of love and connection, open us to your deep peace and equip us to care for one another. Amen.*

### **Jonathan C. Shenk**

Jonathan, a former pastor, is the owner of Greenleaf Painters, a local painting company. In addition to his business involvement, he is a spiritual director and an advocate for transforming the criminal justice system. He lives in Princeton Junction with his wife, Cynthia Yoder. Their son Gabriel is a recent Rutgers graduate.

*June 16, 2020*

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## **Mark 5:35–43**

***Overhearing what they said, Jesus told him, "Don't be afraid; just believe" (Mark 5:36 NIV).***

"Don't be afraid; just believe," Jesus told Jairus, the synagogue leader whose daughter had died. He assured the man that the child was just asleep—then took her hand and raised her from the dead. It was Jairus' faith and Christ's intervention that returned his daughter to him.

In this third month of sheltering at home, far from our friends and families, Jesus' message seems particularly pertinent. We don't know when the COVID-19 crisis will end, how many more lives will be lost, or what our "new normal" will look like, when the crisis does pass. In this time of uncertainty, I rely on my faith to save me from fearfulness and despair.

These times bring to mind an Easter tradition at my old church in Davis, California. Each spring, the minister would solicit "resurrection stories" from members of the congregation, to weave into his Easter sermon. These were personal accounts of survival and renewal that hammered home the point that God is still vital and active in our lives, supporting us through all manner of heartache.

My own resurrection challenge was surviving my husband, who died of leukemia at age 50. My children were away at university and law school, my parents were gone, and I found myself, at 51, alone and unmoored in Northern California. For the first year of my widowhood, I made no commitments, but prayed for direction: should I stay in place or find a way to get home to New Jersey? Eighteen months after my husband's death, I accepted a job at Rutgers–New Brunswick. I worked with realtors, movers, and attorneys to sell my house, move across country, buy a townhouse in Princeton, and establish a new life for myself. Six weeks after I moved into my new home, I met the man I would marry three years later. We now share four children and four grandchildren, and will celebrate our tenth anniversary this fall. This second chance at love and family life is my resurrection, truly a gift from God.

As I face the months ahead, I know that I can make it through this pandemic because God is with me. I don't have to have the answers, and I don't have to do this alone. I just have to be patient and trust in the Lord to help me get to the other side.

*Dear Lord, help us trust in you as we face the uncertainties and challenges of this and every crisis in our lives. Help us to remember that though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, we need fear no evil, for you are with us always. Amen.*

## DAILY DEVOTIONAL ❖ JUNE 2020

### **Elizabeth (Liz) Beasley**

Liz joined Nassau Church in 2007 when she moved to Princeton from Davis, California. She has served as an elder and on the membership and adult education committees, and was ordained as a deacon in November 2019. She is also a volunteer with Villages in Partnership, a church mission partner working to end extreme poverty in Malawi. Liz married Kimball Beasley in the sanctuary in 2010, and retired from Rutgers University in 2019.

*June 17, 2020*

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## **Psalm 30:6–10**

*When I felt secure, I said,  
“I will never be shaken” (Psalm 30:6 NIV).*

The back-story on Psalm 30 isn't hard: the writer, gravely sick, appeals to God, recovers, and thanks God. It's not unusual to see this in the psalms—there are at least ten others where this happens. Business as usual for the psalmist. Business as usual for God.

But Psalm 30 is different. When you get to verse six, well, the story starts to change, doesn't it? “When I felt secure, I said, ‘I will never be shaken.’” Let me give you the modern translation: “I've got such a good life, God; I didn't think I needed you that much. Look at me. Look how well I'm doing.”

This is what separates *this* healing psalm from the others, this utter lack of humility, this sense of entitlement, this so completely human self-congratulation. Oh, what a verse for us, a group that accumulates accomplishments, advanced degrees and accolades the way chronic gamblers pile up busted bets. Who could be more secure than us? Who is less likely to be shaken than we are?

The psalmist doubles down, trying to negotiate with God, the way any good Type A would: “What is gained if I am silenced, if I go down to the pit? Will the dust praise you? Will it proclaim your faithfulness?” It's not “What you can do for me, God? It's what I can do for you. C'mon, your Almighty-ness, work with me.” Have you ever seen such a transparently self-serving plea?

