

Lenten Devotional



NASSAU PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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Scripture quotations are from the following texts:
*Common English Bible (CEB), King James Version (KJV or NKJV),
New International Version (NIV), New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).*

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Preface

Welcome to Lent Dear Friends!

Enclosed, please find a printed copy of our Daily Devotional writings for Week One of Lent 2021. The Season of Lent is a journey I look forward to each year. It comprises the 40 days before Easter (excluding Sundays, because Sundays are always celebrated as the Resurrection of our Lord).

We encourage you to find a daily spot to read, reflect, and meditate upon these daily scriptures and devotions. Each devotion is written by multi-generational members of our church and each week will be prepared and mailed to you by Lauren Yeh.

Take your time. Breathe. Be led by the Spirit who guides us to our Way, Truth, and Light.

With Lenten grace and peace,

Lauren J. McFeaters
Associate Pastor
Nassau Presbyterian Church
Lent 2021

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

Psalm 119:105

Ash Wednesday, February 17

Isaiah 58:1-12

Is not this the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of injustice,
to undo the thongs of the yoke,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to break every yoke?

Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,
and bring the homeless poor into your house;
when you see the naked, to cover them,
and not to hide yourself from your own kin? (Isaiah 58:6-7 NRSV).

Elizabeth Gift

WHY AREN'T YOU LISTENING TO US, GOD? This is the question the Israelites posed a few verses before the focus passage. God replies that they say they are sorry for their sins, and still they keep on doing the same old thing. God says that a true apology is changed behavior, that actions speak louder than words. In Isaiah 58 God says when they change, their light will shine and they will bring great glory to God. I began to think about how we repent today. We don't fast. We ask for God's forgiveness. I think that, like the Israelites' fasting, our prayers of confession are empty if we don't also work for change. On Ash Wednesday we remember that we are fallible, sinful humans. Today we enter into a season of reflection and preparation for Easter. Many of us will begin some kind of Lenten practice. What will my practice look like? How can I work for justice for my brown and black siblings? How can I lighten burdens that we place on this planet? What do I have to share with those who are suffering due to the pandemic? Where can I direct my efforts so refugees feel welcome in our nation? Can I have hard conversations with my family or friends about systemic racism? Won't you join me? With God's help we can change our ways. Then our light will shine, bringing glory to God and healing to God's people and planet.

Loving God, we confess that we so often fall short of your way. Help us to choose your fast. Show us our sin, and guide us to act in ways that bring justice, lift burdens, share resources, and give life. Thank you for your steadfast love for and faithfulness to us always, for your Holy Scriptures, for your promises, and for your forgiveness through the sacrifice of your son Jesus. Amen.



Elizabeth is mom to two adults and two teenagers, and wife to Kevin. She serves as a Ruling Elder, on the Youth Ministry Committee, and as secretary of the Princeton Presbyterians of the Westminster Foundation Board, and is an active participant in Breaking Bread. She is grateful for the ways she and her family have been blessed during the pandemic, and longs for the day when the Nassau Church family is back together in person.

Thursday, February 18

Daniel 9:1-14

“Lord, you are righteous, but this day we are covered with shame—the people of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem and all Israel, both near and far, in all the countries where you have scattered us because of our unfaithfulness to you. We and our kings, our princes and our ancestors are covered with shame, Lord, because we have sinned against you” (Daniel 9:7–8 NIV).

Agnes Olah

LENT IS THE SEASON of penance, confession and prayer. Daniel’s prayer is a perfect start. I have read these verses in the past and noted now something with new insight. David is confessing not only his sin, but the sin of the entire nation and more, asking forgiveness not only for himself but for thousands of others. About 500 years later, Jesus on the cross has done the same. He said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know

what they are doing” (Luke 23:34).

I was up to this point of writing this devotional on January 6th when I got a message to turn on the TV. Washington, the nation’s capital, thousands of violent people...you know the rest. I realized that 2,500 years after Daniel, it is still appropriate to confess the sins of thousands or millions of people and pray over and over for forgiveness. Not only during the 40 days of Lent, between Ash Wednesday and Maundy Thursday, but for a lifetime.

I take New Year’s Resolutions very seriously. Two years ago, one of my ten resolutions was to turn from being a local Christian to a global Christian. To pray every week for a different nation. That year I covered 52 countries, mostly in the continents of the Americas and Europe. I will continue to pray until I cover all 195 countries of the world. We are all sinners and Jesus died on the cross for all of us who believe in him and the God of Resurrection hears all prayers.

Father, thank you for the empty tomb that proves Jesus conquered the sin and death. Help us to confess for ourselves and for the others, to be faithful in prayer and to live the life of faith. In Jesus name, we pray. Amen.



Agnes was born and grew up in Hungary. Her parents raised her religiously. Lent was a special time in Hungary. However, it was done a bit differently than here in the United States. Instead of giving up something (chocolate, for example), children and adults were encouraged to do something good for other people. She remembers her mom preparing a basket of food every year that Agnes delivered to a poor widow in the neighborhood. Nowadays, she tries to use both of these traditions during Lent.

Friday, February 19

Psalm 9

The Lord is a stronghold for the oppressed,
a stronghold in times of trouble (Psalm 9:9 NRSV).

Marshall McKnight

THIS LENT IS SPECIAL. It's our pandemic Lent 2.0.

In the January 2021 issue of *Harper's Magazine* Fred Bahnson writes of his search for the Lord's stronghold among "contemplatives," disciples who make room for meditation in their faith journey to enable a different mindset that steers away from a dualistic "us v. them" or "red v. blue" view of the world. He met author Richard Rohr who advocates *contemplatio*, the wordless prayer of the heart. When this happens, Rohr says, "You stop reflecting, critiquing or analyzing and let the moment be what it is, as it is, all that it is. That takes a lot of surrender."

Bahnson also spent time with Center for Spiritual Imagination director Reverend Adam Bucko and his friend Sister Alison McCrary. They showed Bahnson the importance of a faith community. In November 2019, he joined Bucko and students from Adelphi University as they all handed out sandwiches to homeless people in Hempstead, New York. McCrary sat next to Bahnson at a contemplative prayer service the next evening. McCrary, a New Orleans teacher, helps provide food and shelter to ICE detainees, offers pro bono legal services to people living in Louisiana's Cancer Alley and visits men on Angola's death row. She says, "I don't believe you can have contemplation without action, and you can't have action without contemplation. The life of a Christian is not a solo act. Jesus went to the desert alone to pray, but he was always building a community. It's a both-and." .

Lord, thank you for being a stronghold, our stronghold, where we encounter you through worship and service. Thank you for Nassau Presbyterian Church, a wonderful community of active contemplatives. Amen.



Marshall experiences *contemplatio* on long walks through the fields and woods of Mercer County and since 2011, in worship at Nassau Presbyterian Church. He works for the state of New Jersey.

Saturday, February 20

Psalm 32

Then I acknowledged my sin to you
 and did not cover up my iniquity.
 I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord."
 And you forgave the guilt of my sin.
 You are my hiding place;
 you will protect me from trouble
 and surround me with songs of deliverance.
 Many are the woes of the wicked,
 but the Lord's unfailing love
 surrounds the one who trusts in him (Psalm 32:5, 7, 10 NIV).

Elizabeth (Liz) Holland-Hough Beasley

GOD KNOWS that we are fallible, weak, and, despite our best efforts, imperfect. The Lord doesn't ask for what is impossible for us. He asks us to be open with him, to admit our sins and our guilt, and promises that he will forgive us.

But the Lord goes further, and offers more: to those who trust him, he offers protection and deliverance from trouble, and surrounds us with his unfailing love. What spouse can offer those terms? What parent? God offers a love that no mortal can match. And he offers it to all of us, no matter how flawed, if we will only trust him.

In these difficult times, when illness, death, financial hardship, and political upheaval devastate millions of people in our own country and around the world, it is good to know that we are not alone. God is in our corner, and will surround us with love, protection, and forgiveness, if we will only trust in him.

Dear Lord, please forgive us our sins and be always beside us, going and coming, surrounding us with your forgiveness, protection, and unfailing love. Amen.



Liz joined Nassau Church in 2007 and has served as a ruling elder and on the Membership Committee and the Adult Education Committee. Since retiring from Rutgers University–New Brunswick in June 2019, she serves the congregation as a deacon, volunteers with Villages in Partnership, a church mission partner, and reads to her granddaughters every afternoon via Facetime. She and her husband, Kim Beasley, live in Princeton.

First Sunday, February 21

Genesis 9:8-17

Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, “As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark. I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth” (Genesis 9:8-11 NRSV).

John F. Kelsey, III

EVERY JUDEO-CHRISTIAN CHILD knows this story as God is saving the good—Noah’s family and two of each of earth’s creatures—from the flood. But the story gets a lot more complicated as we grow up and un-

derstand its nuances. The water is the key to understanding the covenant. We Presbyterians believe in only two sacraments—Baptism and Communion—and usually we are only baptized once, just as there was only one great flood. Jesus was baptized by John in the Jordan, and then he fasted for 40 days while Satan tempted him...unsuccessfully.

Lord, we are tempted constantly, and few of us remember our baptism. But we all can remember Noah fighting the flood and maintaining the covenant with God. Help us to use this tool to fight temptation. Amen.

Pam and John have been blessed to be part of this congregation since 1974. Nassau has helped us better understand how to believe and practice what Jesus would have us do.

Monday, February 22

Psalm 16

Therefore my heart is glad, and my soul rejoices;
 my body also rests secure.
 For you do not give me up to Sheol,
 or let your faithful one see the Pit.

You show me the path of life.
 In your presence there is fullness of joy;
 in your right hand are pleasures forevermore (Psalm 16:9–11 NRSV).