God has. And does. Every day from all of us and, yet, God saves us. Salvation only comes when we stop bargaining, when we recognize it's not about us, when we understand that our security is a mirage. Nothing we can offer or say can move God, but this: “Hear, Lord, and be merciful to me. Lord, be my help.”

*Dear Lord, Give us the humility to understand that is never about us, but always about living our lives as You would have us live them. Remind us that Your mercy and Your love is eternal and unencompassed, an amazing grace that you offer us freely. Amen.*

### **Mark Herr**

Mark has spent a career in journalism, politics, the law and on Wall Street. Talk about a man who needs to repeat daily, “Hear, Lord, and be merciful to me. Lord, be my help.”



*June 18, 2020*

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## **Psalm 30:11–12**

***You have turned my mourning into dancing;  
you have taken off my sackcloth  
and clothed me with joy (Psalm 30:11 NRSV).***

When I received the scripture assignment for this devotional I assumed I would be writing about COVID-19, about the countless people mourning countless losses—lost loved ones, lost employment, lost traditions and ways of life. But now, with the brutal murder of George Floyd, and the disturbing lineage of innocent names that precedes his, a much older grief surfaces. One whose wounds from the last blow had not yet begun to heal before this new laceration hit news reports and social media feeds. As riots and protests erupt across the country—in the streets and on any platform that allows the people’s voices to be heard—our country cries out in public grief. God’s people mourn for precious lives lost to hate, and continued miscarriages of justice.

But the psalmist declares, “You have turned my mourning into dancing; you have taken off my sackcloth and clothed me with joy.” The promise of hope in these words is a balm for these fresh wounds, for these old wounds ripped new again. And yet, like the sting of ointment spread on an open wound, they are a reminder that we are not yet healed, and will not be with just one treatment. So the question begs, “When, oh Lord? When will our mourning turn to dancing? In what world can we all be safe to shed the calloused garments of sackcloth? When will all be free to dance in your robes of joy?”

And another question—perhaps the more important question— what do we do in the meantime? What do we do during the healing process? And surely, it is a process. We cannot simply slap a bandage on the wound and turn a blind eye. As we know, a wound so deep will fester without treatment, without regular examination and the care. The first sting of ointment is a reminder that the process of healing has started but is far from over. We must continue administering the hope of God’s promises. For God has promised peace. God has promised justice for all of God’s beloved children. We must also continue examining the wound through the eyes of God’s commandments: “love one another” (John 13:34), and to do so “not in word or speech, but in truth and action” (1 John 3:18); “do justice, and to love kindness, and walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8).

Neither the psalmist nor God promises immediate healing. The transformation, according to Psalm 30 is gradual. “You have *turned* my grieving into dancing; you have *taken off* my sackcloth and *clothed* me with joy.” God promises a process. One of transformation. One that requires radical removal before joy can be restored. Have you ever tried to undress and dress a baby before? I have been taking care of my one-year-old godson these past few weeks, and I imagine that the frustration I experience at the changing table offers a glimpse of what God puts up with. I wrestle with this little guy, who is helpless, but growing in strength. I try to be gentle while attempting to tame his will enough to get the dirty clothes off and the fresh ones on.

## DAILY DEVOTIONAL ❖ JUNE 2020

Sometimes he helps me by fitting his own arms through the holes of his onesie, other times he squirms and rebels, trying to get up with only half the diaper secured. Sometimes he cries and sometimes he gifts me with a heart-shattering smile. The process, from start to finish, always takes more time than I expected, and so it does with grief.

*Lord, as we navigate this grief, have mercy on us. As we undertake this process of healing, have mercy on us. As we seek to love our neighbors, have mercy on us. Amen.*

### **Jade Hage**

Jade has been attending Nassau Church for the past three years, and is grateful to have enjoyed her first anniversary as a member. Hailing from Monterey, California, Jade moved to Princeton to start her career teaching high school English. On Sunday mornings you can find her in the choir loft singing with the soprano section.

*June 20, 2020*

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## 2 Corinthians 6:8–13

***...sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything....open wide your hearts also (2 Corinthians 6:10, 14 NIV).***

When I receive the assigned Bible verses, I usually read several verses before and after the assigned verses to better understand the circumstances and the message. Then I pick a short sentence or phrase to memorize. And the most important is to think how to apply what I learned, how to put it in practice, and then act.

After reading a very long sentence, including one hundred eleven words, the last few words hit me: “having nothing, and yet possessing everything”. We know from the Bible that Apostle Paul was very poor, yet making many rich for over 2000 years. Us too.

During the last three months many of us realized that health is the real wealth. We started to learn again or for the first time that:

- We can replace our fear with faith.
- We won't have all of the answers, but we can have something better, God's presence and his promises.
- We know where to put our hope.
- When our eyes are full of tears, we have to keep them on God.
- When God is all we have, we will know He is all we need.

Today Paul is teaching us how to be sorrowful, yet always rejoicing, not to withhold our affection but open wide our hearts. During the month of April I was sorrowful, because I lost four good friends. But I keep rejoicing for family members and friends who are healthy or healthy again after recovering from the virus. In these days we cannot open our arms to hug each other and our smile is not always visible, but we can open our hearts. There are so many poor, hungry, sad, lonely, purposeless, frightened people around us. They are yearning for attention, encouragement, help and love. Let's open our hearts wide.

*Dear Father, please help us to replace our fear with faith, rejoice for your presence, depend on your promises and always hope. Open our eyes to see and open our hearts to help more and love more. In the name of Jesus, Amen.*

### **Agnes Olah**

Agnes is a retired bank executive living in Somerset and part of the Nassau Church community since 2012. Especially this spring Agnes is spending lots of time in her garden and walking in the woods or by the river while talking to God and singing her favorite church songs.

*June 21, 2020*

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## **Psalm 27:1–2**

***The LORD is my light and my salvation;  
whom shall I fear?***

***The LORD is the stronghold of my life:  
of whom shall I be afraid?***

***When evildoers assail me  
to devour my flesh—  
my adversaries and foes—  
they shall stumble and fall (Psalm 27:1–2 NRSV).***

There are 150 chapters in the Book of Psalms beginning with God’s intent for justice, righteousness and peace and concluding with praise for God’s surpassing greatness. Chapter 27 is a psalm of David who already experienced God’s mercy and gives a testimony of his gratitude. He had been harassed with troubles and conflicts; however, he shouts triumphantly—rejoicing because of God’s mercy and favor. David refers to God as “...his light (joy), his salvation and the rock of his life”. It was because of God’s help that David felt safe and free from the terrors of death.

Whatever wrongdoings evildoers assail upon David he feels no fear to stand up against them. He expressed that his enemies came unto him to eat his flesh. He celebrates his victory that he obtained through the blessings of God.

The first verse brings to mind my childhood when I was afraid of the dark. I am not sure how that fear started. However, I do remember that my kindergarten teacher would put me in the long dark closet that extended the entire length of the classroom, and to make the placement even more frightening, she would close the tall dark doors. What saved me from being in complete darkness was the ray of light that seeped through the small lattice at the bottom of the door.

Each night brought fear about going to bed because I was afraid of the dark. My grandmother, whose faith was her light and her salvation, was my rock! Before I went to bed I would ask her, “Is everything going to be alright?” Her reply was always the same, “If it is the Lord’s will.” Her tender presence and those comforting words were all I needed to cast away fear and go to sleep.

How relevant is the second verse to the tone of our nation today! The evildoers have surfaced and innocent lives have been devoured by manipulating hands, the pressure of a knee and the degradation of the Holy Bible. Those who may never have witnessed the grace of God now tremble, but with the grace of God and with his promises we can banish all fears from our consciences.

## DAILY DEVOTIONAL ❖ JUNE 2020

*Heavenly Father, look upon all your people who are struggling with anger, anxiety doubt, frustration, guilt, hopelessness, loss, lack of patience, pain, regret, sadness, temptation, and weakness. We know that “all things work together for the good of those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.” Let us be reminded of your love as you make all things work for your good purpose in our lives, especially when we have lost hope. Amen.*

### **Shirley A. Satterfield**

Shirley's family have been faithful stewards at Witherspoon Street Presbyterian Church since the 1860s. When Witherspoon, Nassau and Princeton Theological Seminary celebrated 250 years of Presbyterian presence in Princeton, Shirley coined the theme “Partners in Faith” and helped to create the banners that hang in both sanctuaries. Shirley is the historian of Witherspoon Street Church as well as the historian and tour guide of the African American Community in Princeton and Paul Robeson sites. She is a retired guidance counselor of Princeton High School.