Josie Brothers

THROUGHOUT MY LIFE, I have found it easier to pray in times of gratitude and thanksgiving than in times of strife and turbulence. When things are going as planned and I feel content, I never think twice about God's path for me. But when I encounter bumpy roads, I feel uneasy and tend to completely question God's intentions. These verses act as a gentle reminder that God will never forsake us or lead us astray. The Lord is our protector and mighty friend who makes known to us that death will never

separate us from the Lord's love. Because of this, I can rest peacefully and take a step back from my anxieties and concerns. I can learn to praise God with song and harmony through all the chapters of my life knowing that the Lord is always by my side.

Dear God, I will praise you endlessly in both the joyful and sorrowful times of my life, and I will rest soundly knowing that you will keep me safe. Amen.

Josie is a freshman at Elon University where she is studying elementary education and history. She enjoys music and the arts, and she is currently involved in a Presbyterian fellowship group at school.

Tuesday, February 23

1 Peter 3:8–18a

But in your hearts, revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander (1 Peter 3:15–17 NIV).

Lois Foley

AT THE END OF NOVEMBER 2020, I made a conscious decision to stop engaging the news on a daily basis. My decision was based on the need to eliminate unnecessary anxiety and worry after feeling an overload of both for so many months prior. I simply wanted to take back what had become the media control of my life and was beyond exhausted from the dreaded two “Ps” that we all know too well: Pandemic and Politics. After just a couple of weeks, something amazing started to happen, hope returned to me. Instead of reading a newsfeed on my phone, I started reading a daily devotional and the scripture that guided it. Rather than turning to CNN, I turned to the Psalms that we had studied during my small group back in November. What I had known from the time of my youth, though many times clouded by the world's unreasonable demands and expecta-

tions, was made clear to me once again. Christ is my hope; Christ is our hope.

It certainly seems, though, that hope is much harder to spread than fear. Rather, a conscious effort needs to be made to turn things around. Nassau Church, if Christ is your hope, let us all come together communally and drown out the fear and malicious slander that has overtaken our families, communities and country. With gentleness and love, let us lead by Christ's example. Put Christ back in control of your life, and soon you too will experience the wondrous return of hope—two “Ps” or not.

God, draw us closer to you each day. Help us to see, to truly understand, that when our lives are Christ centered, there is little room for the outside influences of this world, which are not pleasing to you and cause us harm. Thank you for your love and the example of your blessed Son. Help us to stop anticipating, stop stressing and to hope, just hope. Amen.



Lois has been a member of Nassau since March of 2018. She enjoys her participation in the Church Mouse program and has met many new friends in Nassau's small groups. Lois is a family law paralegal to a New Brunswick firm. She enjoys distance walking and the beauty of nature in all seasons. Grown children Meghan, Rachel (husband Adam) and Bryan are her joy.

Wednesday, February 24

Proverbs 30:1–9 and Psalm 23

I am weary, O God. How can I prevail? (Proverbs 30:1c NRSV).

He makes me lie down in green pastures;
 he leads me beside still waters;
 he restores my soul.

He leads me in right paths
 for his name's sake (Psalm 23:2–3 NRSV).

Frances Katrishen

I AM WEARY. Yes, I am so weary, so weary of the pandemic and civil discord. I am weary of the daily rising death toll, sickness, grief, hunger, social injustice, and economic distress for many people all compounded by political and social strife. Wave after wave, it seems to go on forever. My teeth are clenched, my head is throbbing, and my body is tense with the pent-up urge to fight or flee. But, I feel helpless; if I were to fight or flee, I would only make matters worse. I collapse in my chair doom-scrolling the bad news or escaping into TV fantasies. I am not prevailing against these feelings of anguish and despair. I cry out to God. I am so weary, help!

Scripture tells me that God hears my cries and shows me the way out of my anguish. Prayer and restorative walks give me the peace to prevail over despair. I sense Jesus calming the waters and saying: “Peace, I give you my peace.” I experience the peace of still waters and green pastures. I sense God is leading me to do my small part to overcome this calamity by praying and supporting others.

Lord God, your people are weary. We long for our suffering to end. God, lead us out of this tribulation to your restorative peace. God, restore our souls. By the power of the Holy Spirit, instruct each of us in the right way to go. Give us your peace and lead us each and every day. We pray for the time when we all enjoy your holy peace in this world as it is in heaven. Amen.

Frances sings in the adult choir and as a deacon 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 is matriculated at the General Seminary in New York beginning in the fall of 2021 where she will earn a Master's in Arts with a concentration in Spirituality.

Thursday, February 25

Psalm 25

Make your ways known to me, LORD.
 teach me your paths.
 Lead me in your truth (Psalm 25:4-5 CEB).

Lynne Seidel

“TEACH ME YOUR PATHS” was my choice of verse in my high school yearbook. Still, sixty years later, I seek to know God, and keep alert for every glimmer. I love poet Mary Oliver's

“Instructions for living a life:
 Pay attention.
 Be astonished.
 Tell about it.”

God, help us keep on your path, undistracted by all around us today. Amen.



A member of Nassau since 1976, when the family wore red, white and blue for the church photo directory, Lynne loves being part of this one-of-a-kind congregation. She can't wait until her several new joints can walk into the old sanctuary.

Friday, February 26

Genesis 16:1–6

Sarai said to Abram, “You see that the Lord has prevented me from bearing children; go in to my slave-girl; it may be that I shall obtain children by her!”... Abram went in to Hagar, and she conceived; and when Hagar saw that she had conceived, she looked with contempt on her mistress. Then Sarai said to Abram, “May the wrong done to me be on you!”... Abram said to Sarai, “Your slave-girl is in your power; do to her as you please.” Then Sarai dealt harshly with her, and Hagar ran away from her (Genesis 16:2–6 NRSV).

Jonathan C. Shenk

BONO, the frontman of the enduring Irish rock band U2, said: “That the Scriptures are brim full of hustlers, murderers, cowards, adulterers, and mercenaries used to shock me. Now it is a source of great comfort.”

This drama between Abram, Sarai, and Hagar is one such shocking story. And, as in any recounted story, it’s hard to know exactly where the truth lies. In later chapters, does God really instruct Abram to send Hagar and their child Ishmael into the desert where they almost die of thirst (21:12)? Or is Abram simply seeking justification for his own bad choices?

The biblical stories come alive as the living, breathing Word of God as we discover that each character—whether noble or self-serving, and usually both—reflects who we also are. Knowing that the Scriptures unabashedly reflect our common humanity can be a source of comfort, as Bono suggests. The chasm between us and those with whom we feel we have nothing in common is not as vast as we imagine. Regardless of all our screw-ups and self-justifications, God is continually at work within us and through us to serve God’s purposes in the world.

During this Lenten season, as we reflect on Jesus, the Living Word, we encounter God’s unwavering commitment to creating and revealing what right relationships look like. The challenge before us is to release our grasp for power and self-preservation so we are free to fully embrace God’s restoring work in our lives and relationships.

God of truth and grace, reveal to us the fullness of your love and power. Give us strength and courage. Help us to trust and participate in your redeeming work in our lives and in the world. Amen.



Jonathan, a Presbyterian minister, 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, an author. They are avid fans of their son Gabriel's indie rock band, Sonoa.

Saturday, February 27

Psalm 31

Be a rock of refuge for me,
a strong fortress to save me.
You are indeed my rock and my fortress;
for your name's sake, lead me and guide me (Psalm 31:2a-3 NRSV).

Gordon Thomas

A TREE CAN GROW—with considerable difficulty—through a rock, but then “how firm a foundation”! As in this picture from the Sourland Mountains, a rock has guided one tree until that tree has found light and soared upward. We too can use the firm foundation of our faith to lead us and guide us through pandemic darkness toward light.



Strengthen our faith in all that we do. Despite troubles in our world and challenges to our beliefs, help us stay rooted in our faith. Amen.



Gordon Thomas has been teaching and singing with preschoolers for about a third of a century at Nassau Church. Separately, he is a Fellow of the American Physical Society to which he was elected for his scientific papers and a Member of the National Academy of Inventors for his patents. He recently retired as a Professor of Physics at NJIT after work at Bell Labs, Harvard, MIT, and the University of Tokyo. He is currently studying running, and photography.

Second Sunday, February 28

Romans 4:13–25

No distrust made Abraham waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, being fully convinced that God was able to do what God had promised. Therefore his faith “was reckoned to him as righteousness.” Now the words, “it was reckoned to him,” were written not for his sake alone, but for ours also (Romans 4:20–4 NRSV).

Elem Eley

GOD CHOSE ABRAHAM to be the earthly, spiritual parent of all those who do not depend on “the law” for eternal life, who rather choose a life of faith in Jesus. Abram was nearly a hundred years old, his wife Sarai close to the same (clearly beyond child-bearing age), when God promised them a son. Faced with this seemingly impossible prophecy, that Abraham “grew strong in his faith” seems straightforward, but just what is faith? How does one grow strong in it?

I am surely incapable of expounding on the mysteries of faith, but I do

remind us that faith is the gift of God, leading us to a never-ending life of hope and love. We do not achieve faith by accomplishing good works, rather the inverse. This is salvation and the working out of it. This is grace.

In golf, there's a saying that "the better you are, the luckier you get." Consider this: the beginning golfer, employing their best efforts, could potentially hit the ball onto the green, maybe even close to the hole. By contrast, an accomplished golfer routinely lands the ball onto or close to the green. If these two friends play a weekly round together for six weeks - even if neither of them practices or plays except for those six rounds - which is more likely to get a "lucky" hole-in-one? Do you see a correlation here to the believer who diligently engages in a life of faith?

O Lord, keep us humble and empowered, trusting that your gift of faith will move us victoriously through these days of conflict, crisis, and fear. We choose to trust you, even in the face of danger. In the name of Jesus, and for his glory, Amen.



Elem and his wife Miriam Eley have been Nassau 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.

Monday, March 1

Psalm 37

The righteous will inherit the land
and dwell in it forever.

The mouths of the righteous utter wisdom,
and their tongues speak what is just.

The law of their God is in their hearts;

their feet do not slip (Psalm 37:29–31 NRSV).