*June 22, 2020*

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## 2 Corinthians 8:7–9

***Now as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in utmost eagerness, and in our love for you—so we want you to excel also in this generous undertaking (2 Corinthians 8:7 NRSV).***

Generosity is something I struggle with. Giving away time, energy, money...I desire to be generous, but often find it hard. Somehow I feel the need to protect: protect me, my family, our resources, our health. Sometimes I sense scarcity when there is none. Sometimes there actually is little to give. But giving even a little is a huge blessing, just like the story Jesus tells of the woman who gave two small copper coins.

We see so many people, organizations, causes, calling—imploring—us to be generous. We also have many different ways to be generous. Paul describes in earlier verses that the Macedonian churches pulled themselves through with joy and generosity. Especially now while we are in a worldwide crisis much like that “severe ordeal of affliction,” how can we be generous? There are so many venues for donating money or supplies to others. We can give time by picking up groceries or making masks for others. Reach out to others in our midst with calls, emails, even a quick text. Give grace to someone who owes us. Give prayer, food, flowers, music, art or similar that might bring solace and hope. Give love and grace to our children and families as they struggle to learn and grow in new, challenging circumstances, to parents who struggle to work, parent, teach, and maintain a household all at once, and to those confronted with too much solitude, anxiety, exhaustion, and grief. How can you be generous with joy to yourself and others today?

*Loving God, we are grateful to you for generously giving your son for us. We are grateful for the generosity of those who have and still are giving so much of themselves for the health and wellness of our communities small and large. Lead us and guide us in ways we may be generous for the good of our families, communities, and world. We ask this in the name of your son, Jesus Christ, who offered the ultimate generous act for us. Amen.*

### **Christianne Bessières Lane**

Christianne is a mom, wife, and musician. She, with her flutist husband, John, has been a member of Nassau since 2003, and sang in the choir for several years before the gifts of her two children. She looks forward to the day when we can sing our praise together in the sanctuary. Mungu ni Mwema! Know that God is good! Alleluia!

*June 23, 2020*

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## **2 Corinthians 8:10–15**

***For if the eagerness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has—not according to what one does not have” (2 Corinthians 8:12 NRSV).***

We are facing unpredictable and unsure times where worry and restlessness run rampant. We may find that our foundations are crumbling around us, what we once thought stable is now shrouded in uncertainty. In a time in which so much is being taken from us, we must remember that we still hold the capacity to love and give of ourselves, much like Jesus Christ did for us. As the highlighted verse tells us, “if the eagerness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has—not according to what one does not have.” Right now, many of us have time. Time that usually would have been spent at work, school, or outside. I have often felt frustrated because I am unable to see my friends, go on the Appalachia Service Project, and participate in my many activities. However, when I am feeling down, I take the verse to heart and remember that even though I may not be able to be in the presence of my friends, I can still give my time by reaching out via text messages or Zoom meetings. As the verse tells us, do not worry about what you no longer can give, but simply share what you are able to. The Lord will be with us and will see us through this storm, but as we weather it we must continue to share our kindness and sympathy with others.

*Dear Lord, lift us out of these scary times and grant us the courage to trust in you and your plan. As Your Son gave to us, help us to so give our compassion and love to others. In Your name we pray, Amen.*

### **Camille Scordis**

Camille is a junior in high school who enjoys attending the 11 o'clock service of worship with her family. She is also involved in the Youth Group and Nassau's Cantorei Choir. In her free time she enjoys reading mysteries and writing poetry.

*June 24, 2020*

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## **Psalm 30:1–5**

*O LORD my God, I cried unto thee,  
and thou hast healed me (Psalm 30:2 KJV).*

How appropriate to the present day that the psalmist's cries resulted in God's healing. We collectively and as individuals need healing, from biological foes as well as the societal ones of prejudice that are dividing us and attacking our collective wellbeing.

While we benefit from science to defend against biology, we only need ourselves to defend against the ills of prejudice and discrimination. Recently Nassau's adult education classes presented the idea that the gift of speaking in tongues provided by Pentecost solved the communication divide of the diversity of languages created in Babel. As a nation of 330 million we have a common language yet our thoughts and ideas are as confusing and confounding as the languages of Babel must have been to its inhabitants.

In spite of a common language we are incapable of harmonizing our collective values and loving one another as Jesus commands us. We need God's intervention to defeat these foes of peace and harmony and once we realize we have to surrender to God's will we all be able to fully enjoy God's grace.

We are fortunate to have and be part of a community of faith like Nassau Presbyterian Church. It is a beacon to the local community and the world at large as to how to serve each other while embracing our differences and accepting diversity. Nassau helps many to see the joy in the morning!

*Dear Lord, please answer our prayers for physical and mental health, economic wellbeing and, most importantly, social justice and harmony. Like the psalmist we look forward to the joy that the morning will bring and please give us the strength and opportunity to serve you in that new day. Amen.*

### **Henry Behnke**

Henry is married to Marie Behnke and they are the proud parents of three grown sons, two daughters –in-law and have one grandson. All are Rutgers graduates; they hope the grandson will consider attending there as well. Henry and Marie have been members of Nassau Church for 15 years and serve as ushers. Marie has also served two terms as a deacon. Henry is an engineer and consults for solar energy and technology companies to assist with business development activities.



*June 25, 2020*

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## **Mark 4:30–34**

***It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth” (Mark 4:31 KJV).***

When I think of the Parable of the Mustard Seed, and I think of this verse, I think of a child. I know that the idea of ‘the mustard seed’ can be applied to anything to which time, attention and love must be added to make something bloom as well as blossom. However, when I consider a mustard seed, from initial planting to harvest, this process reminds me of the growth of a child...from a small baby into adulthood. From its earliest days we swaddle and care for a small baby, encouraging it to walk and talk; to make mistakes; to play; to exhibit imagination; and to love and respect those around him or her as well as to love and respect God. The years go by so quickly, but it is astounding to see what wonderful individuals these children become once matured. It is almost impossible to believe that, from the smallest of babies, these boys and girls grow to speak different languages; formulate interests in a wide range of subject matters; thrive in school, sports and extracurricular activities; and hold their own opinions and plans for the future. My niece Emily and my nephew Luke are sixteen and thirteen, respectively. I remember when they were toddlers, but, whenever I visit and I see the lovely cherubs they have become; when I look into their eyes and know they are growing and flowering, just like the mustard seed, I am comforted and awed. While women have physically borne these children, and, as families watch these children grow, we know that all children of the world are made in God’s image. And, thus, are the miracles of wonders of the Lord and of Jesus Christ reflected in their eyes. As with a mustard seed and our goal for this seed to become the lovely green and gold flowering plant that it becomes, we must endeavor to shower our children with love and affection. With respect. With our time. And with our attention. I would argue that this period of lockdown has given families another chance to do all of these things. We are able to take a step back and focus on our families. We are able to step away from our busy distraction of daily emails and meetings *bound by* technology and step toward more creative ways *to use* technology *beneficially*—via e-learning and just simply having fun. Returning to the life of a child. With our children. And seeing the world through the eyes of a child. The mustard seed and mustard plant take great care before full fruition. We must remember the same with our children. And God does not want us to waste this chance.

## DAILY DEVOTIONAL ❖ JUNE 2020

*Psalm 46:10 begins, “Be still, and know that I am God.” It is ironic, as wiggly as small children are, that the eyes of You, God, and of You, Jesus, can be reflected through the eyes of these children. They can, indeed, and we know that, though these eyes, you are continually teaching us to love you through our children. To see you as our children see and feel you. And to know that you love us, as our children love us, unconditionally, in return. Children are gifts and are our mustard seeds. Amen.*

### **Cynthia Lynn Miller**

Cynthia has attended the Presbyterian Church ever since young—from her years growing up in and as a member of the Village Presbyterian Church in Northbrook, Illinois, to her membership within Nassau. Cynthia believes that the wonders and miracles of the Lord as well as of Christ Jesus are reflected in children everywhere when we take the time to look, listen, and love. She works in international market research and loves history, travel, reading and writing.