Julia Hill

READING PSALM 37 over and over I did not really know how to start this devotional. But then it became clear. The phrase “their feet do not slip” caught my attention because it reminded me of what happened at the Capitol in Washington on January 6th. And the lack of authoritative presence at the riot. Where were the authorities? They were letting their feet slip when they did not try harder to stop the riot before it got to the point that it did. That is where they were. But friends, in this moment of darkness we must remember that God put us on this earth for a reason. To speak what is true and what is just. “Their feet do not slip” also has a positive meaning: it means we have been firmly rooted because God is with us. This verse comes to mind: “I can do all things through God who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13). We are held firmly by Our Creator just like trees are held by their mighty roots. So yes, the events of the week of January 6th were traumatic and they did shake us to our core; we must remember that like trees have their roots, we have God who gives us strength and peace. And with that we can continue to rebuild to a brighter and peaceful future.

Lord God, we know you to be our strength and our peacemaker. Use the events in Washington as a way to open our eyes to the nation we are and to the nation we need to be. One of peace, justice and acceptance. Guide us on paths of righteousness and equality so that in the coming weeks, we can feel like we are starting to turn a page to a brighter better future. In your name, Amen.

Julia is a junior at Princeton High School. She serves on the Children and Family Ministries Committee. She and her family have been members of the Nassau Church since 2013. She is active in church life from chancel dramas and Christmas pageants to vacation Bible school and the Cardigans (cardmaking group). When she is not on Zoom, she can be found in her room singing and dancing to her favorite Broadway show Newsies or her favorite Netflix show, “Julie and the Phantoms.”

Tuesday, March 2

Hebrews 11:1–3, 13–19

Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for. By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible (Hebrews 11:1–3 NIV).

John Thurber

GROWING UP, I heard inspiring stories about courageous Christians whose actions shaped my understanding of faith in action. Among them was Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who wrote *The Cost of Discipleship* and supported the Barmen Declaration as calls for a more faithful obedience to Christ in the midst of the growing fascism and racism of Nazi Germany. The more recent examples of Dr. King, Archbishop Tutu and so many others confirm that faith in action can lead us to love with actions and in truth as we confront evil.

Over this past year, we have been reminded how deeply racism is ingrained in our country. The timeline of Black deaths caused by police violence grows endlessly. Confederate flags and racist symbols were on display at the Capitol during the January 6th insurrection. The legacy of white supremacy and racial caste lives on, most recently in efforts to invalidate Black votes in swing states. Racism is our original sin. Black lives matter.

Every form of racism is contrary to the will of God, yet racism remains pervasive. What does our faith require? The challenge for us is to start by examining the racism in our own lives and to heed the call to participate in the struggle for racial justice throughout our community, across the nation and around the world. Being church today means overcoming racism by establishing right relationships everywhere as we strive to create the Beloved Community.

O Lord, thank you for making one human family of all the peoples of the earth. We confess that we have failed to hear the voices of our Black and Brown neighbors crying out for racial justice. Help us to not become weary in doing good, and give us the strength to respond to those cries through courageous acts of discipleship. Through Jesus Christ, our risen Lord, Amen.

John is a ruling elder on Session and chair of the Cemetery Committee. He and his wife Connie Cloonan joined Nassau Church in 1995 and live in Lawrence Township. They have two adult children (both married), and three grandchildren – all of whom bring them great joy.

Wednesday, March 3

John 12:36–43

Nevertheless among the chief rulers, also many believed in Jesus; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue. For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God (John 12:42–43 KJV).

Bart Jackson

THE EXCUSE: “Faith and belief are very private, individual matters. ‘Tain’t nobody’s business but my own.”

WHAT I REALLY MEAN: Of course I’m not going to go telling everyone that I am a devoted Christian. They’ll think I am some unthinking, Bible-thumping, glassy-eyed slave to a creed outworn, mindless. I need to impress friends and important strangers that I’m a profound, independent thinker. (Note the sweet Satanic seduction here: he’s got me taking a stab at perceiving other peoples’ perceptions of my belief – and fear gets planted.)

Don’t get me wrong. I give to the poor and hungry, try to lift the spirits of all those I meet, share all that joy. And my prayers reflect immense gratitude for the blessings lavished on me as I stumble along Christ’s path. But my reputation – they might cast me out.

Then suddenly I harken the gospel of P.T. Barnum: “Without promotion, something terrible happens: Nothing.” All that joy God pours into my soul...all those blessings seen shining through me, all fall dead. God’s light gets viewed as mere personality quirks. By not connecting my deeds with their true Author, I’m denying others the greatest gift, the good news of what Christ’s way has to offer. Perhaps it’s time I began sharing a little promotion about Christ’s path to God. He may not need it, but my friends sure do. Besides, if you spend a great deal of time worrying about doing something that will make you appear foolish, you’ve already done it.

Dear God, let the light of your presence and your blessings shine forth in my life, and grant me the courage to proudly and loudly boast in you, the source of all my joy and strength. Amen.

Bart sings lustily at the computer screen with the rest of Nassau choir’s distant choristers; pontificates ceaselessly at the Men’s Breakfast Zoom; and enjoys phone chats with the many warm & intriguing friends the Jacksons have made during their 16 years at Nassau. He is the founder of the Prometheus Social Enterprise Awards, CEO of Prometheus Publishing, Host of The Art of the CEO radio show, and best known as the husband of Lorraine.

Thursday, March 4

Exodus 19:1–9a

Then Moses went up to God; the Lord called to him from the mountain, saying, “Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the Israelites: You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession out of all the peoples” (Exodus 19:3–5a NRSV).

So Moses came, summoned the elders of the people, and set before them all these words that the Lord had commanded him. The people all answered as one: “Everything that the Lord has spoken we will do” (Exodus 19:7–8a NRSV).

Trevor Thorton

IF YOU HAVE READ the rest of the story, you may be tempted to laugh at the Israelites as they “answer as one” that they will do all the Lord commanded. Perhaps promises are more easily made while looking down at the world from the safety of eagles’ wings? The Israelites are such a painfully accurate picture of humanity sometimes. How many promises have I made on the mountain top that I have broken in the valley?

If you are like me, the past year has been a trying time filled with uncertainty, sleepless nights, and heightened emotions on all sides. I found myself making promises: to fight for justice, to advocate for those who are oppressed, and to search for ways to serve essential workers and people who have lost their jobs. But in the day-to-day reality of my life (mostly spent looking at a computer screen), it is easy to lose sight of these important promises.

As we face the anniversary of our world being turned upside down by COVID-19, I invite you to take a few minutes right now to ponder the promises and intentions that are deeply etched on your own heart.

I find comfort in the words of Paul: “it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill God’s good purpose” (Philippians 2:13).

Lord, may our words and actions shine light where there is darkness and show love where there is hate. Amen.

Trevor and his partner Thomas VanWart, live with their dog Luna in Kingston. He is on faculty at the New School for Music Study, and on staff at the New School’s umbrella organization, the Frances Clark Center for Keyboard Pedagogy. In the last year, much of his non-teaching work consisted of creating, curating, and coordinating the translation of resources for piano teachers as they moved their instruction online.

Friday, March 5

Psalm 50

But to the wicked God says:

“What right have you to recite my statutes,
or take my covenant on your lips?

You give your mouth free rein for evil,
and your tongue frames deceit.

These things you have done and I have been silent;
you thought that I was one just like yourself.

But now I rebuke you, and lay the charge before you” (Psalm 50:16, 19, 21 NRSV).

Karen Brown

IWRITE THIS DEVOTIONAL on the day of President Biden’s inauguration, praying for healing but worried about where our sadly divided nation will be by Lent.

Psalm 50 speaks of judgment, of God’s judgment against the wicked. I have fought all my life against being a judgmental person, and I used to struggle with verses like these. I always believed that we should try to understand and be tolerant of those with different views and practices than our own. What I have learned over the last four years, however, is that there is a place for judgement. There is an objective standard, a line in the sand, and actions and beliefs that cross that line must be judged. We must be willing to stand up and say, “This is wrong.” White supremacy is wrong. The spread of disinformation is wrong. Incitements to violence are wrong. Refusal to take the actions necessary to combat a deadly pandemic—that is wrong. As a Christian, I am not called to tolerate these actions. There are some things people can do, can believe, that I am called to judge. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote during the Nazi era, “Silence in the face of evil is itself evil: God will not hold us guiltless. Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act.” The challenge, of course, is to draw the line correctly, where Jesus would draw it, so that you stand against evil without straying into intoler-

ance. That is the lesson I hope our nation can learn.

Dearest Lord, please guide us in our struggles to love our neighbor without tolerating wrong. Help us to draw our lines firmly but carefully, guided by your scripture and your spirit. Amen.

Karen and her husband James Takasugi have been members of Nassau since 1995. She has served as a deacon and a member of the Adult Education Committee, and is currently on the Mission and Outreach Committee. Her day job involves working in the biotech industry to help develop drugs for cancer patients.

Saturday, March 6

Psalm 51

Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.
Do not cast me from your presence
or take your Holy Spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of your salvation
and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me (Psalm 51:10–12 NIV).

Lois Foley

REFLECTION HAS BEEN MEANINGFUL to many of us these last months. Days of quiet solitude have provided me ample time to look back at my life. While we cannot turn back the hands of time to erase mistakes, through our relationship with Christ we have a lifelong companion who has seen it all. His love allows us to face our mistakes and provides the promise of a different path if we open our hearts and lives to him, whether new to the faith or not. We regularly separate ourselves from God, just by virtue of our human nature. Even so, God waits us out every single time we foolishly believe that we can go it alone. No need for revisionist history. He wants to walk next to us with an outstretched hand and with forgiveness.

We will all experience sickness, great loss and grief as we move through life. None of us will escape. Yet, with the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives, we will never walk through any of those situations by ourselves. In the quietest hours and days of our lives now when many feel the most isolated, he sustains us and gives hope of renewal. He restores us with the joy of salvation through his boundless patience, understanding, companionship and love. For me, though it may have taken 55 years of ups and downs to fully grasp that the peace, which has overtaken me since I have been willing to do so, is like no other.