*June 26, 2020*

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## **Mark 6:1–5**

***Then Jesus said to them, “Prophets are not without honor, except in their hometown, and among their own kin, and in their own house.” And he could do no deed of power there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them. (Mark 6:4–5 NRSV).***

Reading this particular part of the passage made me think about how much we downplay miracles that God performs when we have our backs turned. Then we turn around and we know something is different but we can't quite put our finger on it. I'm sure right now, at this very moment in time God is performing the simplest of miracles that will save our world from completely falling apart. I just hope that everyone will recognize it when it is put in motion. Yes, there are “Christmas miracles” but what happened to “everyday miracles”? Something that may seem so small (like a prayer right when you wake up or before your head hits the pillow) may be the thing needed to change your life for the better. I know I've been skeptical of this, but believing that your prayer is actually being answered is the part that, if you think about it, is the miracle. The difference it makes. The sense of change you get when you know something has been altered. In a way that nobody but the Creator above can. And all God's people say: AMEN!

*God, creator of miracles, help us to see that miracles are happening in small ways in our lives. Help us to understand that our prayers are being answered. Thank you for listening to them and instantly getting to work to make them a reality. We are eternally thankful. And we are even more thankful that we are children of God. In your name, Amen.*

### **Julia Hill**

Julia Hill is a sophomore at Princeton High School. She and her family have been members of Nassau Church since February 2013. She is involved in the youth group, vacation Bible school and chancel drama over the summer, and singing in the youth choir. She also is in her first year of serving on the Children and Family Ministries Committee. When she's not doing online school or taking walks, you can find her in her room singing and dancing to one of her favorite Broadway shows, *Newsies*.

June 27, 2020

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## Joshua 4:4–7

***“When your children ask in time to come, ‘What do those stones mean to you?’<sup>7</sup> then you shall tell them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off in front of the ark of the covenant of the LORD. When it crossed over the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. So these stones shall be to the Israelites a memorial forever” (Joshua 4:6b–7 NRSV).***

This passage about the importance of remembering, of symbols that help us remember, is so apt in these troubled times. Societal memory is a fickle thing.

My father was a civilian engineer who worked on physical security measures for the US Navy. After the bombing of the marine barracks in Lebanon in 1983, which resulted in 241 deaths, he was asked to join a task force charged with recommending changes to ensure the safety of US embassies in the face of terrorist attacks. By the time the task force issued its recommendations, it was two years later, and no one was interested: too expensive, too inconvenient, too difficult to implement. Perhaps, if we were better at remembering, 200 people would not have died in Al Qaeda attacks on US embassies in Tanzania and Kenya in 1998.

We learned about the dangers of new diseases in the 1918 Spanish Flu pandemic when 675,000 Americans died. The booming 20’s caught our imagination and we forgot the preceding unpleasantness. When SARS erupted in China in 2003, when Ebola erupted in Western Africa in 2014, when Zika erupted in 2015, most of us remained unconcerned. Perhaps, if we were better at remembering, we would have had a plan. We might have mounted a unified national response to COVID-19, learned quickly from the tragic experiences of China and Italy, and saved some of the 115,000 Americans who have died.

Race riots have been occurring in the US with increasing regularity. Significant racial incidents have led to violence repeatedly in the last century: 1919 in Chicago; 1921 in Tulsa; 1943 in Detroit; 1965 in Watts; 1968 after the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.; 1992 following the acquittal of three white policemen for a brutal take-down of a Black man, Rodney King; 2014–2015 across the US fueled by multiple incidents of police brutality towards Black men. Perhaps, if we were better at remembering the cries of rage and despair from our Black sisters and brothers, George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery and Breonna Taylor would still be alive.

Faith during difficult times, when the waters aren’t parting, is hard. Remembering the incredible, transformative power of our God should be easy, but we live in a broken world, where transformation is rare, and usually history just repeats. And our God knows this. He knows that we need those stones, that cross, to remind us that, yes, history does repeat itself. He parted the waters of the Red Sea; He parted the waters of the Jordan River. That is the God we worship. During this year of consequences from all the things we have forgotten, let us not forget the power God has to bring about change, to keep His promises to us.