God, make us willing and open to accept your presence in our daily lives, to accept your guidance and your love. Grant us peace and renewed hope as we move through life from this day forward. Amen.



Lois has been a member of Nassau Church since March of 2018. She enjoys her participation in the Church Mouse program and has participated in several of Nassau's small groups. Lois is a family law paralegal to a New Brunswick firm. She enjoys distance walking and is mom to grown children Meghan, Rachel (husband Adam) and Bryan. Although not yet a grandmother, she loves her daily texts and Facetimes with 12 great nieces and nephews who always bring smiles.

Third Sunday, March 7

Psalm 19

John 2:13–22

Jesus said to the dove sellers [in the temple], “Get these things out of here! Don’t make my Father’s house a place of business.” His disciples remembered that it is written, Passion for your house consumes me (John 2:16–17 CEB).

Joyce MacKichan Walker

JESUS’ DISCIPLES are remembering a lament psalm, a desperate prayer of petition and complaint to God. The psalm writer is overwhelmed by those who hate and insult the psalmist because of love for God and God’s house. “Because passion for your house has consumed me, the insults of those who insult you have fallen on me!” (Psalm 69:9 CEB).

Here is Jesus, angrily turning the tables on the profiteers and reclaiming God’s house of worship for its rightful purpose. Those who insult God by their actions will indeed turn their insults on Jesus. Jesus’ passion will indeed bring down on him hatred and insult, resentment and jealousy, danger and, ultimately, death.

But it’s early days in John’s Gospel. There’s been a wedding—if you stayed late you were there for the best wine. That’s it. Well, not everything. There was that call, personally, by name, to follow Jesus. And that promise, “You will see greater things than these” (John 1:50).

Followers of Jesus remember, “Passion for your house consumes me.” Will we keep ours through a pandemic in which God’s house stands ready, but not yet? In which God’s house is our easy chair, a side table with a scavenged bit of bread and apple juice, and a clicked link? In which God’s house—where our presence is needed—is the neighbor’s house with back rent, the hungry’s empty cupboard, the refugee’s cold tent? Where will you witness to your passion for God’s house in these days?

Consume us, O God, with passion for the community that is the body of Christ. May our longing increase as we open our hands and our hearts to a world of need, for it is you who sends us to serve. Amen.

Since Joyce retired as minister of education and mission in 2018, she is enjoying teaching, writing, reading mysteries and other genres, and traveling COVID-19 safe with Michael in their second-hand RV-van. It's easy to social distance in state and national parks and campgrounds! She misses in-person worship and hands-on mission engagement, but loves daily outdoor walks, virtual adult education programs, and opportunities to learn new things.

Monday, March 8

Psalm 58

Do your rulers indeed speak justly?

Do you judge people with equity? (Psalm 58:1 NIV).

Joshua Stucky

The first question the psalmist asks in this verse is a question that I think many of us have been asking ourselves the past few months, and probably the past few years. With the major change in leadership that has been happening in this country, this is an important question that we need to keep asking ourselves. We cannot allow ourselves to think that the fights for racial justice, social justice, and economic equality are over yet. We must continue to show God's love to everyone we encounter, no matter how different we may be from them. Most importantly, we must continue to peacefully spread the peace, joy, love, and equality of God's kingdom in our homes, our towns, our states, our countries, and the world.

The next question the psalmist asks is more personal, asking us to look inside ourselves to see if we personally are living out the example that God sets for us. The call for equity is especially important as our country itself cries out for the exact same thing. As we can see through Jesus' example, change starts at an individual level. Only by first confronting our own in-

iniquities—in the way we think, speak, and act—can we help further God’s kingdom in this world.

Lord, let me help your kingdom come and your will be done here on earth as it is in heaven. Let me be the daily bread of others so that they too can feel your love. Let my conscience not be replaced by a faceted view of this world, but instead let your word give me conscience, so that I may have eyes to see and ears to hear the troubles of this world, and hands and feet to help. Amen.

Joshua is a junior at Princeton High School who enjoys spending time working at the local bike shop, making all manner of things out of cardboard, and spending time with friends and family—safely, of course! He is grateful for all of the wonderful opportunities that Nassau has given him to grow and explore his faith. He wishes you all good health and safety as the pandemic continues.

Tuesday, March 9

Psalm 61

Hear my cry, O God;
listen to my prayer.
From the end of the earth I call to you,
when my heart is faint.
Lead to the rock that is higher than I;
for you are my refuge,
a strong tower against the enemy.
Let me abide in your tent forever,
find refuge under the shelter of your wings (Psalm 61:1–4 NRSV).

Jan Giles

THE PSALMIST IS ALONE, AFRAID.

Comfort is found in the promise of God’s presence, protection, to life in the shelter of the Lord, the shadow of the “sun-bathing” wing. The covenant’s promise calms and comforts the psalmist.

In all, not just loneliness and despair. *In all our life*, one can be in the

shelter of the Lord. It is there, there in our days, before our eyes, in all of the creator's world. Our Lord wishes us to ask and be in this love. *Knock and the door will be opened for you* (Matthew 7:7 NRSV).

We must accept and take shelter given as God deems for us, beyond how we have formed or imagined that shelter to be, open to the gifts and grace of God.

When I listen, quiet myself and allow all of me to observe, there are multitudes of drops of God's grace, love everywhere and I relish and try to catch more drops... create a puddle. I am astonished by the encompassing presence of the Lord for us to witness and accept. The glorious peace in that space pulls me in and I crave the euphoria of this splendor and love.

Then I dissect the how, the connections and creation of the one small piece I have held.

I am unable to make sense and I abandon reason and fall to my faith. I revel in the glory of the ubiquitous omnipotent love of God and I fall into the swaddled warmth of love.

Dear Lord, I humbly pray, I am thankful for trials and tribulations, joy and elations, discoveries, challenges, and path finding. Your shelter allows me to live and grow in love and life, protected by your wings of grace. Amen.

Jan was raised in Cleveland, Ohio in a home filled with quiet, living faith and love. Through the years of raising her children at Nassau Church, she has found a reservoir of faith she had not known. She is inspired and led by that faith. Although she often falters and falls, her church community and gifts like writing Lenten devotionals, constantly return her to her journey in faith.

Wednesday, March 10

Mark 11:15–19

On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple courts and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves, and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts (Mark 11:15–16 NIV).

Jay Dunn

EVERY CHRISTIAN is familiar with this episode of Christ's ministry. Jesus discovered that the temple of God had been turned into a 1st century version of a shopping mall and had ceased to be a house of worship. According to Mark, and two of the other Gospel writers, this occurred only a few days before he was betrayed, arrested and crucified. I've always suspected that the bribe paid to Judas to betray our Lord came from one of the evicted merchants.

I have been fortunate enough to visit the Vatican twice in my life. Even though I am not Roman Catholic, I nonetheless marveled at the expanse dedicated to the Christian ministry. In particular, gazing at the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel took my breath away.

But the moment I left the Vatican the ambiance was totally different. The blocks around the Vatican are filled with souvenir and gift shops. Vendors roam the streets, hawking everything from postcards to jewelry. Everyone is trying to separate visitors from their money. Is this really different from the temple in Jerusalem that Jesus encountered?

Father, help us to remember that our love of God should never be impacted by our desire for wealth. Help us to treasure that which is holy and never confuse it with that which is monetary. Amen.

Jay is a semi-retired sports writer. His baseball column appears each week in *The Trentonian*.

Thursday, March 11

Psalm 69

Save me, God, because the waters have reached my neck!

I have sunk into deep mud. My feet can't touch the bottom!

I have entered deep water; the flood has swept me up.

I am tired of crying. My throat is hoarse.

My eyes are exhausted with waiting for my God! (Psalm 69:1–3 CEB).

Anne Kuhn

I had always skipped over Psalm 69 in favor of more familiar, briefer Psalms. Now, having read it thoughtfully, it seems to have come at just the right time, a fitting description of my emotional journey over the past year. In this song of lament, David cries out to God with astonishing intensity and honesty. Reading these verses over and over, I wondered what must have been happening to him. I learned that some biblical scholars believe this song was written after the destruction of Jerusalem and the imprisonment of the Jewish people by Nebuchadnezzar, around 587 BCE.

David's song begins with the plea of an utterly helpless and hopeless person. His emotion intensifies with expressions of frustration and anger (*More numerous than the hairs on my head are those who hate me for no reason* v. 4a), repentance (*God, you know my foolishness, my wrongdoings aren't hidden from you* v. 5), empathy (*Don't let those who seek you be disgraced because of me* v.6b) and humiliation (*I wept while I fasted—even for that I was insulted...people made fun of me* vv. 10, 11b). At the end, exhausted and emotionally spent, David's mood shifts. He realizes that God is still there, God is faithful and will never abandon his people (*You who seek God—let your hearts beat strong again because the Lord listens to the needy and doesn't despise his captives* vv. 32b, 33). In the fullness of God's own time, God will restore the people to their homeland. With this reassurance, David gives thanks and praise to God.

God, we are discouraged, tired from crying, and exhausted. Hear our prayers and grant us peace in knowing that no matter what happens in our world, you are faithful and loving and will never abandon us. Amen.

Anne is a certified executive coach and HR consultant practicing in Greater Philadelphia, New York City and central New Jersey. She joined Nassau Church in 2008 and is a deacon, a member of the Human Resources Committee, and co-chair of the Mass Incarceration Task Force. She is married to Jeff Kuhn and the mother of Paul (who lives in Cincinnati) and Sara (in Atlanta).

Friday, March 12

Psalms 70 and 71

Make haste, O God, to deliver me; make haste to help me, O Lord. Mine enemies speak against me (Psalm 70:1 KJV).

Mine enemies speak against me; and they that lay wait for my soul take counsel together (Psalm 71:10 KJV).

Mark Herr

NOTHING TERRIFIES more than vulnerability. You alone are at the mercy of classmates. You're old in a job market that cuts out candidates at 55. You're gay in a sea of straights. You're the only Black woman in the office. You're the only white kid on the team.