## DAILY DEVOTIONAL ❖ JUNE 2020

*Dear Lord, help us to remember your power in this time of pain, loss and rage. Help us to hope, and participate, and be a part of your transformation when it comes. Amen.*

### **Karen Brown**

Karen has been a member of Nassau Church since 1995. She has been a deacon and a member of the Adult Education Committee and is now a member of the Mission and Outreach Committee. Although she works in Boston as a clinical pharmacologist, she has had the blessing of being able to shelter at home in Lawrenceville these last several months with her husband James Takasugi and, at various times, with their adult children, Alan and Andrew.

*June 28, 2020*

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## **1 Corinthians 12:4–6**

***There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone (1 Corinthians 12:4–6 NABRE).***

God is a unifying presence, even in the midst of diversity. This is because all of God’s creation received their abilities through God. This reminds me greatly of the parable of the body. If the nose decided it wanted to be a foot, what would smell the aromas around us? And if the hand decided it wanted to be an ear, how would we hold items? Everyone was given a talent that contributes to the Lord’s promise. One person may heal someone’s body while nursing the sick, while another may heal someone’s soul by playing comforting music. We all play a part in bringing the Lord’s kingdom to this earth and if this pandemic has taught me one thing, it’s that we are all essential in some important way.

*Dear Lord, thank you for making us different and providing us with unique talents. Allow us to fully realize the importance of diversity and how it helps us better create the world you envisioned. Amen.*

### **Robert Duffy**

Robert has appreciated being embraced by Nassau Church and tries to continue “cyber-participating” in any way he can. He has officially completed his intern year in internal medicine and will now start his residency in dermatology, both at Cooper University Hospital. He has grown to enjoy simpler, more solitary activities, such as biking and watching evening Jeopardy, as social distancing continues to be imperative.

June 29, 2020

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## Psalm 48:9–14

*Your praise, God, just like your reputation,  
extends to the far corners of the earth.  
Your strong hand is filled with righteousness.*

*Examine its defenses closely;  
tour its fortifications  
so that you may tell future generations:*

*“This is God,  
our God, forever and always!  
He is the one who will lead us  
even to the very end” (Psalm 48:10, 13–14 CEB).*

May this meditation be acceptable to you, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer.

*Your praise, God, just like your reputation, extends to the far corners of the earth*

These are challenging times...a once in a hundred-year pandemic...world economies in disarray...more horrific deaths of African Americans...protesters around the world calling for racial justice. In this environment do we experience God's reputation and praise reaching to the far corners of the earth? Are we glad because of God's acts of justice?

Brian Blount, president of Union Presbyterian Seminary, calls Christians to be better witnesses in this time of national disorientation and pain. Has our witness been adequate? Do we hold up symbols of faith, but fail to embody them and show justice and mercy? Have we demonstrated the richness of our faith to all our sisters and brothers so that God is praised?

*Examine [Zion's] defenses closely; tour its fortifications so that you may tell future generations:*

*“This is God, our God, forever and always!”*

We are asked to examine Zion, our Refuge, closely and pass along knowledge of God's steadfast love and sustaining care to our offspring.

As a child I remember my grandmother singing hymns in her kitchen as she prepared meals. “Count Your Blessings” was a favorite. She encouraged us grandchildren to memorize Bible verses so they would be with us in times of trouble. She wrote to me weekly while I was in college, always including a Bible verse that I was to hold close that week. That was her witness to me. It is not forgotten.

Now I am the grandfather of four beautiful children. I reflect on the world that I leave to them. I witness the protests in the streets today and recall those of my youth. I pray that current events

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bring greater insight and reconciliation for the world my grandchildren inherit. Will they know God's faithfulness? Will God be their mighty fortress? Will they shout, "This is our God, forever and always! He is the one who will lead us, even to the very end"?

We dwell on your faithful love, O Lord.