C'mon, God, get the lead out. I'm dying here.

Thou art my help and my deliverer; O Lord, make no tarrying (Psalm 70:5b KJV).

No tarrying, Lord. On the hop. On the double. In a New York minute. I NEED YOU NOW, GOD!

In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust: let me never be put to confusion (Psalm 71:1 KJV).

I'm depending on you, God.

Incline thine ear unto me and save me (Psalm 71:2b KJV) Thou art my rock and my fortress (Psalm 71:3c KJV).

You're more than just my rock; you're all I've got. You've seen me through broken hearts and busted wallets. You've nursed me back from failure, from social faux pas and academic face plants. You've walked with me through cancer's shadow of death and don't let them kid you, God, I feared. I fear, every day, in ways limited only by my imagination.

What's that, Lord? You're with me? Yes, I can do this now.

I will go in the strength of the Lord God (Psalm 71:16a KJV). Let all those that seek thee rejoice and...say continually, "Let God be magnified!" (Psalm 70:4 KJV).

Deliver us. O my God, out of the hands of the wicked, out of the hands of the unrighteous and from cruel men and women. Even more, deliver us from ourselves. Before we begin to pluck the mote out of our brothers' and sisters' eyes, make us remember the beams in our own. Save us from the others, O God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but most of all, save us from us. Amen.

Mark is getting ready to mark his 35th year as a member of Nassau Church. He is easily the worst dressed parishioner every Sunday, particularly when he sits next to his wife Rachel.

Saturday, March 13

Numbers 20:22–29

Take Aaron and his son Eleazar, and bring them up Mount Hor. Strip Aaron of his clothes and put them on Eleazar his son. Then Aaron will die there (Num-

bers 20:25–26 CEB).

Anne Thomsen Lord

AS A CHILD, I remember thinking how unfair it seemed for Moses and Aaron to be denied entry to the Promised Land. The brothers made mistakes, but they led the Israelites for forty years. Surely, their good service outweighed the bad. Today I see a more generous God than my elementary school self did.

Early this year, a YMCA co-worker wondered out loud, “Hiltrud hasn’t been here in a while.” He was right. She came to swim almost every morning, and we hadn’t seen her since Christmas.

I dismissed his concern thinking she might be spending more time at her daughter’s over the holidays. She’d probably be back tomorrow.

Instead, the next day, I learned the YMCA had been notified: Hiltrud died on December 27th. Her last check-in was the 22nd.

For years Hiltrud was part of my daily life. Suddenly, she was gone. I’d never exchange “good mornings” with her again or hear another story of her childhood in war-torn Europe.

Aaron didn’t make it to the Promised Land, but he was given the gift of notice. God revealed when Aaron’s earthly life would end, and he spent his final moments on a mountain with family.

Hiltrud is one of many whom I have seen for the last time not knowing it was the last time. Life is fragile. Most of us will not be as lucky as Aaron and know so much about our impending deaths. I don’t know if I wished Hiltrud a Merry Christmas. I hope so.

Dear God, Help us recognize your gifts. Amen.

Anne is a deacon, ruling elder, and mother of four. She works early in the morning as a lifeguard at the Princeton YMCA, and she loves her swimmers very much.



Fourth Sunday, March 14

Ephesians 2:1–10

You are saved by God’s grace because of your faith. This salvation is God’s gift. It’s not something you possessed. It’s not something you did that you can be proud of. 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 (Ephesians 2:8–10 CEB).

Rebekah Sterlacci

THE PAST YEAR has been a lot. It’s like if you could put everything awful you could imagine happening with everything awful that you never imagined happening, then you might be able to begin to describe the past year—but even then you might not come close. We are helpless. We are in need of saving. In our faith, we come to God, grateful for the gift of salvation.

In an attempt to simplify and structure my reflecting over the past year, I’ve started writing haiku poetry in my journal. Here’s a haiku pairing to reflect on this passage from Ephesians:

You, my friend, are saved.
It’s not about you, your work.
God’s grace is a gift.

Have faith. Practice it.
Even in challenging times.
With thanks, go do good.

Lord God, thank you for your grace and for saving us. Even when everything feels strange, confusing, and painful, we know that you have given us the gift of salvation and that we can trust in your plans for us. Amen.



Rebekah is the District Supervisor of Visual and Performing Arts for Piscataway Township Public Schools and the Artistic Director of the Piscataway Choral Collective. Rebekah and her husband Jason (and almost seven-year-old Jonas) have been a part of Nassau Church for nine years. At Nassau, Rebekah is chair of the Worship and Arts Committee. Rebekah loves cooking vegan food, drinking espresso and IPAs, practicing yoga, running/hiking, and curating Spotify playlists.

Monday, March 15

Exodus 15:22–27

Then Moses led Israel from the Red Sea and they went into the Desert of Shur. For three days they traveled in the desert without finding water. When they came to Marah, they could not drink its water because it was bitter. (That is why the place is called Marah.) So the people grumbled against Moses, saying, “What are we to drink?”

Then Moses cried out to the Lord, and the Lord showed him a piece of wood. He threw it into the water, and the water became fit to drink (Exodus 15:22–25 NIV).

Benjamin Yeh

ISN'T IT WONDERFUL to have that piece of wood, which could turn the bitter water edible, a handy water filter you may carry wherever you go, with the assurance of water fit to drink? But, even with that from God and the manna and the quail afterwards, the Israelites kept on grumbling, arguing, complaining along the journey for 40 years!

Father Alfred D'Souza once said, “For a long time it seemed to me that life was just about to begin, real life. But there was always some obstacle in the way, something to be gotten through first, some unfinished business, time still to be served, a debt to be paid....At last it dawned on me that these obstacles were MY LIFE.”

Yes, these obstacles, problems, challenges are our life! And, luckily, we have choices: either to long for the real life to begin sometime later, and keep on grumbling, arguing, and complaining along the way until the last minute—or to walk with our Lord now, asking for his mercy, power, and wisdom, to pick up the piece of wood God has shown us, to turn every drop of bitter water and obstacles into soul-quenching drink and blessings.

Dear Lord, forgive us for squandering your grace and gift, blind to your omnipresent love and power. Help us to face life's obstacles with courage and wisdom, witnessing your power to turn bitter water into sweet springs. Amen.

Benjamin and his wife Emily have been members of Nassau Church since 2014, when they moved from Taiwan to Princeton. He is currently a ruling elder and serves on the Human Resources Committee. Emily serves on the Children and Family Ministries Committee. They have two children, Jonathan and Symphony.

Tuesday , March 16

Numbers 20:1–13; Psalm 82

They quarreled with Moses and said, “If only we had died when our brothers fell dead before the Lord! Why did you bring the Lord’s community into this desert, that we and our livestock should die here? Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to this terrible place? (Numbers 20:3–5a NIV).

How long will you defend the unjust
and show partiality to the wicked?
Defend the weak and the fatherless;
maintain the cause of the poor and the oppressed.
Rescue the weak and needy;
deliver them from the hand of the wicked (Psalm 82:2, 3 NIV).

Larry Alphs

THE READINGS FOR TODAY speak poignantly of our time. We have been in lockdown for a year. It is hard. Friends have died and we could

not be with their families to comfort them. Grandchildren have been born but not hugged by their grandparents. Jobs have been lost. Rents and mortgages cannot be paid. Schooling has been disrupted. Social gatherings have been curtailed. Church services are virtual. We are lost and afraid. When will this be over? Who will hear our cries?

As a youth hearing the stories of the Israelites in the wilderness, I wondered how they could be so faithless. They had heard the Lord's promises. They had Moses and Aaron and Miriam among them. Why didn't they believe and trust in the Lord's goodness? But reading more carefully, we learn that Miriam had just died. Instead of the fertile fields of Egypt, they were marooned in a desert, hungry and thirsty.

Given the events of the past 12 months, we can empathize with the Israelites and their cries for salvation. They resonate with cries we have heard from friends and family and, at times, ourselves. For some these cries focus on the hardships of the COVID pandemic. For others these cries are added to generational cries for deliverance from poverty and injustice. We too pray for deliverance. We pray for strength to the weary and increase of power to the weak so that once again we can run and not grow weary, walk and not be faint.

Lord, our Rock, our Redeemer, hear our cries. Call us by our name.

In this time of need we look to you for salvation. Save us.

You have promised that in our times of trial you will provide a way out so that we can stay standing.

Help us to stand.

Kyrie eleison

Have mercy upon us.

Kyrie eleison

Amen.

Larry has occupied a balcony seat at Nassau since 2007. A farmer, pharmacologist, psychiatrist and scientist, he waits patiently for this crisis to pass, nour-

ished by audio and video calls to his family spread across the globe...rejoicing in his grandchildren...looking for a new day when we can be together again.

Wednesday, March 17

Isaiah 60:15–22

Whereas you have been forsaken and hated,
with no one passing through,
I will make you majestic forever,
a joy from age to age.

...and you shall know that I, the Lord, am your Savior
and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob (Isaiah 60:15, 16b NRSV).

Cynthia Moorhead

THE ISRAELITES were despised, wandering, and longing for a return to Zion. They were a people without a home and hated wherever they went. The prophet Isaiah tells them the Lord will save them and make them “majestic forever.”

People throughout history have claimed this promise: the marginalized and destitute, Black slaves in the antebellum South, persecuted Jewish prisoners in Nazi concentration camps, immigrants risking their lives traveling to a safer home.

And now our world is suffering the horrors of a pandemic. All of us are seeking the promise of this saving grace. Isaiah’s words also tell us “to know that I, the Lord, am your Savior and your Redeemer.” This is our part to play. These words are our light in the darkness.

Dear God, in depths of despair, in shouts of joy, help us to know that you are our Savior and our Redeemer. In Jesus name, we pray. Amen.

Cynthia is a long-time member of Nassau Church. With her husband Jim, she is part of three generations now actively involved in our congregation. She has been teaching three- and four-year-olds in church school for more years than

she can remember.

Thursday, March 18

Psalm 92

It is good to give thanks to the Lord,
to sing praises to your name, O Most High;
to declare your steadfast love in the morning,
and your faithfulness by night.

For you, O Lord, have made me glad by your work;
at the works of your hands I sing for joy (Psalm 92:1-2, 4 NRSV).

Nancy Prince

IT IS NECESSARY for me to give thanks to the Lord, to notice and to speak gratitude. This morning on my walk out-of-doors I felt inspired to really pay attention to all of nature around me. I felt a connection to the hymn, “This Is My Father’s World”, a hymn I learned as a child in Sunday School at my village church. “...of rocks and trees, of skies and seas, his hand the wonders wrought.”

The outdoor world of Skillman this morning was beautiful. The blue sky kept increasing as the clouds drifted away. The scenery was a display of winter plants and trees, yet worthy of being noticed. I saw crystals of remnants of snow at the edge of the path I traced with my footsteps. Even ice particles are worthy of notice.

I admired the professional care of the landscapers who maintain the lawns and the planting fields beyond the cultivated areas. I felt appreciation for the workers who faithfully and skillfully create a most attractive outdoor visual effect.

During this time of the pandemic the walks in nature have been inspiring and restorative for me. I have benefited socially and spiritually when I have made the walks with special walking partners.

Gracious and most loving God, thank you for your abundant and unceasing love for all of life. Guide us in our daily lives to show your love and to do your will at all times. Amen.

Nancy is a retired middle school teacher. She has served as a ruling elder and a deacon. She sings with the Nassau Church Choir.

Friday, March 19

Psalm 95

For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture,
and the sheep of his hand.

O that today you would listen to his voice! (Psalm 95:7 NRSV).

Bob and Nina Seaman

THE YEAR 2020 WAS FILLED WITH CHALLENGES, and, so far, 2021 seems to promise more of the same. As we look at the state of our nation: a raging pandemic, massive unemployment, civil unrest, we ask, “Where are you, God? Why is this happening?”

The psalmist has words of comfort. We are in God’s hands. We are God’s people.

The psalmist also has an admonition. Listen for God’s voice. God is reminding us that we are called to be disciples, to feed the poor, visit the prisoner, welcome the stranger, pray for the sick and grieving. In the words of Micah, “to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God (6:8 NRSV).

God has spoken, let us open our hearts and minds to God’s calling.

Lord, help us to be those who listen for your calling and put your words into action. Give us strength for the living of these days. Amen.

Nina, a retired teacher, and Bob, a retired clergy, live in Plainsboro and long to get back to their summer home in Nova Scotia.

Saturday, March 20

John 12:1–11

Then Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil (John 12:3 NKJV).

Symphony Tsai

JESUS DIED ON THE CROSS FOR US, and something we can do in return is to make God our top priority. We should be willing to do anything for him, just like how Mary spared no expense to show her love for Jesus. She poured out the most expensive bottle of perfume on Jesus' feet and then wiped them with her hair, when she could've sold the perfume for quite a lot of money.

I know it is difficult to put God as priority, especially when we have so many things to pursue in our daily life. Our attention is easily distracted and our worries may carry us away. I wish I could have more time with God and he would guide me and lead me among the noises and distractions.

Dear God, please help me learn how to put you as priority. Guide me and lead me, especially when I am confused by the distractions. Amen.

Symphony is a sixth grader at Princeton Day School. She has been at Nassau Church since kindergarten and began singing in choir at third grade. She enjoys drawing and playing the violin.

Fifth Sunday, March 21

Jeremiah 31:31–34

“This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time,” declares the Lord.

“I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts.

I will be their God, and they will be my people.

No longer will they teach their neighbor,

or say to one another, ‘Know the Lord,’

because they will all know me,

from the least of them to the greatest,” declares the Lord.

“For I will forgive their wickedness

and will remember their sins no more” (Jeremiah 31:33–34 NIV).

Brandy Alexander

I WEAR A BUTTON from Princeton Presbyterians on my coat that says “Do Justice,” and it amazes me how many people comment on it. “Do Justice” is more than a button, a hashtag, a banner at 61 Nassau Street, or even now a facemask. I remember these words from Micah being introduced to my mind, and I believe that they are now also written on my heart.

Votes for Women. I Am a Man. ¡Sí se puede! Yes we can! Make love, not war. Ain’t I a Woman? No human being is illegal. Love is Love. Nothing about us without us. We are the 99%. Black Lives Matter. Say Their Names.

These are just a snapshot of powerful slogans displayed on posters and written on the hearts of social justice advocates in the past century. They are also manifestations of “Do Justice” for many people of faith.

I feel so weary at times, especially after a year filled with such blatant iniquity and injustice amid a pandemic. Thus, I found myself reading and rereading this passage. How, God? When? I am more aware than ever of how much I need to learn. Perhaps how much more I need to unlearn. Of the incredible and ongoing task we face as individuals, as families, and as a congregation to continue dismantling racism and stand in solidarity with

the oppressed and historically marginalized. Yet, Jeremiah's words offer an assurance and a promise that God sees our struggles and we are forever God's people.

God of our weary years, God of our silent tears, forgive us for our wickedness and sins. Open our minds and our hearts to your teachings and to the voices of our neighbors. Help us all, from the least to the greatest, to truly know you and to courageously live out the challenge of the Gospel. Amen.

Brandy is a member of the Adult Education Committee and a licensed social worker privileged to serve the Latinx immigrant community in New Brunswick. She and her husband Francisco Pelaez-Diaz began attending Nassau in 2012, and now together with their young children Oliver and Max, they continue to worship regularly and build the beloved community with our faith partners at Witherspoon Street Presbyterian Church, Westminster Presbyterian Church in Trenton, and Princeton Theological Seminary.

Monday, March 22

2 Corinthians 3:4–11

You show that you are a letter from Christ, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God....Now if the ministry that brought death, which was engraved in letters on stone, came with glory...will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious? (2 Corinthians 3:3a, 7a and 8 NIV).

Sheri Dunham Haan

GOD TAUGHT ME THE MEANING of this not long ago. I was shopping in a favorite Princeton store. The checkout woman had customers at a small counter for which she was also responsible. While I waited to pay for my purchase, several customers at the counter demanded her attention. Exasperated, I became a bit surly; well, maybe two bits surly. After I said a few pointed words, I paid and left.

But God wouldn't have it. The hound of heaven pestered me relentlessly. Three days later I returned to the store. Fortunately, the clerk was there and

without other customers. She said hello and mentioned that she remembered me. No surprise there. I apologized for the way I spoke to her. I told her that I am a Christian and know that she is also one of God's creatures whom he loves. I asked her if she would forgive me. Momentary silence. Finally, with tears in her eyes, she looked up and nodded yes and thanked me for coming back. I left with a poignant reminder that I am a living letter of the Holy God.

Dear Father, open my mind and heart to be aware that I am always and everywhere your living letter. May your love through me be visible, palpable and compelling. Amen.

Sheri is the executive director emerita of Christian Schools International in Grand Rapids, Michigan and author of children's books published by Baker Book House.

Tuesday, March 23

Acts 2:14–24

These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

“In the last days, God says,
 I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
 Your sons and daughters will prophesy,
 your young men will see visions,
 your old men will dream dreams” (Acts 2:15–17 NIV).

Francisco Pelaez-Diaz

THE EXPERIENCE of being part of a minoritized group since I immigrated to the U.S. made me acutely aware of how difficult it is to listen to others who we perceive as being different from us. I remember that my reaction to cultural differences during my first months in this country was judgment. “Americans don't care about their elderly parents!” I thought

when I learned that parents are usually put in nursing homes rather than kept at home. It was until I asked questions and was really open to listening that I came to understand better (not totally, but better).

When the apostle Peter said, “These people are not drunk, as you suppose,” he was addressing the judgment made by some of the witnesses of the miracle of the tongues that took place on Pentecost. While some others listened in amazement and genuinely asked questions seeking to understand, the ones to whom Peter was referring had made fun of Jesus’ followers and declared, “They have had too much wine,” which was a prejudgment that showed their lack of willingness to listen. Peter applied a reality check (it was only 9 a.m.!) and redirected their attention to the essence of the event: God’s action can take place in the most unexpected ways and through the most unlikely people: women, youth, and the elderly.

When we judge before listening, we might make mistakes, disregard other people’s experiences, marginalize entire groups of people, miss very important lessons, and risk minimizing God’s action in the world.

Merciful God, we come to you fully acknowledging our human condition, plagued with tendencies that privilege our own interests, views, and experiences above and against those of others who we regard as different from us. Help us understand that by clinging to our tendencies we miss seeing and understanding your action in this world, which oftentimes is embodied in those we consider not only different from us but also unworthy of our attention. Help us to listen, see, and understand. Amen.



Francisco is a PhD candidate in Religion and Society at Princeton Theological Seminary. Francisco is originally from Mexico and has worked as an ordained pastor among immigrants in a multiethnic/multiracial PC(USA) congregation in Dayton, Ohio. Francisco, his wife Brandy, and their two young sons, Max and Oliver, have been part of Nassau Church and its two sister/partner churches, Witherspoon Street Presbyterian and Westminster Presbyterian since 2012.

Wednesday, March 24

Psalm 107

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
his love endures forever.

Let the redeemed of the Lord tell their story—
those he redeemed from the hand of the foe,
those he gathered from the lands,
from east and west, from north and south (Psalm 107:1–3 NIV).

Jenna Stucky

SOMETIMES IT'S HARD to believe we should be thanking and praising God when things aren't going our way. Just the other day, I found out one of my closest friends would be moving. I didn't want to believe that they would be leaving. Later that night I questioned if this was all part of God's plan. Why is this happening? I had to assure myself things would all end up working out, but what if they didn't? Then I thought, maybe God doesn't plan for these types of situations to happen, but is there to help us through them. The stronger we hurt, the greater God's love is. At times it may seem like God's forgotten us, but God never leaves our side. Reading this verse reminded me to praise and thank God for all of the wonderful gifts we've been given, and know God's love and strength will help us through.

God, help us to remember to praise you for your love endures forever. Help us to know even when we are hurting, your love never fades. Amen.

Jenna is 13 and is in 8th grade. She enjoys participating in school musicals and plays, and loves being artistic. She spends her free time playing piano and making music.

Thursday, March 25

Psalm 112

Praise the LORD!

Happy are those who fear the LORD,

who greatly delight in his commandments.

They rise in the darkness, as a light for the upright;

they are gracious, merciful, and righteous (Psalm 112:1, 4 NRSV).

Lina Genovesi

This Psalm evokes the promise of the Lord to those who fear him and obey his commands. It requires almost blind faith to obey the commandments of an almighty Lord whom we cannot see. In my own life I have experienced what blind faith can do when I wanted to take matters in my own hands rather than surrendering and trying to be *gracious, merciful, and righteous* and deal generously and conduct my affairs with justice. It did require steadfastness and standing firm in my faith and many times I have been challenged to do so and have never regretted it.

This Psalm calls for all of us to do the right thing, even though doing the right thing is far from the easy path. We are seeing in our world reality that those that did not fear the Lord and greatly delight in his commandments have brought onto themselves and others pain and suffering and leaders who have chosen to follow the path of the Lord are remembered even though at the time they were walking along a path littered with thorns, rocks and boulders.

This Psalm gives us a road map of the right behavior to follow to stand strong and with faith in the face of adversity and gives us the infallible promise that those who follow the commandments of the Lord will prevail over the wicked, whose desire comes to nothing.

Dear Lord, give me strength to have blind faith to follow your commandments and give me the strength to be gracious, merciful and righteous and to carry

on in my life with integrity. Dear Lord, I pray that you awaken in my fellow brothers and sisters the fortitude to do the same so that the world is a better place for all of us. Amen.

Lina 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.

Friday, March 26

Psalm 116

The LORD protects simple folk;
 he saves me whenever I am brought down.
 I tell myself, You can be at peace again,
 because the LORD has been good to you (Psalm 116:6–7 CEB).

Chloe Salapatas

WHEN I READ THIS PSALM, I easily connected to it because of today's current situation. Living in a pandemic...having those words come out of my mouth still catches me by surprise. The verse that I chose to write about connects to the well-being of your physical and mental health and knowing that God is always there to help us get back on our feet. In the Psalm, there is one line that really stands out to me: he saves me whenever I am brought down. Reading this verse assures me that God is there for me, unconditionally. Having an unclear future can affect us all and knowing that the Lord can help us gives us all hope.

When will this end? Will times ever be normal again? What will be the next time that I can actually see and hug my friends? These are all questions that we want the answers to, but we must be patient because it will take time. God makes sure to keep us grounded at all times so that we can witness the information being given. We may never go back to the way it was outside of this trying experience, but what God can do is bring peace within our homes. That is why I believe that this is such a powerful and

important Psalm to read and think about, so it can help us create a peaceful world again.

Dear God, thank you for keeping our feet grounded and our heads and hopes high. Thank you for keeping everyone safe and healthy even in the darkest of times, I hope and pray for these uncertain times to halt to a stop. Thank you for keeping everyone at a distance yet still close. Amen.

Chloe is an 8th grader at Thomas Grover Middle School. She lives with her mom Danielle, her dad Mark, her younger brother Theo, and her puppy Charlie. Chloe actively participates in multiple church activities and loves to give to the community.

Saturday, March 27

Psalm 117

God's faithful love toward us is strong, the LORD'S faithfulness lasts forever!
Praise the LORD! (Psalm 117:2 CEB).

Tom Coogan

Psalm 117 is only two verses long. If the Psalter as a whole can be thought of as a mini-Bible, then this Psalm might be thought of as a mini-Psalter.

At its core is the "steadfast love and faithfulness" that Rev. Davis referred to in a recent sermon as "more than a greeting or a blessing. It's who God is."

That love is for all people, and forever! That is the simple but powerful message of this Psalm.

In response, we should sing God's praises. What more needs be said?

Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be pleasing to you, Lord, my rock and my redeemer. Amen.

Tom and his wife Beth have been Nassau Church members for 15 years. Tom has served as deacon, small group leader, ruling elder, and softball coach.

Palm Sunday, March 28

Mark 11:1–11

Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields. Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting, “Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!” (Mark 11:8–9 NRSV).

Kelsey Lambright

Today marks the second Palm Sunday in The Great Pandemic Shutdown (which has been 54 weeks—not that I’m counting), as well as the final Sunday of Lent. I sometimes forget that Palm Sunday takes place during Lent. In 2019, when our church gathered for Palm Sunday, we each grabbed huge palm fronds and carried them into the sanctuary to wave them and celebrate the Messiah entering Jerusalem, entering the world to save us. It’s a day of excitement and anticipation. But then we remember that we’re still in the season of Lent, which brings with it stories of wandering and wondering, of hard questions and harder answers, of trials and temptations. That feels a bit more familiar this year than the story we find today of crowds gathered shouting in celebration and friends joining Jesus in the days that follow.

While encountering this Palm Sunday story in the midst of Lent seems disjointed, there’s something about this tension that can speak to us. The beauty of discovering this passage as a Lenten text is that in these stories we see God in the midst of a crowd during celebration and in the solitude of the wilderness. We meet a Savior who enters the Holy City in praise and honor and who enters the wilderness to be tested and taunted. We find ourselves feeling confusion and worry and also insight and peace, feeling grief and despair and also hope and love, feeling alone and also not quite so alone.

God, thank you for being with us through the roller coasters of life, including this trying time when a new crisis seems to be around every corner. Hosanna,

Lord. Save us from our despair, our pride, our worry, and our darkness. Help us discover you in new ways and new places through this Holy Week. Help us follow you faithfully through both the wilderness and the city. Amen.



Kelsey is a PhD candidate in practical theology at Princeton Seminary, and she has worked with the youth at Nassau Church since 2015. When she isn't reading or writing, you might find her knitting, playing with her cat Roux, or traveling the world (when there's not a global health crisis) with her husband, Marcus, who is a pastor at First Presbyterian Church in Trenton.

Monday, March 29

Psalm 121

My help comes from the LORD,
 who made heaven and earth....
 The LORD is your keeper;
 the LORD is your shade at your right hand.
 The sun shall not strike you by day,
 nor the moon by night....
 The LORD will keep your going out and your coming in
 from this time on and forevermore (Psalm 121:2, 5-6, 8 NRSV).

Michele Minter

LENT IS THE SEASON in which we focus on turning away from our pre-occupations and back toward God. That can seem intimidating. After all, God is very grand— *the LORD, who made heaven and earth*. That grand God seems so far away!

Yet, the psalmist also tells us that *the LORD is your shade at your right hand. The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night*. Have you ever had the experience of stepping under a tree or under the eaves of a

building in the hot sun, and finding that the temperature was several degrees cooler? God is as enveloping and effortlessly available as the shady spot under a favorite tree. God is as naturally close to us as the cool air that allows us to catch our breath in the heat. God is our continual protector and keeper, present with us both day and night.

What a miracle that the cosmic God who made heaven and earth is so intimately close! God envelops and infuses all our actions—running errands, eating breakfast, going to meetings and school on Zoom—as effortlessly as the tree offers its shade. Today, remember that God is present in every bit of *your going out and your coming in*. May that make even your most routine activities feel blessed.

Good and gracious God, we know our help comes from you, and yet we become preoccupied and fail to notice your presence with us. Today, grant us the ability to see you at work in everything we do, effortlessly close. Amen.

Michele is a member of the Witherspoon Street Presbyterian Church, a Princeton University staff member, and a passionate ballroom dancer. She has two adult children and lives with her husband Jeff in Plainsboro, NJ.



Tuesday, March 30

Psalm 126

Those who sow with tears
will reap with songs of joy (Psalm 126:5 NIV).

Mani Pulimood

THE ISRAELITES SANG this psalm in joyous gratitude and praise as God restored them to live and worship in Jerusalem. *We were like those who dreamed*, the psalmist said as though the 70 years in captivity were a period of deep sleep and mourning. Now their mouths were filled with laughter and their tongues with songs of joy.

In one of my Zoom Fellowships, someone likened our period of quarantine to living in exile. As we talk and interact on Zoom we continue to see something of Christ in one another. During dark times we have to dive deep into the inner resources of our lives to seek Christ in all that has life, to see God as our light of life.

This past year has been a time when we find the riches of God's grace and peace in the pain of change and brokenness of life. It is a time when churches, companies and schools have been forced to dramatically change, and embrace new ways to continue working and interacting. It has been a time when the healthcare systems have been overwhelmed by death and disease but have continued the battle against COVID.

These threads of sowing, mourning, death, disease and darkness weave through the fabric of our lives as we approach Holy Week. The songs of joy that come with Easter and the promise of Resurrection assure those of us who believe that Christ will shine Christ's light and dispel the darkness.

Lord Jesus Christ, as we remember the year that has gone by, we do believe that those who sow with tears will reap with songs of joy. We pray that you will revive our hearts, and let your streams of living water flow through our lives this day, quenching our thirst and strengthening us to do your will. Amen.

Mani has been worshipping at Nassau Church for the last 15 years, with his wife Monisha and their two sons, Nikhil and Philip. He has authored a book, *Spiritual Dimensions—Musings on Life and Faith*. One of his favorite ministries is online evangelism (<https://twitter.com/ManiPulimood>).

Wednesday, March 31

Hebrews 12:1–3

So then, with endurance, let's also run the race that is laid out in front of us, since we have such a great cloud of witnesses surrounding us. Let's throw off any extra baggage, get rid of the sin that trips us up, and fix our eyes on Jesus, faith's pioneer and perfecter. He endured the cross, ignoring the shame, for the sake of the joy that was laid out in front of him, and sat down at the right side of God's throne. Think about the one who endured such opposition from sinners so that you won't be discouraged and you won't give up (Hebrews 12:1–3 CEB).

Kim Kleasen

This could qualify as one of the most obvious moments in time to connect with these scripture verses. Of course we've been running the race laid out in front of us—for over a year now. The pandemic race is our collective race. But, layered underneath that race, the race at the front of our collective conscious being, are countless other individual races each of us is running. Private and public, these races challenge our very being. They are in addition to our great collective race and we are tired. Races of grief, loss, celebration, healing, sickness, love, success, disappointment, anger and more, these races are challenging us in ways perhaps not experienced before.

The joy in Hebrews 12:1–3 is not in the running of the race, but in the promise fulfilled that we are not running alone. Those who have gone before us, that great cloud of witnesses, and those alongside us now are our companions if we only look up to see. Our faith is in Jesus Christ who, in a few short days, will run the race of Holy Week, a race that is a promise

that God is with us and that the dark days of suffering will give rise to the bright morning. Perhaps the morning will be what we expect, hope for and dream of and perhaps the morning will surprise us as Mary Magdalene was surprised to find an empty tomb on that Easter morning. Whatever awaits us along life's racetrack, we are prepared, and we are not alone, if we only remember to fix our eyes on our faith in God and Jesus Christ.

Holy and Gracious God, my race is challenging me. Some days I run the race with joy, others with despair and other days I run it with listlessness, simply putting one foot in front of the other. Each day let me remember the cloud of witnesses that run with me and let me be mindful of my faith and live my life in the joy of each day and the promise of what is to come. Amen.

Kim Kleasen is a long-time member of Nassau Church and the Adult Choir, She is currently on Session and working on our Forward in Faith Together initiatives. Her pandemic race activities have included honoring the life of her parents, participating in classes on spiritual direction, practicing flute and needle-working.

Maundy Thursday, April 1

John 13:1–17, 31b–35

If I, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you too must wash each other's feet. I have given you an example: Just as I have done, you must also do (John 13:14–15 CEB).

Rozlyn Anderson Flood

SERVANT'S HANDS: AN ELEGY

My father's hands were teaching, surgeon's hands,
guiding my tiny hands to place the puzzle pieces
of the foot and ankle model, linking talus to
metatarsals to phalanges. My father's tools
were the intricate jigsaws of my childhood;
my first words: tibia and fibula.

*Beneath the skin we are all the same, my father
recited over and over like prayer.*

For decades my surgeon father worked
day and night in a city hospital with rich and poor
alike, treating a panoply of humanity, plastering
casts, setting bones of feet and ankles, suturing,
taming raging pain with the balm of firm palms
so multitudes could regain power to walk.

His dedication unswayed by the journey
of his long life, escaping a lynch mob
in rural Georgia and an armed carjacker on the
New York Thruway (it made the evening news).

Father's solace—unshakable faith in the
saving power of Jesus, choosing the healing,
the washing because down to the bone
we are agonizingly, recognizably human.

Beneath the skin we are all the same.

My father's hands were teaching hands,
 a surgeon's hands,
 a servant's hands.

Dearest Lord Jesus, you set a glorious example as a servant leader, and we aspire to be your hands in the world to deliver healing, hope and solace to a broken and grieving world. Thank you for loving us unconditionally and forgiving us when we stumble. Thank you also for the generations of ancestors who prepared us to find you and love you. Amen.



Roz is a philanthropic advisor for Princeton University's Office of Gift Planning. She is a member of the Adult Choir and the Worship and Arts Committee. She has been writing poetry for over 50 years, and has studied with major poets. She serves on the board of the poetry publisher, Copper Canyon Press.

Good Friday, April 2

Hebrews 10:19–22

Therefore, my friends since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain (that is, through his flesh), ... let us approach with a true heart in the full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water (Hebrews 10:19–20, 22 NRSV).

Debbie Tegarden

RECENTLY I WAS REMINDED that human skin is itself an organ—a door of perception—similar to our eyes and ears. So it can be called by faith to be purified with the sprinkling of sacramental water to be opened to the gifts of the Light and the Word.

As we race through our lives, our skin—the body's skin and the body's

soul—often suffers from neglect, derision, and abuse. We think of our flesh as the “veil” or “curtain” dividing us from Christ’s healing touch.

But on the night when he prepared to depart, Christ poured out his love: he bathed the cracked and aching feet of all who had marched beside him and who now sat with him at table, even as he braced himself to prepare for the mortal tearing of his heart’s flesh.

And in this timelessness of Holy Week, even at the hour when the great temple curtain is torn open, let the deadest and darkest corners of our consciences be quickened at the soothing sprinkle of his grace. We are bold now, in body and in soul, to open to his touch, and we are refreshed and purified, as he spills out his life blood in the beautiful sacrifice.

The prophet sees this servant grow up as a twisted root from barren ground—how even though he gasped with thirst he poured out his heart’s living blood. The barren fig tree has come into leaf; Christ will rise again and reopen the vessels of living waters.

Hidden One, help us to hold fast to the confession of hope without wavering, knowing that Christ who is the promise is faithful forever. May our hands clap and our feet dance, as our breaking hearts open to receive the joy from your boundless waters. Lift the shadowy veil from our worn-out flesh and shower us with the grace to live in the gathering of friends and to work in the gardens of the Lord. Amen.

Debbie lives in Princeton, She is in the slow process of retirement, even while she yearns to engage again with her friends and the shared occasions of a loving faith.

This devotion was accompanied by a video (lyrics below).

DOWN TO THE RIVER TO PRAY

Refrain:

*As I went down in the river to pray
Studying about that good ol' way
And who shall wear the starry crown
Good Lord, show me the way*

O sisters, let's go down
Let's go down, come on down
O sisters, let's go down
Down in the river to pray (*Refrain*)

O brothers, let's go down
Let's go down, come on down
Come on, brothers, let's go down
Down in the river to pray (*Refrain*)

O fathers, let's go down
Let's go down, come on down
O fathers, let's go down
Down in the river to pray (*Refrain*)

O mothers, let's go down
Come on down, don't you wanna go down?
Come on, mothers, let's go down
Down in the river to pray (*Refrain*)

O sinners, let's go down
Let's go down, come on down
O sinners, let's go down
Down in the river to pray (*Refrain*)

Holy Saturday, April 3

Lamentations 3:1–9, 19–24

I am the man who has seen affliction
by the rod of the Lord's wrath.
He has driven me away and made me walk
in darkness rather than light;
indeed, he has turned his hand against me
again and again, all day long.

He has made my skin and my flesh grow old
and has broken my bones.
He has besieged me and surrounded me
with bitterness and hardship.
He has made me dwell in darkness
like those long dead.

He has walled me in so I cannot escape;
he has weighed me down with chains.
Even when I call out or cry for help,
he shuts out my prayer.
He has barred my way with blocks of stone;
he has made my paths crooked (Lamentations 3:1–9 NIV).

Bill Katen-Narvell

THIS PASSAGE SEEMED APPROPRIATE for a second Lent in a time of COVID. The past year, and for some time to come, we are subject to an inexplicable affliction that has both decimated the oldest of us, and irreparably set back the education of the youngest generation. I have felt walled in. But not alone. Throughout the past year, a couple of things have helped me keep my sanity, a group of fellow church men (yes, the group is all male) who used to gather monthly in person, but have switched to a weekly virtual format, and a group of folks collected by a Nassau member who join togeth-

er outdoors to play platform tennis. Is it a coincidence that both outlets have a connection to Nassau Church; I think not. God often answers our prayers through each other.

Lord God, as you have allowed this plague to torment us, help us to remember that ultimately you are merciful. Guide us to find ways to reach out to each other, and to recognize and accept your grace when it is offered, whether by the actions of a fellow parishioner, or whatever other means you choose. Amen.

Bill is a 25-year member of Nassau Church, whose wedding to BJ in 1979 was officiated by Wallace Alston. He was raised an Episcopalian (with some Russian Orthodox and Roman Catholic influences), and his subsequent theological education is mostly vicarious through BJ's seminary education and spiritual direction practice. When not writing meditations, he keeps busy as a vice president for State Street Bank.

Easter Sunday, April 4

Acts 10:34–43

Then Peter began to speak to them: "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him." (Acts 10:34–35 NRSV).

Jim Moorhead

With these words, Peter begins his sermon to the Roman centurion Cornelius and to the centurion's relatives and close friends. At the close of Peter's preaching, the Holy Spirit fell upon his hearers who spoke in tongues, extolled God, and then received baptism. This occasion is sometimes called the conversion of Cornelius, and rightly so. But there was another conversion that day; it was Peter's. The opening sentence of his message—I truly understand God shows no partiality—alludes to his own transformation. Peter had not been eager to cross the lines of ethnic and religious identity. God had given him a vision, three times repeated,

to nudge him in that direction. Moreover, God had already told Cornelius to send messengers to fetch Peter. The account suggests a degree of divine overkill employed to convince Peter: Just do this! And what does Peter find when he enters the home of Cornelius? He discovers that God has already been at work there. He learns that God indeed offers grace to those in every nation. Peter catches a glimpse of the radical inclusivity of the Gospel. Like all of us, Peter lived in a world of us and them, Jew and Gentile, Roman overlords and those whom they ruled. During Peter's journey to Cornelius's home, he crossed those boundaries. Our boundaries, our categories of us and them, may differ from Peter's, but the promise of the Gospel is that we too may find the grace of God as we cross them.

We thank you, O God, that you call us to ever deeper experiences of your love as we cross the boundaries that separate us from others. Remind us that there is nowhere we can go that you are not already present. Amen.

Jim is an ordained Presbyterian minister who taught at Princeton Seminary for several decades before retiring in 2017. His area of expertise is the history of American Christianity, and he currently serves as senior editor of the Journal of Presbyterian History. He and his family have been part of the Nassau Church family since 1984.

Thank you for joining us on our Lenten journey this year.

Christ is Risen!
He is Risen, Indeed!