Meditation on "Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing," by Michael Ryan  
(watch on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oYn-BU6oHww>)

*Creator God, lead us. Guide us in these tumultuous times. Help us to reflect your love to all your peoples, to your whole creation.*

*Savior, may our children and grandchildren know your steadfast love and praise you throughout their lives.*

*Spirit, hear our groaning for justice and reconciliation. Amen.*

### **Larry Alphs**

Larry spends much of this COVID time in his garden watching the step-by-step evolution of the seasons, taking moments to reflect on the beauty of creation and thankful for technology to keep him in contact with family and friends.



# DAILY DEVOTIONAL ❖ JUNE 2020

June 30, 2020

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## 2 Corinthians 5:14–17

***From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything is become new! (2 Corinthians 5:16–17 NRSV).***

*If we are in our right minds? Shall we now no longer regard Christ and our neighbors from a human point of view? Everything will become new?*

I drove into town a few weeks ago for the pleasure of gliding over the new bridges at Alexander St.; then I went up to Nassau and took a slow tour of the main street I've avoided for these many weeks. Over the years, this street has worn many faces—through many adaptive permutations, plantings and replantings and graftings, blights and handyman fixes, and—it is all familiar to me because I biked or walked each school day from my Edwards Place home to the Quarry Street Middle School and later to Princeton High.

In those high school years I had fallen in love with the majestic, apocalyptic requiems of the nineteenth century (Berlioz, Verdi, Fauré, Brahms): how the surging voices, the sforzando brass, and the gleaming strings combined to express the dark dread of dissolution and the streaming beacon of resurrection. I played these recordings over and over, and memorized every word and music

***Dies irae, dies illa, solvet saeculum in favilla.***

***Day of wrath, now worlds dissolve into ashes.***

Thousands of times I've walked or cycled past Renwick's and Woolworth's and Davidson's, and past the endless rows of buildings and enterprises that, as on a forest floor, have risen up to replace them, only to be overgrown again and again by hopeful new enterprises. Across the street, of course, the University's mushrooming campus relentlessly pushes up and outward, always straining against the sidewalks' borders—and now against the marshy banks of the Lake. I had known each busy corner before the streetlights were installed; I can recall when parking spaces on the street were at 45-degree angles and all the meters took pennies and nickels. I thought I understood how the dances of time could bend the tunes, brightening or darkening the storefront faces of a beloved street.

***Denn alles Fleisch' est ist wie Gras, und alles Herrlichkeit des Menschens wie des Grasses blumen.***

***Now I understand that human striving can be mown down, with its lopped flowers beneath our feet.***

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I worry that alleys and storefronts and newspaper boxes, with all the wonderful variety of hope and commerce and passion embodied by countless generations, may just wither away beneath the hard blast of an unseen menace, and the fear and disorder that follows in its wake. So many of us will seek out our brothers, sisters, parents, strangers—either lost to lonely death or locked in structures invisibly crumbling on all the main streets across the globe. Who will return to this street, and the byways and paths all over the earth? What will they build and how will they live?



**Photographs by Eugène Atget and Mauricio Lima**

**Written by Adam Nossiter**

**New York Times, May 27, 2020**

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/27/world/europe/paris-atget-coronavirus.html>

Soon we will sift through the ashes of our jobs, our savings, our friends and loved ones? Is this what Paul means by “from now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view”? Will Christ find us and open our eyes to a new world? I recall the conflagration of Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris recently. In full view of the massive catastrophe and desecration of the toxic fumes and flames, people gathered to sing hymns. In the midst of death and disruption and recrimination, we see Christ and find his way.



The Berlioz Requiem at Notre Dame (Paris):

(Watch on YouTube: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jLL-U\\_hd9XM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jLL-U_hd9XM))

*O Christ, you have experienced the ruin this world can wreak on the heart and body. Heal us with your love and rebuild our hearts for the task ahead. Remove the dread and greed that have powered our near destruction of this beloved Earth. Teach us to love justice. Teach us to do justice. Teach us to live justice. Deliver us from this spectacle of unreasoning death and despair; catch us up bring us, all unworthy, into the light of new life into your new life. Amen.*

### **Debbie Tegarden**

Debbie remains at home, longing for the fellowship and community of the life at Nassau Church, and giving thanks for online glimpses, however shadowy and peculiar, of the life in Christ. Her heart breaks for the world she has known, and all the worlds she may now never know.

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

Psalm 119:105

NASSAU PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH