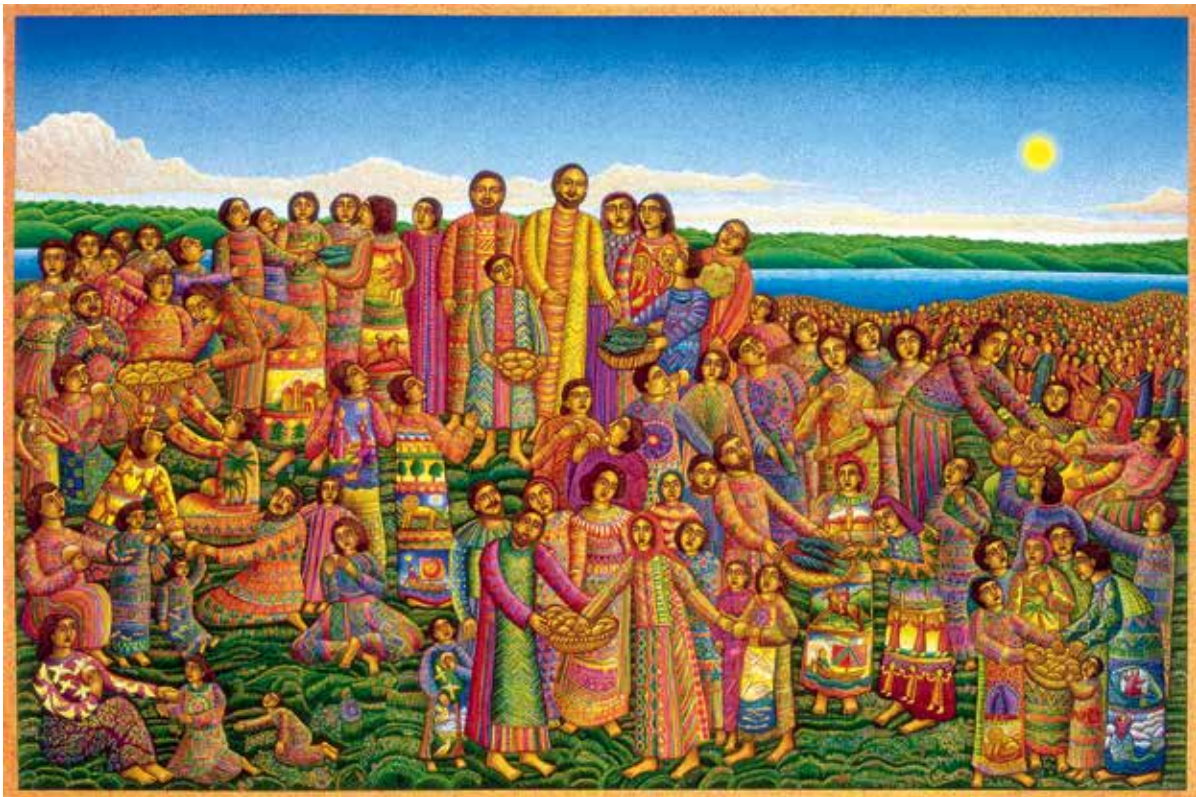


# Lenten Devotional



Loaves and Fishes

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NASSAU PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

*Princeton, New Jersey*

MARCH 5 - APRIL 20, 2025

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*Common English Bible (CEB), King James Version (KJV or NKJV),  
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New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition (NRSVue).*

The Vanderbilt Divinity Library offers an excellent  
on-line daily lectionary: [lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu](http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu)

# Preface

Dear Nassau Presbyterian Friends,

Thank you for joining the journey of Lent. We are glad you are here and a part of the community of approximately 600 people engaging with Nassau's Lenten Devotional. Over the next six weeks, 47 different voices related to the congregation will help illumine the path through Jesus' life, teachings, crucifixion, and resurrection.

The 2025 Devotional is made possible through the contributions of friends from Nassau, Witherspoon Street, and Westminster Presbyterian Churches. Each contributor selected a text from the Common Lectionary and provided a brief meditation and prayer for the day. We are grateful for the imagination of Isabella Shutt, Intern for Faith Formation, Mission, and Outreach; the thoughtful eyes of Carol Wehrheim and Debbie Tegarden, editors; and the persistent effort of Lauren Yeh to get this to your in-box or into your hands.

We bring what we have to this Lenten journey like the young boy in John 6. Jesus multiplies our offering to make sure there is more than enough for all, as the artist John August Swanson illustrates on the cover. Thank you for accompanying one another along the way.

Blessings,

Len Scales  
Associate Pastor for Faith Formation,  
Mission, and Outreach

*Your word is a lamp before my feet and a light for my journey.*  
Psalm 119:105 CEB

Ash Wednesday, March 5, 2025

## Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth ... but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Matthew 6:19–21 (NRSVue)

Watching the news coverage of the wildfires in Los Angeles County earlier this year, I was imagining the loss of all my personal possessions and how devastating that would be. But, as I reach my 77th birthday, I increasingly ponder the value of my “treasures on earth” and I recognize the clinging sense of materialism that infects all of us to some degree. Rather, I have tried to focus on what the book of Matthew calls the “treasures in heaven,” further noting that “where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

In addition to memories of family and friends, I’ve come to realize that my most cherished heavenly treasures will be the special moments I’ve experienced over the past thirty-six years with refugee families sponsored by Nassau, including dramatic welcomes at airports, countless weekly meetings as a family begins its resettlement transition, the oft-repeated sharing of plum brandy with a Bosnian family, and, most recently, a long and tearful embrace from an Afghan husband and father who had just been reunited with his family after a three-year separation. These moments have become central to my faith. Put very simply, it’s when I am working with a refugee that I feel closest to Christ.

With Nassau’s sponsorship of a new refugee family sometime early this year, we will all have another opportunity to meet and learn from “the stranger,” accumulating heavenly treasures that will stay with us long after our material possessions have been forgotten.

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**Loving and welcoming Lord, help us to leave our comfort zones and to embrace “the stranger,” knowing that this is the work that you would wish for us. Amen.**

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Lynn and *Tom Charles* have been members of Nassau Presbyterian Church since 1987...and they cherish the friendships they have found here and the opportunities for service that have been created by those who came before us.

Thursday, March 6, 2025

## Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16

When they call to me, I will answer them;  
I will be with them in trouble;  
I will rescue them and honor them.

Psalm 91:15 (NRSVue)

**D**o you ever look around and wonder where God could possibly be amid the chaos that is happening in the world? It seems that every day something terrible happens. There is a school shooting, or bad choices are being made by some country's leader that will impact other countries negatively.

It's not always this global. There are specific, everyday instances when friends struggle with their faith, or times when I want to do something good with God working through me to make something better. Psalm 91:15 promises us that God will be with us in trouble, no matter how severe. There are many little ways that God comforts us. I ask, "Where are you?" And in those moments of doubt, which I'm sure we've all had, I see God. Often in these moments, a hymn or psalm that I've memorized comes to mind and I know that God is with me. I find peace in it. I find peace in God.

So where is God in our lives? Our Lord is in the little things. The way we feel after a tiring but distinctly happy day, or when we laugh at a joke that only a few people understand, or when we reread the Bible and comprehend its message. It's in the exhilaration of a student getting a well-deserved A+, or in the love that shines around an extended family's reunion when they meet for the first time in years. This is God's love.

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**Dear God, In the times of doubt, we know that you strengthen us. Help us to find peace in the things that bring us joy and to recognize that it is your gift. Your gift ... of love. Amen.**

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*Isabel Lewono* is a 14-year-old student at the Wilberforce School. She enjoys reading, writing, drawing, sports, and playing with her dog, and is so happy to be a part of the Nassau Presbyterian Church community.

Friday, March 7, 2025

## Exodus 6:1-13

God also spoke to Moses and said to him, “I am the LORD. I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as God Almighty (El Shaddai), but by my name ‘The LORD’ (YHWH) I did not make myself known to them. I also established my covenant with them ....”

Exodus 6:2–4a (NRSVue)

**I**n this passage God speaks to Moses, identifying God’s role in Moses’ history. The Lord uses different names and reveals the name YHWH. This also is the name that God used when speaking to Moses from the burning bush. There are many translations for this name; I prefer the idea of “I AM.” God is who God is.

When we are introduced to someone, names are exchanged. Exchanging names allows us the means and opportunity to call on each other. When I give someone my name, I expect them to use it to ask for something that they or someone else might need, or perhaps to give me a gift. Part of the expectation of exchanging names is that a relationship will grow. Relationships rely on exchanging information about our experiences, our history, our families, our work, our interests. Throughout the book of Exodus, God, Moses, and the Israelites exchange information. YHWH’s nature is revealed, along with God’s expectations for who the Israelites should be. And the Israelites reveal quite a bit about themselves.

Lent commemorates the forty days that Jesus spent fasting in the desert and enduring temptation by Satan and is traditionally a period of introspection for Christians involving fasting, praying, almsgiving, and abstinence. I’m thinking that this Lent, I’m going to use the Lenten traditions to call on God, so we can get to know each other better. God has given me the greatest gift—Jesus. I’ll be spending these forty days contemplating who I am in relationship to who YHWH is, and expanding my appreciation of God’s great gifts of grace and love seems a worthwhile way to spend forty days.

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Day by day, day by day,  
O sweet Lord, three things I pray:  
To see thee more clearly,  
Love thee more dearly,  
Follow thee more nearly,  
Day by day. Amen.

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*Keith Mertz* joined Nassau Presbyterian Church in 2000, drawn by the chance to join the Choir, and continuing there by contributing to youth fellowship and small groups, and serving on Session. He lives in Montgomery Township with his wife Mary Ann and their border collie Lucy.

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Saturday, March 8, 2025

## John 12:27-36

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

John 12:35–36 (CEB)

Maybe it is my own age, or it may be it’s the times in which we live, but I am increasingly conscious of the darkness that surrounds us. Every day I see the forces of darkness attacking, often in Jesus’ precious name, the very values that Jesus represents—love and compassion, mercy, care for others, self-restraint. In John 12, Jesus enters Jerusalem in triumph and prepares his followers for what is to come. Jesus tells them: “Walk while you have the light so that darkness doesn’t overtake you.” Jesus further charges them to “believe in the light so that you might become people whose lives are determined by the light.”

How easy it is to walk in the darkness! We all long to belong, and the forces of darkness are all too ready to welcome us if we are not careful. But we are called to walk in the light of Jesus Christ, and to share that light with the world. In Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings*, as Frodo sets out to confront the growing darkness in Middle Earth, the elven queen

Galadriel gives him a special glass vial. Galadriel tells Frodo, “May it be a light for you in dark places, when all other lights have gone out.” Thankfully, we too have been given a light that can illuminate even the darkest of times and places. We only need to believe, and to heed Jesus’ commandment to be people whose lives are determined by the light.

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**Jesus, Light of the World, help us to walk in your light as we travel through this world. Also, please help us to reflect your light for others, that all may see your glory and walk in your light. Amen.**

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*John Parker* is a writer by profession who enjoys travel, outdoor activities, and listening to live music. He is the proud father of three grown children, raised in part by the Nassau Presbyterian Church community. At Nassau, he is currently an Elder and Church School teacher, a former Deacon and youth leader, and a committed Small Group leader and participant.

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First Sunday of Lent, March 9, 2025

## Deuteronomy 26:1-11

The LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with a terrifying display of power, and with signs and wonders; and he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey.

Deuteronomy 26:90 (NRSV)

I am a spiritual child of the mountains, specifically Daniel’s Mountain, Eagle Rock, Botetourt County, Virginia. My paternal ancestors were enslaved people who lived on that land, part of a plantation founded by Robert Anderson, a Scots-Irish Presbyterian from County Donegal, Ireland. According to my uncle, Robert Anderson “gave us our name and part of our blood.”

We call the 70 acres of lush hills on the banks of the James River “Daniel’s Mountain” after my ancestor, Daniel, who bought the land of his birth after Emancipation. My grandfather, Russell, bought the land from his father, and named my Uncle Donald as life tenant.



When Uncle Donald was alive, he held an annual Memorial Day Weekend pig roast, which he called the Usufruct. In its heyday the Usufruct was packed with Botetourt County residents of all races. We feasted on succulent pork and the best Virginia barbecue sauce, amid an exotic menagerie of white peacocks and Tennessee walking horses. My uncle would preside over the gathering like a lord of the manor, alternately playing the bagpipes and reciting passages of King Lear under the stars.

Daniel's Mountain is quieter now. The tombstones in the slave graveyard lean into one another—praying hands. Uncle Donald, my grandparents and my father are buried nearby. A family—slave and free—mingled for eternity.

Our God delivered my family from the Egypt of slavery. Today we are doctors, lawyers, business executives, filmmakers, professors, and poets. Daniel's Mountain symbolizes our victory.

First fruits. Glory to God.

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**Dearest Lord, we praise you for delivering us from evil. Be with us as we continue to defend our freedoms and seek justice. In Christ's name, Amen.**

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*Rozlyn Anderson Flood* sings in the Adult Choir. She is proud to be a member of the Art of Faithfulness team, leading small groups in poetry and film. She is equally proud to be the mother of a healthcare executive and an award-winning documentary filmmaker.

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Monday, March 10, 2025

## Psalm 17

Guard me as the apple of the eye;  
hide me in the shadow of your wings ...

Psalm 17:8 (NRSVue)

Psalm 17 is David's prayer, asking for God's protection and deliverance from his enemies, whom he describes as "lions eager to tear."

Our bodies respond to the stress of the modern world as though lions were chasing us. Our hearts beat, our minds race, and our palms sweat, even as we sit in the comfort of our homes or offices. The most strained moments of our modern lives can feel unbearable, regardless of whether this is due to our own self-inflicted sin or the sins of others. It can feel as though the entire world is against us.

In these moments, pause and take comfort in God's mercy and protection. Pray for God's protection in the chaos around us. Use the gift of mindfulness practices to help center your focus on God in these moments:

Pause.

Take a few deep breaths:

5 seconds breathing in, 5 seconds holding the breath, and 5 seconds breathing out.

Notice your senses. What can you hear? See? Touch?

Take refuge in this present moment. In this moment, you are safe from all the stresses of the modern world.

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**Dear Lord, we take comfort in the blessings of your mercy and protection in the present moments of our daily lives. We feel your wing outstretched for us in these moments and are so thankful for your grace. Amen.**

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*Lauren Herb Davis* joined Nassau Presbyterian Church a little over a year ago. She has lived all over the United States, but most recently Los Angeles. She is married

to Garrett, and together they have a ten-year-old son Kai, who loves to perform at church. She is a Postdoctoral Researcher at Princeton University in the field of domestic welfare policy.

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Tuesday, March 11, 2025

## Psalm 17

Keep me as the apple of your eye;  
hide me in the shadow of your wings ...

Psalm 17:8 (NRSV)

*Lee:* David's basically saying that I have listened to you and done your commandments, and I'm not the one who does evil and is arrogant. I can use this in my life to remember not to be arrogant or a ball hog in soccer.

*Ned:* I think this Psalm is relatable to when I'm in school, and I'm confused and hopeless. The translation of this complex Psalm is just like, "Help me God, I didn't do anything wrong. I just want to be safe and happy and protected from the stuff happening in the world."

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**Dear God, please push us through hard times when we want to give up, and please always be by our side. Thank you for blessing us with food, water, and shelter. Amen.**

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*Lee and Ned Lord* are twins and are in the sixth grade at Princeton Middle School. They go to Nassau Presbyterian Church and play sports: swimming, basketball, soccer, and baseball.

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Wednesday, March 12, 2025

## Job 1:1-22

At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship and said:

“Naked I came from my mother’s womb,  
and naked I will depart.

The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away;  
may the name of the LORD be praised.”

Job 1:20–21 (NRSV)

I am writing this while terrible fires rage in Los Angeles and global human suffering is immense. Thus, I found revisiting the book of Job particularly appropriate. The story of Job is that of a truly righteous man, blessed with great success by human standards: a large family, tremendous wealth, and fame throughout the land. Job “has it all.” But then, God allows Job to be tested in ways that seem inconceivable, leading to the loss of family, fortune, fame, and health. How unfair, we think—Job did everything right! Which leads us to the familiar question: How can God allow bad things to happen to good people? When he seeks an explanation, Job’s wife tells him to blame God, while his friends say he must have done something wrong to deserve this.

Where does the story of Job leave us, as followers of Christ trying to live righteous lives? I don’t have an answer, and maybe that is the point. We don’t have the answers, because we are human, and God is God. We come back to Job’s declaration, “The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised.”

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**Oh God, let us feel your presence, even in times of terrible suffering and loss. When we question why bad things happen, restore and strengthen our faith. Help us to know deep in our hearts that you are God and you will not forsake us. Amen.**

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*Anne Kuhn* has been a member of Nassau Presbyterian Church since 2008. She is married to Jeff and has two grown children, Paul (living in Cincinnati, Ohio) and Sara

(in Tacoma, Washington). She is currently a Church School Shepherd, Co-Chair of the Mass Incarceration Task Force, and a member of the Mission and Outreach and of the Human Resources Committees.

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Thursday, March 13, 2025

## Philippians 3:2-12

... even though I, too, have reason for confidence in the flesh.

If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

Philippians 3:4–6 (NIV)

**H**ide it under a bushel? No! I'm gonna let it shine!"

Too often we deny gifts from God. Sometimes they are conspicuous, sometimes hidden. If you live in the public eye as a professional communicator (pastor, educator, artist, other performer), survival may depend on your exercise of God's gifts. Perhaps it's easier to acknowledge those talents in such a case, or even to boast—yet some might offer a self-deprecating smile and a bashful “Golly, gee.”

However, to deny God's gifts is actually an audacious act of selfishness. We focus attention on ourselves by not humbly accepting those gifts, and thus we effectively deny God's work in our lives, as well as God's plan for us. Remember Luke 12:48, where we are taught to use our gifts in service to others? To ignore such gifts seems like an attempt to avoid faithfully ministering to our neighbors.

Paul's list of qualifications in verse 4 seems devoid of faith. His stellar Hebrew lineage is an accident of birth. His commitment as a Pharisee is, by definition, about legalism. The choice to zealously persecute the church is a highlight of his pre-Christian résumé and his faultless following of the law to achieve (outward) righteousness—both are inadequate. In fact, he goes on to denounce his life of legalism (vv. 7–8) and

to declare powerful and ongoing commitment to faithful service (v. 12),  
“I press on ....”

Let’s follow Paul’s example. Faithfully press on, trusting God’s gifts to shine brightly as we joyfully and gratefully employ them!

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**Dear Lord, heighten my awareness of the gifts you have given me. Even if I have not yet fully developed them, help me to joyfully use those abilities in service to your church and to your world. Amen.**

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*Elem Ely* and his wife, Miriam, have been Nassau Presbyterian Church members since 1997. In addition to serving as bass soloist/section leader in the Adult Choir, Elem is Professor of Voice Emeritus at Westminster Choir College and teaches a limited number of gifted voice students.

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Friday, March 14, 2025

## Psalm 27

The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD!

Psalm 27:1, 14 (NRSV)

**F**ear. Since Adam and Eve, we all fear from time to time. It should not be part of our nature, but maybe it is. The phrase “fear not” appears in the Bible 365 times, which is once for each day of the year.

Oh, how many times in my life have I needed to be reminded of this phrase! I mention only a few fearful moments. When I was flying on an airplane for the first time, from overseas to the United States, we had a crash landing. My first job in the U.S. was as a teller in a small New Jersey bank; the bank was robbed twice during business hours. Later, I worked as a bank auditor in New York, in One World Trade Center, on the 103rd floor. Thankfully I was working in our New Jersey office on the day of the terrorist attack in 1993. And I was on vacation on September

11, 2001, when our latest location, at Five World Trade Center, collapsed. So many fearful moments, but instead of being afraid, I chose faith over fear. I know Christ loves me and I learned that fear ends when faith begins.

God has given us about six thousand wonderful promises in the Bible to strengthen our faith. Let me list only six: Philippians 4:19; Romans 8:28; Matthew 11:28; Colossians 1:11; Isaiah 41:13, and Zephaniah 3:17. And my favorite one is, "...with God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26 NIV).

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**Merciful God, we are haunted by fears, but your Son brings us faith, hope and love. Amen.**

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*Agnes Olah*, a retired bank executive, lives in Somerset and has been part of Nassau Presbyterian Church community for the past thirteen years. Agnes enjoys assisting in various children's craft and other activities at Nassau. She also participates in the Church Mouse program and leads the Greeting Cards and Crafts projects, which help to fund Nassau's mission partners.

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Saturday, March 15, 2025

## Psalm 27

But I have sure faith  
that I will experience the LORD's goodness  
in the land of the living!  
Hope in the LORD!  
Be strong! Let your heart take courage!  
Hope in the LORD!

Psalm 27:13–14 (CEB)

In our house is a hand-painted wooden sign—"God did not promise smooth sailing, just a safe harbor." But it is not clear from scripture whether we will experience this safe harbor in the land of the living. Psalm 27 epitomizes this duality. David has his moments of doubt, for

instance, in verse 9:

Please don't hide it from me!

...Don't push your servant aside angrily—

...you have been my help!

God who saves me,

...don't neglect me!

...Don't leave me all alone!

And in David's life there had been numerous storms that would have frightened the most intrepid sailors. Nonetheless, David concludes, "But I have sure faith that I will experience the LORD's goodness in the land of the living!" (verse 13).

In the devotion I wrote last year, I noted that if there was hope for David, then there is clearly hope for us all. It seems fitting to repeat that this year.

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**Dear Lord, help us to remember that when the seas are tumultuous, a safe harbor is promised, and deliver us to that harbor, in this life and the next, if it be your will. Amen.**

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*Bill Katen-Narvell* was raised as an Episcopalian in Atlanta, but married BJ Katen, a child of Nassau Presbyterian Church in 1979. After a sojourn in Philadelphia to get an MBA, and a decade in Connecticut, where their three children were born, they returned to Princeton and joined Nassau Church in 1993. In 2022 Bill retired from a career in information technology related to financial institutions.

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Second Sunday of Lent, March 16, 2025

## Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18

Then [God] said to [Abram], “I am the LORD who brought you from Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess.”

Genesis 15:7 (NRSV)

**D**uring a recent trip to New Orleans, my husband and I visited the site where my great-grandparents lived for over sixty years. It is now a vacant lot, never rebuilt after Hurricane Katrina. Everywhere, climate change is accelerating the impacts of natural disasters, from tragic flooding in North Carolina to heartbreaking fires in Los Angeles.

Yet, when we stood at that vacant lot in urban New Orleans, it was full of life: butterflies, ginkgo berries, tall grass, and wildflowers (plus some discarded Mardi Gras beads). The neighborhood is coming back, and people are getting on with their lives. God’s creation—both nature and people—is resilient. We must mourn the devastating losses caused by climate change and we must keep learning from them. The clock is ticking, but all around us, there are places waiting to be reclaimed and restored, if we can change our habits and policies.

God’s promise of a covenantal relationship with Abram included a homeland, a place of safety, community, and natural abundance. God offers us the same. I pray that we may find the wisdom and determination to cherish this gift rather than exploit it.

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**God of all good things, grant us the humility to recognize all your creation as holy and make us good stewards of your beloved people and places. Amen.**

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*Michele Minter* works for Princeton University, worships at Westminster Presbyterian Church, and lives in Plainsboro with her husband, Jeff Yuan.

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Monday, March 17, 2025

## Psalm 105:1-42

O give thanks to the LORD, call on his name;  
make known God's deeds among the peoples.  
Sing to God, sing praises to God;  
tell of all God's wonderful works."

Psalm 105:1-2 (NRSV)

**I** try to remember to thank God for each new day. Pastor Dave Davis remarked in a sermon that he woke up very early one morning and paid attention to the birds singing. I have heard that same sound many mornings. More than likely, so have you. He said that it occurred to him that creation is still happening.

God calls us to actively take part in that creation. We are encouraged through scripture and loving guidance from our friends to share God's love with others. To sing God's praises is truly a gift.

As I write this, I am thinking of a recent Sunday morning's Adult Education program that featured Noel Werner taking us through various hymns in our church's Glory to God hymnal. We sang songs that we don't often—or in many cases, ever—sing during Sunday worship.

The takeaway, the earworm for me, was Hymn 642, a song the Muscogee nation faithful sang during their forcible relocation from the southeastern United States to what was then, in the late 1830s, Oklahoma Territories.

Heleluyan, heleluyan;  
hele, heleluyan....

As innocent souls marched and endured unimaginable pain and suffering, they made known God's deeds among the peoples. They told all of God's wonderful works. They sang God's praises.

Imagine that kind of faith. When people ask, "How can God let terrible things happen in the world?" I am reminded of a quote from television's Fred Rogers, "When bad things happen, if you want to see God,

look for the helpers.”

Furthermore,

Heleluyan, heleluyan;

hele, heleluyan....

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**Gracious and Loving God, Thank you for your creation. Give us the strength to sing your praises in joyful and sorrowful times. Help us to talk of your great deeds through laughter and tears. Thank you for my friends who help me tell others of all your wonderful works. Amen.**

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*Marshall McKnight* became a member at Nassau Presbyterian Church in 2011. He serves on Session and the Adult Education Committee. and helps facilitate movie Small Groups. He also serves on the Mass Incarceration Task Force and mentors young people snared, hopefully temporarily, in the juvenile just system.

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Tuesday, March 18, 2025

## 1 Corinthians 10:1-13

I do not want you to be ignorant, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ.

1 Corinthians 10:1–4 (NRSVue)

**B**y drinking from the rock that is Christ, we receive the abundance of steadfast love, grace, and salvation that God has to offer and is always willing to provide.

In this passage, the writer warns us against ignorantly thinking that everyone who came before us and all those we don't know are so different from us, when, in reality, we are more similar than we realize.

As followers of Christ, we practice the same traditions and observe the same holidays. We lean on the same spiritual guide and gain strength

from the same source. All our rituals may be done in varying traditions, but nonetheless we, as Christians, have them in common.

At the end of the day, we are all human and we are all sheep in God's flock, and that is what makes us God's children.

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**Dear Heavenly Source of Salvation, Thank you for providing us with the salvation, security, and peace we need to get past any obstacle. Continue to remind us that, despite how we serve you and how we think of our relationship with you, we are always going to be Children of God. In your humble and precious name, Amen.**

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*Julia Hill* is a sophomore at Drew University in Madison, New Jersey. She is planning to major in Theatre Arts with a French minor. She enjoys listening to Broadway shows and K-POP while walking around the beautiful Drew campus. She joined Nassau Presbyterian Church with her family in 2013 and has been an active child of the church ever since!

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Wednesday, March 19, 2025

## Psalm 105:1-42

Seek the LORD and his strength;  
seek his presence continually.  
Remember the wonderful works he has done,  
his miracles and the judgments he has uttered.

Psalm 105:4–5 (RSV)

Seek the Lord and his strength; seek his presence continually. Simple right?

Then why do I fail at this daily?

Each year, reflecting on passages and striving to make these words relevant when they will be shared some 60 days later strikes me as challenging. Yet each year it usually works. Here I hope 2025 is not the first failure.

Each year we despair: How will we survive the vitriol, hatred, bigotry, and the persecution of God's children? Why are wildfires, wars, fatal diagnosis, and deaths of loved ones filling each day? How do so-called Christians support policies and practices that undermine doing justice, loving kindness, and walking humbly? Why do some weaponize religion to seek and keep power? How will we survive this?

Again, seconds after reading and reflecting on the words, I have failed at seeking and remembering God's wonderful works, miracles, and judgments rendered. I forget the beauty of the frozen lake and the eagle soaring I witnessed hours ago, and the sunrise of minutes ago. I forget the laughter of children, the beauty of song. I forget that for generations God has sustained and delivered us and rebuked kings on our account. Yet I lack the faith it will occur again. I falsely believe I do not have the strength or endurance to meet this moment. How about you?

Shall we today give thanks to God? Shall we sing and tell of God's wonderful works? Shall we remember God is mindful of God's covenant forever, and actually trust in that? Can we do that for a day, a week, or all of Lent? Let's just try it!

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**God help us to trust and seek your strength. Help us see your wonderful works—all day, every day. Let us sing and shout them, and realize that each and every one of us are one of your wonderful works and nothing can separate us from your love and care. Help us be your hands and feet in this troubled work to bring your beloved community to fruition. Amen.**

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*Claire Mulry* has attended Nassau Presbyterian Church since 2001. She lives in Franklin Park, New Jersey, with her wife Holly Hardaway. She is an avid Mets and Rutgers Women's Basketball fan and is an occupational therapist who teaches at Kean University.

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Thursday, March 20, 2025

## Revelation 2:8-11

And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: These are the words of the first and last, who was dead and came to life.

Revelation 2:8 (NRSVue)

**L**ife often (usually?) doesn't work the way it worked out for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Devout people endure all manner of sufferings and difficulties every day. There are private, quiet struggles that no one else knows about. There public ones that cannot be hidden. People hope and they pray, but no fourth person shows up.

The words of Jesus in Revelation 2 offer one way for thinking about such things. "I know your hardship and your poverty," Jesus tells the church in Smyrna. "Don't be afraid of what you are going to suffer." "Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life." "Those who emerge victorious won't be hurt by the second death," he states.

Jesus reframes these Christians' afflictions. God knows they are suffering and knows they will suffer more. Even still, he tells them "you are actually rich." He points to a life beyond this life and a death beyond our earthly death, "the second death." These are what really matter.

Placing the sufferings of this life in a broader frame, outside the bounds of human life as we see it, can make them intelligible for the Christian: "For our slight, momentary affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure," Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians, "because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen, for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal."

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**O God, help me today to live as a stranger and pilgrim on this earth, to look for the things above where Christ is, and to see my life as hidden with Christ in You, so that when Christ is revealed, I might be revealed with him in glory. Amen.**

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*Jack Tannous* lives in Princeton with his wife, Jeannette, and children Eleanor (10) and Elias (8). He is from Houston, Texas.

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Friday, March 21, 2025

## Daniel 12:1-4

There shall be a time of anguish, such has never occurred since nations first came into existence.

Daniel 12:1 (NRSV)

When I first saw the assigned scripture readings for my meditation, I was dismayed to find that they were apocalyptic. I had nothing to say.

But Los Angeles is burning. My beloved western North Carolina flooded. National and international affairs seem to go from bad to worse. It seems that we are in “a time of anguish, such has never occurred since nations first came into existence.”

I don't agree with the prophecy in Daniel that this is a divine punishment, nor that God will save some of us who are the wise ones. We have brought on this climate devastation, and it is going to land both on those who tried to conserve things and those who didn't.

But still, I thank God morning and night for countless blessings in this life. I value each moment whether I am recovering from the Norovirus or playing Beethoven. I want to live. I want the world to survive.

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**God, help us to care for your creation and for each other. Help us to see blessings in each moment that we have. Amen.**

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*Frances Slade* is the founder and Artistic Director Emeritus of Princeton Pro Musica. She was a choral director at Rutgers University and Music Director at All Saints Church in Princeton. Today, her passion is playing the piano; she also loves English country dancing and contra dancing. She and her partner, Rainer Muser, enjoy Small Groups and Adult Education at Nassau Presbyterian Church.

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Saturday, March 22, 2025

## Luke 6:43-45

For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit; for each tree is known by its own fruit.

Luke 6:43 (NRSV)

There is an old saying: “The apple doesn’t fall far from the tree.” While a parent has the most long-lasting and significant influence on a child, all adults (parents, teachers, and congregations) have an impact on young people.

Christ knew that by pruning, watering, and feeding the “tree,” a gardener’s impact on the growth of the saplings would be significant. Likewise, the impact that the adults at Nassau Presbyterian Church have on our youth has wide-sweeping ramifications for the future of our church, our country, and the world. This is an obligation that all of us should eagerly embrace.

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Dear Lord, Thank you for the wonderful “fruit” that shout, run, laugh, jump, and cry in our midst each day. May the sounds of our children touch each of us often. Amen.

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*Penn Bowditch* began teaching in 1972 and retired from secondary independent and public education in 2021. He lives in the Hopewell area with his wife, Maria, and their Bernese mountain dog, Izzy.

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Third Sunday of Lent, March 23, 2025

## Luke 13:1-9

Then he told this parable: “A man had a fig tree growing in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it but did not find any. So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, ‘For three years now I’ve been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven’t found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?’ “‘Sir,’ the man replied, ‘leave it alone for one more year, and I’ll dig around it and fertilize it. If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down.’”

Luke 13:6–9 (NRSV)

**L**uke 13:1-9 is Tough Jesus. Hard Truths Jesus. Wake up, McFly! Jesus. Cut it down! Repent or perish!

This is Old-Timey, Jonathan Edwards, stuff. We’re sinners and The Big Guy is Angry Jesus. This isn’t your 21st Century “Oh, we’re worried-about-our-pronouns” faith.

As the Talking Heads said, “This ain’t no party, this ain’t no disco, this ain’t no fooling around!”

Salvation and damnation, neat. No rocks.

In Luke, we fig trees are on the eternal life chopping block. If – if – we bear fruit next year, maybe Heaven awaits. Where’d that “Theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven” stuff go?

If we stopped here, stopped with Angry Jesus Having a Bad Day, well, it looks bad for the figs. Most of us aren’t so good at the repentance thing, are we?

Oh, we repent being overweight every year, but most of us can’t shed pounds, much less our sins. Forget that Thou Shalt Have No Other Gods business, eh? Or loving our neighbors as ourselves?

Take the under on those bets.

It’s pretty bleak until you meet the Jesus of Ephesians 2:8: “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.”

Yes, by all means, give us some good works to show you get it. But never forget: the Almighty knows what He’s working with here: substan-

dard fig trees and He is offering the gift of His unconditional, unmerited – and often unasked for -- salvation.

Thanks be to God!

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**Dear Lord, Help us to be better fig trees. But thanks to God, who has given us the grace we do not merit or earn in our daily figginess. Amen.**

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*Mark Herr* has been worshipping at Nassau Presbyterian Church for more than forty years.

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Monday, March 24, 2025

## Psalm 39

Hear my prayer, LORD!

Listen closely to my cry for help!

Please don't ignore my tears!

I'm just a foreigner—

an immigrant staying with you,

just like all my ancestors were.

Look away from me

so I can be happy again

before I pass away and am gone.

Psalm 39:12–13 (CEB)

Psalm 39 draws us to both our hope in God's love, grace, and forgiveness and our despair for our suffering and distress in our lives. How many times have you wondered how both can be true at the same time? Just like the Psalmist, we sometimes plead with God to pay attention and to help us with our struggles and our griefs. How many times have you felt God has ignored you or turned away from you, leaving you to feel like a foreigner in your continued prayers to God—seemingly all alone, no one listening, let alone God listening. All this is like being in a foreign land.

Where is God? we ask; if I think I am not heard by God, then couldn't I just be happy again without the expectations God has for my life? And yet, like the Psalmist, we continue to pray, we continue to ask God to hear us. In doing so, we open our hearts and minds to that which we are called to do—living our life in God's vision for us and the world.

One foot in front of the other—some days with clear hope and other days with despair. Hope and despair—two sides of a coin, each showing up in the reality of our life of faith.

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**Loving God, hear my prayer! Loving God, listen to me! On those days when despair is bigger than hope, let me trust in you and in**

your infinite grace, as I continue to pray to you until the light of hope creeps back into my life. Amen.

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*Kim Kleasen* is found singing in the choir loft with her beloved Adult Choir, and playing her flute. Leadership with the Art of Faithfulness is amazing as Kim seeks to use the creative arts and our own God-given creativity to deepen our faith and our hope in God.

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Tuesday, March 25, 2025

## Psalm 39

Hear my prayer, LORD,  
listen to my cry for help;  
do not be deaf to my weeping.  
I dwell with you as a foreigner,  
a stranger, as all my ancestors were.

Psalm 39:12 (NIV)

We aren't supposed to say homeless anymore. They're unhoused—not homeless.” Knowing what to say and what not to say is important in my house. I live with tweens, teens, and a philosopher. One can be ridiculed for a slip of the tongue or not knowing the latest slang. Although I could stand to have fewer lessons in skibidi rizz, I appreciated this correction made by GenAlpha to their millennial mother. Humans can be unhoused, but we are never homeless. Everyone has a home whether it be a literal one or a distant memory.

Home is central to humanity, and this makes the Psalmist's declaration of being forever a stranger all the more dark. Feeling like you have no home with God is to despair deeply. The next time you find yourself in this kind of darkness, know you're not the first and won't be the last to feel this way. The Psalms are filled with records of every feeling on the spectrum. They validate our highest highs and lowest lows, and serve as a great tool to begin processing our own feelings.

Visit the emotion-packed Psalms, and perhaps you'll find a home there.

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Dear God, Thank you for the warmth of home. Amen.

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*Anne Thomsen Lord* feels at home at church and has been worshipping at Nas-sau Presbyterian Church since 2009. She works at raising four humans, the YMCA, HomeWorks Trenton, and Old Tennent Church.

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Wednesday, March 26, 2025

## Luke 13:18-21

It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and planted into his garden. It grew and became a tree, and the birds perched in its branches.

Luke 13:19 (NIV)

A seed that flowers; a germ of an idea for a novel; a small stuffed animal that becomes a beloved keepsake and takes on a life of its own; two glass figures, depicting eighteenth-century masqueraders at a ball, listed as priceless in the antique and auction worlds; the mustard seed that goes from “farm to table.” No, this is not *\$100,000 Pyramid*. Far from it. We live in a world wherein we often take what we see for granted. That which we see, hear, feel and taste in reality (or “irl”) began as a tangible or intangible concept. Concurrently, we need to understand that the least of the things we experience has the ability to assume an even greater significance than that which we can ever realize ourselves. Only God knows how anything and everything will evolve.

Take a stuffed bear, for instance, and its humble beginnings as a little fluff ball. When I order online or buy one from the shelf, of course, I pick out the cutest face, the softest paws, the richest color of fur, the one I think will best add to my collection. But once I receive the little bear in the mail, once I get the little bear home, the effect of this bear on heart, soul, and mind is greater than I could have ever imagined. God’s love has infused the little bear, and that love manifests in ways we cannot see (but need to have faith we *will* see).

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Oh God, Oh Jesus, please help us to realize that your love is infused in a mustard seed, in a flower, an idea for a book, antique

figurines, and—absolutely—in a stuffed animal. And that we are all the better for loving you as well as having faith that you will help all of these things grow beyond our wildest imaginations to even higher heights. Amen.

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*Cindy Miller* grew up in Northbrook, Illinois, and currently lives in Lawrenceville, New Jersey. She works in international market research as well as is a novel- and article-writer in her spare time. She grew up Presbyterian and has been a member of Nassau since 1997 as well as thoroughly enjoys contributing to the Adult Education Committee and the Lenten Devotionals. She collects glass figurines, loves the eighteenth century and loves stuffed animals.

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Thursday, March 27, 2025

## 2 Corinthians 4:16-5:5

So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day.

2 Corinthians 4:16 (NRSV)

As I write this in early 2025, I find it easy to “lose heart” in humanity and the world we live in; however, I am also reminded that it is remarkable that I am alive at all. Yes, the world is broken—“our outer nature is wasting away.”. People are suffering, there is intolerance, war, hatred, inequality, poverty, hunger, and environmental degradation. Yet, in spite of all this, here we are as individual humans who are alive. That life exists at all is an amazing confluence of happenstance and seeming improbability, which speaks to the grace of God. We did not will ourselves into existence, God did that. Therefore, just knowing all this, is renewing. We cannot change the world if we are not renewed ourselves on the inside. Knowing God is there to renew us internally—if we only listen—is enough for me.

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Gracious God, creator of life, help me hear your words of wisdom and encouragement to bring renewal to my inner self so that I can help bring that renewal to others. Amen.

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*Jeffrey Yuan* is a member of Westminster Presbyterian Church in Trenton. He started his spiritual journey in Christianity as an adult and was baptized eleven years ago. Jeff lives in Plainsboro, New Jersey, with his wife Michele and their three cats. He has two grown children that he and Michele are very proud of, and he currently works for Roivant Sciences, Inc.

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Friday, March 28, 2025

## Psalm 32

I said I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD and thou forgavest my sin.  
Selah...he that trusteth in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about.

Psalm 32:5b, 10 (KJV)

Legend has it that David wrote Psalm 32 after his affair with Bathsheba. Whoever authored it, he knew absolutely the value of mercy and forgiveness.

Throughout my life, I keep discovering how God's and Christ's examples of mercy hold out the most rewarding pathways for me to follow. God asks us simply and always to show mercy. Forgo that "deserved" retribution for injuries against your person. Forget vengeful payback or a severe judgment on others' sins. Instead, show compassionate clemency toward the offender.

Then Christ urges us to go deeper: forgive from our hearts. Let go of that resentment of the wrongdoer. Walk out of the realm of hate.

Oh, and when I stray vengefulness, well—all hell breaks loose. A merciless attitude demands judgment. Judgment demands days of keeping score. With a prosecutor's eye, my mind focuses only on the flaws of others—shutting out the true value of folks around me. And once I lurch down the judgment road, guess who falls under the most severe scrutiny? My own self. And I sweep open the door to the devils of Comparison and Regret. Truly, this is no way to wake up.

So with God's help, I strive to respond with an outpouring of mercy—to others at least. Question: why can I never find more than a few stingy

drops of forgiveness for myself?

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Sweet God, again I pray: may I not get what I deserve. Please guide us, God, onto the paths of Mercy in our lives. Lead us away from bitter days of judgment and score-keeping. Help us to follow your loving example, learning to forgive others and forgive ourselves. Amen.

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*Bart Jackson*, very much to his own delight, sings in Nassau Presbyterian's Choir, pontificates ceaselessly at the Men's Breakfast, and revels in the warm friendships made in our church for the last eighteen years. Retired from publishing, he still maintains his humor-besotted *Quips Newsletter*, and has just completed his latest book: *Holy Christ—It Works*, which takes a practical look at the benefits of Jesus' message. He is best known as the husband of Lorraine Jackson.

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Saturday, March 29, 2025

## Luke 15:1-10

Then Jesus told them this parable: “Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn’t he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it?”



Luke 15:3-4 (NIV)

When I first made this photograph, I thought of myself as the lost sheep in need of God’s grace. Today in light of recent events, I can now see myself as one of the ninety-nine, safe and secure while so many others face insecurity and distress. As followers of Christ, now more than ever, our challenge is to “welcome the breadth of humanity” with humility and compassion.

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**Lord of justice, mercy and grace, give me the courage and strength to show Christ’s love in my life and through service to others. Amen.**

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A member since 2018, *Karen Barrows* has served as a deacon and is currently a ruling elder at Nassau Church and serves on the Worship and Arts Committee.

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Fourth Sunday of Lent March 30, 2025

## Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

“But he answered his father, ‘Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command, yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your assets with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!’ Then the father said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.’”

Luke 15:29–32 (NRSVue)

**Y**ou may recognize this selection from the popular parable of the prodigal son. The younger son wastes his inheritance and hits rock bottom before returning home to work for his father. The father celebrates his return and welcomes him as a son, not worker, inviting neighbors to a joyous feast marking their reunion. This parable is third in the series about celebrating found individuals—one of a hundred sheep, one of ten coins, and one of two sons.

In these verses the elder son is caught up with the question of who is more deserving and is unable to fully embrace the joy of reuniting with his brother. He is similar to “the teachers of the law [who] muttered, ‘This man welcomes sinners and eats with them’” (15:2), which prompted Jesus to tell these parables. The teachers are worried about the status of those breaking bread together, losing sight of the beautiful connection forged.

Jesus, and the father in the story, responds not by reminding us that these “sinners” can repent; as scholar Dr. Amy-Jill Levine states, “That son may be no more repentant than a sheep and a coin.” The lesson is more challenging. Rather than rejecting or conditioning the acceptance of those who irresponsibly squander the gifts of our faith—denying the love of God to others or twisting our Scripture—we are to joyfully accept them when they come to us in need.

“[I]n Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting

their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us” (2 Corinthians 5:19).

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**God, give us the courage to reconcile with our lost siblings, provide us joy in our communion with them, and stay close to us as we rebuild your family. Amen.**

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*Isabella Shutt* is a first-year Master of Divinity student at Princeton Theological Seminary and recent graduate of Princeton University. Originally from western North Carolina, she loves baking, listening to silly podcasts, and snuggling her beagle Atticus.

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Monday, March 31, 2025

## Revelation 19:1-8

After these things I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, “Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honor and power belong to the LORD our God”... And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, “Alleluia: for the LORD God omnipotent reigns!”

Revelation 19:1, 6 (NRSV)

Where have we heard these words before? “Honor, Glory, and Power be unto him!” Maybe not from heaven but right here on earth. Possibly when you last heard “Worthy Is the Lamb That Was Slain” from Handel’s Messiah. Better yet, if you were part of that “great multitude” in the annual Messiah sing-along at Princeton University’s Chapel.

Either way, did you sense the glory of God as the mighty chorus thundered? You can even experience the wonderment vicariously. Simply Google: “Hallelujah flash mob/food court” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SXh7JR9oKVE>

Those words from Revelation, lifted from Scripture but penned by Charles Jennings (along with the entire Messiah libretto), had gathered dust on Handel’s shelf for more than a year. When finally opened, they unleashed Handel’s glorious music.

How about you? Is God’s Word unleashing you? Or is the Bible gath-

ering dust on the shelf at your house? Why not read from it at the beginning of each new day ... before turning on the morning talk show or responding to some seductive click-bait or demanding priority? When we opt for the Bible first thing, it can powerfully redirect our day in a way that honors and glorifies God.

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**Our Father and our God. You alone are worthy of all honor, power and glory. Thanks for the privilege you give each of us every day to open your word. May it inspire us to honor you with acts of kindness, great and small, reflecting your glory and power to our needy world. Amen.**

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*Ed Madsen* was born in Chicago during the Great Depression, the son of Danish immigrants. After two years in the Army (following graduation from the University of Illinois), he appraised commercial and residential real estate for fifty years. A writer and amateur musician, he has composed a few songs, including “Cloverleaf—Official March of the Fourth US Army.” Ed has been a member of Nassau Presbyterian Church for more than thirty years.

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Tuesday, April 1, 2025

## Psalm 53

(To the chief Musician upon Mahalath, Maschil, A Psalm of David.)

The fool hath said in his heart,  
There is no God. Corrupt are they, and have done abominable iniquity:  
There is none that doeth good.  
God looks down from heaven upon the children of men,  
To see if there were any that did understand, that did seek God.  
Every one of them has turned aside:  
They have altogether become corrupt;  
There is none that doeth good,  
No, not one.

Psalm 53:1–3 (KJV)

Psalm 53 reminds us that humans inhabiting the earth, in their ignorance or lack of spiritual awareness, deny that God exists. At the moments when nothing seems to be working and the world seems to be sinking lower and lower, when kindness, empathy, and compassion seem mere distant memories, it is very easy to wonder where God is. How do things stand when the pursuit of money, fame, and glory seems to be taking a front seat over caring for the close—and not so close—people in our lives. With life getting harder and harder, it is easy to forget that God does exist, and if we could collectively turn to God and do God's bidding over our self-interests, our collective lives might just get easier.

Since God is forever powerful, it is foolish to deny God's existence in times of hardships and injustice, when the cards are stacked against the have-nots who must watch the privileged cruise through life untouched. In our dire need, we are able to remember that, by the will of God and God's grace, humans can wake up from their foolishness, and the inequity and the imbalance of certain aspects of our lives can be redressed. That does not mean that we do nothing; what it means is that we willingly turn to God for strength and support—and are thus leaning on God's grace.

Psalm 53 is a powerful reminder of the folly of denying God's existence and justice, balanced with a hopeful message of deliverance for the faithful. Despite humanity's inherent sinfulness, God's grace offers salvation, calling for faith and righteousness in our daily lives.

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**God, give me the fortitude and the wisdom not to join those who are foolish, and grant me the strength to lean into your Grace so that I can bear the darkness that seems to have set in over many aspects of life. Amen.**

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*Lina Genovesi* has been a member of Nassau Presbyterian Church for over seven years. She is a part of the Mission and Outreach Committee and is active with Churches for Middle East Peace, whose mission is to advocate for peace and justice in the Middle East. She is currently a practicing attorney and resides in Princeton with her husband and two cats.

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Wednesday, April 2, 2025

## Psalm 53

O that deliverance for Israel would come from Zion!  
When God restores the fortunes of his people,  
Jacob will rejoice; Israel will be glad.

Psalm 53:6 (NRSVue)

Jennifer and I had been excited about our upcoming date, but thirty hours prior my back had seized mercilessly. The afternoon of our date, while alone and still in agony, I felt a strong push and heard a crunching. Shock became sudden relief; my back was like new! I immediately emailed Jennifer, who instantly replied, “That’s really awesome! I just finished praying for your back!” Those two twenty-year-olds went out dancing that night, awed by God’s power and mercy.

Miracles have varied impacts. A friend in greater need of divine mercy was sorely jealous. Between relationships, I wondered how my miracle hadn’t been wasted. As my wife Christianne and I got to know each other, though, we talked extensively about faith. Hindsight says the miracle with my prior girlfriend was necessary to produce another near miracle of this introvert to be talking about his own faith.

The widow’s need for God’s intervention is obvious (2 Kings 4:1–7). Elisha knew that God would provide, and God increased supply as far as the widow could contain it. Jesus one-upped Elisha (Luke 9:10–17), filling a city-sized crowd and necessitating a cleanup.

I wonder how many entrepreneurs Elisha turned away the next day. I also wonder how many who had been fed by Jesus had also shouted “Crucify him!” not much later. Even so, these miracles say God wants to provide. God’s blessings appear in many ways—not just as supernatural—and David states that God blesses God’s people even in times of trouble. I can attest, God does indeed.

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**Dear God, whether we are experiencing good times or are facing times of trouble, may we remember and seek your compassion, mercy, and provision. In Jesus’ name, Amen.**

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*John Lane* has worshipped at Nassau Presbyterian Church with his wife Christianne since 2002. and is the father of Sarah and Samuel. He is a flutist and delights in occasionally sharing his work in worship with you.

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Thursday, April 3, 2025

## Isaiah 43:1-7

But now thus says the LORD,  
he who created you, O Jacob,  
he who formed you, O Israel:  
Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;  
I have called you by name; you are mine.  
When you pass through the waters, I will be with you,  
and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;  
when you walk through fire, you shall not be burned,  
and the flame shall not consume you.  
For I am the LORD your God,  
the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.

Isaiah 43:1-3 (NRSV)

**M**ake sure you are sitting with a comfortable chair. Take a deep breath, hold it, let it out slowly. Remember that God, the one who formed and created you, is with you. In the sky, in your chair, and in your soul. God is around us everywhere. The God who formed us and is ruler of the whole world wants to be with us. It's quite incredible. Take a few moments to close your eyes and look inward. Think about what has gone on so far today, where you have seen/felt/thought about God. These places are holy, just as you are holy. Take a couple more breaths and think about what you are doing the rest of the day, and then think of how God will be there with you. The rivers and fire will not overcome you. But the Lord will also be with you in the quiet places. As you go into the rest of your day think about the places where you see God.

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**Lord, Creator and former, as we go through this season of Lent let us never forget that you will be with us in all times and all places. Amen.**

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*Robbie Bendelius* joined Nassau Presbyterian Church last year. He is from upstate New York and attends Princeton Theological Seminary. He will be pursuing a Chaplaincy residency next year.

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Friday, April 4, 2025

## Psalm 126

When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion,  
we were like those who dreamed.  
Our mouths were filled with laughter,  
our tongues with songs of joy.  
Then it was said among the nations,  
“The LORD has done great things for them.”...

Those who go out weeping,  
carrying seed to sow,  
will return with songs of joy,  
carrying sheaves with them.

Psalm 126:1–2, 6 (NIV)

After a few reads of Psalm 126, I had the gist: When God restores the fortunes of Zion, they’ll be joyful, joyful, joyful.

But something seemed off. How did they lose their fortune? And why would they ask God to restore it? Hmmm, I must be missing something.

So I consulted the original Hebrew. Whoa! When the Psalmist speaks about Yahweh restoring the fortunes of Zion, he’s referring to when the Israelites were captured and enslaved, presumably by the Babylonians (587/586 BC). It’s a recurring theme/event in the Hebrew Bible: The Israelites ask Yahweh to liberate them from their oppressors, and then their unbounded joy when Yahweh does.

But how did this theme/event—about Yahweh releasing captives—make the leap to us? From Augustine forward, Christian commentators believe it foreshadowed how Jesus liberates us from bondage to sin, and the unbounded joy that comes from this freedom.

I’m fairly sure this liberation has played out a bit differently for each



of us. For me, years ago, I didn't like anyone, including myself: that was my private prison. But Jesus convinced me that God loved me. Then Jesus challenged me to love God back, as well as to love other people, who might then show me love, which I then had to learn to accept. In a process of creative demolition, Jesus broke up my private prison, freeing me to discover the rich world outside it. And Jesus is still restoring a fortune I never would have had otherwise.

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**Lord, free us from the things that hinder us from loving you and others more fully. Amen.**

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Through both teaching and research, *Tom Quinlan* has pursued a life-long fascination with writing (i.e., how our minds translate thoughts/feelings into written language). Now retired, he lives in Hamilton with his wife, Debbie.

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Saturday, April 5, 2025

## Psalm 126

Those who sow with tears,  
will reap with songs of joy.  
Those who go out weeping,  
carrying seed to sow,  
will return with songs of joy,  
carrying sheaves with them.

Psalm 126:5–6 (NIV)

I remember passing by these two verses written on the billboard of a local congregation when returning home for Christmas. Like every year, the feeling of coming home is elating. The air felt calmer, old childhood landmarks glistening in renewed beauty. My mother herself put it best, “when you’ve been gone, the feeling never fails—returning home is a dream!”

Reading Psalm 126, I could see my own joyous surprise transformed into calling. We live in certainty of God’s grace. Still, a glimpse of God’s love here on earth never fails to catch us off guard. It’s as though we were

dreaming. Verse 1 states it like no other: “When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dreamed.” Such ecstasy, however, never lasts forever. Hardly a few moments pass before we carry on with our next worldly grievance. My first moments at home are always joy-filled, but it’s never long until distractions set in and I set my eyes upon the next fleeting adventure. Before I know it, I’m back to craving that feeling all over again—like a slot machine—waiting for the Lord to shake me awake yet again.

My own tendencies towards such pining are what make these two verses so powerful to me. As Christians, we are called to “sow” love, mercy, and justice not despite our hardships, but because of them. We can never know when God’s next blessing will come, but we are assured that they are intimately and mysteriously connected to our present tears—and the ways we work with them. Let us remember that such toil is all the sweeter with Jesus alongside. Therein lies hope, our seed to sow.

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**As we walk further into our Lenten journey, I pray that we may all find peace in the assurance of God’s restoration and the value within the seeds God grants us in between. Amen.**

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*Amaya Dressler* is a senior at Princeton University studying anthropology. She is originally from Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, and hopes to pursue a career in chaplaincy and medicine.

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Fifth Sunday of Lent April 6, 2025

## Psalm 126

When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion,  
we were like those who dream.

May those who sow in tears  
reap with shouts of joy.

Psalm 126:1, 5 (NRSVue)

This is a great psalm for a winter discontent and bitter bread.

Don't miss the word "restored" in the first verse. This isn't just the memory of happier times, followed by a plea for their restoration. The psalmist reminds that those happier times, when our mouths were filled with laughter, were themselves a restoration. They too were preceded by tears.

You can't escape history in this psalm. Joy here is always a reminder of restored joy—and thus of the sadness that preceded it. Only in dreams is joy never lost. In our ordinary, waking lives, sadness is ever-present; we live in a sea of it. I mean, look around. But if restored joy always points to the sadness that preceded it, can our tears not, by a similar logic, remind us of a time when God restored joy to our lives?

Winter is like this, is it not? Even at its harshest, it comes with the idea that spring cannot be far behind, in part because it never has been. That idea then turns into a prayer of sorts, a desperate prayer, that God might restore our knowledge of certain things that would give us joy if we could only remember how to do them. How to feed the hungry, for example, or care for the sick, or make the least among us first, or forgive our debtors, or create a society in which all God's children are equal simply by dint of who they are—God's children.

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**Restore our fortunes, O Lord, such that those who sow in tears  
reap with shouts of joy, and those who go out weeping, bear the  
seed for sowing, and come home with shouts of joy, carrying  
their sheaves. Amen.**

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*Ned Walthall* is a photographer based in Princeton, New Jersey. He received his MFA from the Institute of Art and Design at New England College (formerly the New Hampshire Institute of Art). His work has been featured in Lenscratch (<https://lenscratch.com/2022/02/ned-walthall-grand-central-terminal-after/>). Since 2016, he has lead a small group at Nassau Church called “The Sacred Art of Photography.”

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Monday, April 7, 2025

## Hebrews 10:19-25

Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Hebrews 10:23–25 (NRSVue)

*To Persevere:* “To persist in a course of action or an attitude despite opposition, keep on.”

This call is one that [Black] Americans have responded to over the years, sometimes with confidence and patience, and sometimes with impatience and disappointment that exploded into revulsion and riots, and then simmered down into spirituals and gospel songs filled with love, hope, and faith. We know how to keep on keeping on. I wish the change that is to come would come soon ... because “I ain’t got long to stay here.” My faith is unwavering, and I am sure Jesus Christ made the perfect sacrifice for us all. It is wise to encourage my fellowship to persevere as that promised New Day approaches ... in God’s time, not my time.

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**Dear Lord Jesus, we persevere, having you as our example. We are grateful for your perfect sacrifice. We know no other way to awaken except with thanks for another day to hear your word and do your will. Please look kindly on our Earth, our congregations, and your faithful followers. Amen.**

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*Denyse Leslie* is a child of God, blest to believe in Jesus and his sacrifice, and to be able to enter God’s presence in prayer with love. She is a Witherspoon Presbyterian

Church member and one of four founders of the Bending the Moral Arc: Courageous Conversations program, which is finding life within and beyond our two congregations. She is active with the Paul Robeson House of Princeton. Denyse lives in Hopewell with her Husky, HoneyBee.

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Tuesday, April 8, 2025

## Judges 9:7-15

The thornbush said to the trees, "If you really want to anoint me king over you, come and take refuge in my shade; but if not, then let fire come out of the thornbush and consume the cedars of Lebanon!"

Judges 9:15 (NIV)

I was a teen when my father was asked to run for mayor of our town. One of his friends immediately urged him to decline, pointing out that the job would entail a great deal of thankless work, controversy, and abuse. My father shook his head.

"I'm going to do this," he explained, "because I can. If those of us who can do it refuse, then we have no right to complain about the way it's done by others."

Judges 9 is a parable. An olive tree, a fig tree, and a grapevine all turn down the opportunity to become king of the trees. They all think they have more important functions to attend to. As a result, they find themselves being governed by a thornbush who wants to place them all under its prickly branches.

The lesson here is that all of us possess talents bestowed by our Creator and sometimes God wants us to use those talents to benefit others, even if it happens to be inconvenient. If we refuse, the task will inevitably fall to someone else, whether or not that person is capable of doing the job. When God calls, he expects us to say "Yes."

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**Father, we thank you for your many gifts. Please help us to utilize those gifts to further your will and your glory.**

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*Jay Dunn* is a retired sportswriter. His baseball column appears in the *Trentonian* on Thursdays.

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Wednesday, April 9, 2025

## Psalm 20

The LORD answer you in the day of trouble!

The name of the God of Jacob protect you!

Psalm 20:1 (NRSVue)


**P**salm 20— a modern paraphrase for all ages.

1. May the LORD never leave you on Read when you freak out; May the name of the God of Jacob protect you.

2. May God send you Roadside Assistance with no deductible and support from the homestead when you travel. That's on brand.

3. May God remember how you sacrificed riches in order to do good and accept your Friend Request without hesitation.

4. May God be a real one and never ghost you, and may God always like and interact with your posts, stories, and plans. May your streak never end.

5. May we applaud  God's faithfulness. They are the OG. May we celebrate all God's strength and goodness in our lives. May the LORD come through when you need it most.

6. Now this is what I know for sure: The LORD is the GOAT. Victory belongs to all of us on God's squad and all are welcome, Boomers to Zoomers. And when there's drama in the friend group, God brings a calm and steady hand.

7. There are bullies all around, those who misgender, dead-name, and use offensive, outdated terms for our brothers and sisters of color. These bullies are violent; they have no chill. But nobody has time for that. We rely on God and only God to lead us.

8. Bullies are humbled while we are lifted up.

9. LORD, Let us get the W! Do not let us take the L, fam, for real. Answer us! Do not leave us on Read, King.

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Lord, you never change. Even as trends come and go, you stay the same. Your love and faithfulness, they are steadfast. Amen.

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*Aaron Twitchell* keeps getting older but has yet to grow up. He and his family live in Hopewell Borough, where you can find him building a fairy tree village with the neighborhood kids or shaking his fist at the insubordinate deer who terrorize his flowers. His favorite animals are ticks—whom, he insists, are misunderstood. He is an ordained minister and certified Lego builder (no sets!).

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Thursday, April 10, 2025

## Psalm 31:9-16

My future is in your hands.

Don't hand me over to my enemies,  
to all who are out to get me!

Shine your face on your servant;  
save me by your faithful love!

Psalm 31:15-16 (CEB)

**H**ow are your heart and your spirit these days? I don't know about you, but I have been feeling rather like the Psalmist: depressed, full of grief, suffering, and full of sadness. In mid-December when I read this Psalm these verses caught my attention as the prayer of my heart, given these difficult times in which we find ourselves, as well as some events in my life.

I had just returned from a visit to my Dad, not knowing if I would see him alive again. He had been in and out of the hospital for several weeks and was getting frailer with each passing day. I found myself unsure of how best to move forward through the days of Advent, wondering if my dad would bounce back as he had so many times before. It was in the midst of this great uncertainty that I found the reassuring words of these verses coming into my mind again and again, bringing me great comfort and a deep, gentle reassurance. Uncertainty can be a hard place in which to sit. This scripture soothed that unease.

In early January my Dad slipped gently into his eternal rest. Of course I am experiencing all the feelings that grief brings. What is saving me, day by day, is the faithful love of God pouring out on me, through the

kindness and caring of the people around me. It is making the unbearable bearable.

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**Faithful and loving God, you are a soothing balm for our weary souls. Our future is in your hands. Shine your face on us and save us with your faithful love. Help us to recognize and receive your care in the times when our hearts are hurting. Thank you for the hope we have in Jesus. Inspire us to share your love and care with others always. Amen.**

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*Elizabeth Gift* and her husband Kevin are blessed with four amazing children, a wonderful daughter-in-law, and two precious grandchildren. In her seventeen years at Nassau Presbyterian Church, Elizabeth has served as Elder, Deacon, Church School teacher, Small Group leader, and secretary of the Westminster Foundation Board. Elizabeth enjoys puzzles, running, playing with her grandsons, and sharing on Instagram (@elizabethgift4) with the random hearts she finds in the world. She warmly invites you to check them out.

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Friday, April 11, 2025

## Psalm 31:9-16

For I hear the whispering of many—  
terror all around!—  
as they scheme together against me,  
as they plot to take my life.  
But I trust in you, O LORD;  
I say, “You are my God.”

Psalm 31:13–14 (NIV)

Psalm 31:9-16 seems paired with Isaiah 54:9 (“Just as I swore that the waters of Noah would never again go over the earth, so I have sworn that I will not be angry with you”) from the Old Testament selection for this day to give testimony to God’s chosen people’s dramatic and unjustly suffering. The word for “distress” derives from a verb “to bind” or “be restricted,” suggesting being bound up or trapped in dire straits. The psalmist’s complaints range from personal ill health to paranoia includ-



ing “terror on every side”!

As the ancient writer reached Psalm 31, verse 14, the message’s tone adjusted to stating trust in the Lord and then apparently opening negotiations for the Lord’s protection. These readings establish the need to embrace positive changes.

Yes! Considering “busyness” and complexities of our own lives, we and our ancestors have been—well—human. We still deal with perceived and real adventures and crises to be managed. As Christians living twenty centuries after Jesus, we also recognize, appreciate, and need the positive inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

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**Lord, please inspire us to appreciate the past while living our own lives with tenacity to endure when needed and with enthusiasm to enjoy the many positive features of our modern life. In your name, Amen.**

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*Val Mathews* enjoyed a busy, varied career in technology, military-industrial complex, and bluffed in several languages, with just enough international travel. He enjoys the Nassau Men’s Breakfast Group and has three children and six grandchildren. His wife Martha has been in the Nassau Adult Choir.

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Saturday, April 12, 2025

## Psalm 31:9-16

My times are in your hands;  
deliver me from the hands of my enemies,  
from those who pursue me.  
Let your face shine on your servant;  
save me in your unfailing love.

Psalm 31:15–16 (NIV)

Psalm 31 was written near the end of King David’s life, as he lamented his plight and appealed to God for help. His son, Absalom, was leading an insurrection against him, and was on his way to Jerusalem to kill

him. In this passage, David trusted in the Lord to save him.

By contrast to David, as Jesus prepared to enter Jerusalem, knowing that his enemies would arrest him there, he made a different entreaty to God. In the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prayed, “Father, if this cup cannot be taken away unless I drink it, let your will be done” (Matthew 26:42).

There is much to lament in our current age: wars in Ukraine, the Middle East, and Africa; climate change that has caused rising temperatures and sea levels, and natural disasters; the heated political conflict in our own country, tearing families and communities apart. It is tempting to beseech God to sort it all out, to save us. When I pray, even for personal things, my children, my grandchildren, my husband’s, or my own health, I try to remember to add, as Jesus did, “but thy will be done.”

Ultimately, we are God’s people, in life and in death, and “whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord” (Romans 13:8). I take comfort in that.

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**Dear Lord, help us to use our time on Earth to do your will and show your love to others, secure in the knowledge that we are your people, in life and in death, and nothing can separate us from your love. In Jesus’ name, Amen.**

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*Liz Beasley* joined Nassau Presbyterian Church in 2007, and has served as Elder, Deacon, and as member of the Membership, Adult Education, and (currently) Mission and Outreach Committees. She retired from Rutgers in 2019, and lives with her husband, Kim, in Princeton. When she isn’t visiting her grandchildren in California and Illinois, she volunteers with Villages in Partnership (a nonprofit/NGO dedicated to eradicating extreme poverty in Malawi), chairs the Activities Committee for the Present Day Club, and hosts a karaoke group.

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Palm Sunday, April 13, 2025

## Psalm 113

This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Psalm 118:24 (NRSVue)

When I first read this verse, I immediately thought of the song I learned in Nassau's Joyful Noise Choir at only four years old. The lyrics are simply the words of Psalm 118:24, of course, with fun hand motions and an echoing part. Despite its simplicity, I think it's easy to overlook the message of this catchy tune.

We all have moments of time where it feels like the day is a task, a chore, a to-do list, a set of things that has to get done. Our planners are full, our heads ache, and we are constantly overworking ourselves to the point where we dread the next day: the day of the big test, the important meeting, the high-stakes doctor's appointment. In these moments, when stress flurries around us, we forget that each moment is a gift from God. The Lord has made this day for us not to fill it with more tasks and to-dos, but instead to rejoice and be glad in it. Even when it feels like the day ahead is an insuperable mountain to climb, God is in control. We can have peace knowing that God's everlasting love will overcome the stress of any pressing deadlines, dreadful tasks or appointments. Next time your day feels overwhelming, take a moment to remember that simple song. Put the day in God's hands and let God do the rest.

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**Dear Lord, thank you for making this day for each one of us.  
We pray that you can give us open minds to see the good in each  
moment and feel your everlasting love. In your name, Amen.**

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*Rachel Berliner* is a junior in high school who loves everything about Nassau! She spends her time at youth group, in choir, leading the Time with Children every once-in-a-while and serving as a deacon. Her favorite Nassau memories include working with Appalachia Service Project in the summertime and helping out at Vacation Bible School.

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Monday, April 14, 2025

## Psalm 36:5-11

Your steadfast love, O LORD, extends to the heavens,  
your faithfulness to the clouds.  
Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains;  
your judgments are like the great deep;  
you save humans and animals alike, O LORD

Psalm 36:5–6 (NRSVue)

Mount Everest is 29,032 feet above sea level. The Challenger Deep is the deepest point in the Pacific Ocean with a depth of 12,080 feet. This expanse of 41,112 feet encompasses all the earth's life (with the exception of some bar-headed geese during flight).

Although these numbers are real, my mind is unable to fully comprehend them. I know they are big. I am also quite certain that I will neither climb Everest's peak nor be in a submarine at Challenger Deep. But the numbers are too large. When I try to visualize the difference between them, it is as if my mind goes blank. This is probably because the measurements I see on a day-to-day basis are more often in units of one or ten. My perspective is too small to visualize anything this large.

My ability to envision God's love is similarly inadequate. God always was, is, and will be? God is here, there, and everywhere in between? These words encompass literally everything, and yet my attempts to imagine their meaning leaves me bewildered.

In the same way that my brain is better at visualizing a ruler than a mountain, perhaps I would be more successful if I focused on noticing God's love in the everyday moments of life. Just like a mountain climber scales a peak one step at a time, we may better understand God through small observations daily.

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**Dear Lord, teach us to notice your acts of love in everyday moments. In your name we pray, Amen.**

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*Robert Duffy* has been part of the Nassau Presbyterian community for many years now. Although he grew up in the Princeton area and has no plans to leave, he yearns to explore all the corners of the earth (although he may not quite be ready to climb Mount Everest).

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Tuesday, April 15, 2025

## Psalm 71:1-14

Be to me a rock of refuge,  
a strong fortress to save me,  
for you are my rock and my fortress.

Psalm 71:3 (NRSVue)

**A**t times we can simultaneously know something is true and doubt its reality, especially when our reality might lead us to believe otherwise. We know of God's loving presence, and yet when life is especially hard/confusing/overwhelming ... feeling that presence becomes shrouded by our own constellation of emotions and fears. That seems to be happening here when the Psalmist requests that God be a rock and fortress but simultaneously acknowledges that God is a rock and fortress. So we pray. In our pain, fear, disbelief, we ask God to not only be with us, but to be with us, providing the refuge where we can pause and regroup, and imbuing us with the strength to carry on.

Prayer and music for me are deeply intertwined. Recently I have been writing round after round on texts that I sing/pray, over and over, seeking comfort, calm, faith, strength, resolve, and refuge. May this music be a prayer and bring refuge and strength to you.

Listen on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/zk69BzDYInc>

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God, our Rock and Fortress, though we know you are with us, still we pray for your presence. When the world feels dark and confusing, we particularly ask that you provide a place of respite, a fortress where we may escape while seeking the strength within to stand on your Rock and live as you would have us live. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

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*Christianne Bessières Lane* is a mom, wife, and musician. She with her flutist husband, John, has been a member of Nassau Presbyterian Church since 2003, and sang in the Adult Choir for several years before the gifts of her two children. Now that her children are in school, she gratefully uses her gifts to create more music to serve God and beautify the world.

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Wednesday, April 16, 2025

## Psalm 70

Make haste, O God, to deliver me; make haste to help me, O LORD.

Let them be ashamed and confounded that seek after my soul: let them be turned backward, and put to confusion, that desire my hurt.

Let them be turned back for a reward of their shame that say, Aha, aha.

Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee: and let such as love thy salvation say continually, Let God be magnified.

But I am poor and needy: make haste unto me, O God: thou art my help and my deliverer; O LORD, make no tarrying.

Psalm 70:1–5 (KJV)

During the time I was considering which verses to focus on for some meditative thoughts, the horrific fires in the Los Angeles area were on the news constantly. Twelve thousand structures, mostly homes, were destroyed, and more will be gone before all the fires are extinguished. A select few have other homes to relocate to while their burnt dwellings are repaired. The vast majority are not so fortunate.

In Psalm 70 David is asking God for deliverance from his enemies. Fire is a harsh enemy when it destroys your home. The struggle does not end when the fire is put out. The cleanup must be completed prior to rebuilding—assuming insurance will cover this expense. This will take months if not years. Temporary living accommodations, schools, and, in some cases, employment all need to be arranged.

All these issues can amount to some form of enemy—more covert than overt. We need to be vigilant in helping the affected deal with these enemies. David makes the case (verse 5) that help is needed now. “But I

am poor and needy: make haste unto me, O God: thou art my help and my deliverer; O LORD, make no tarrying.” David asks the Lord not to tarry! The LA fires are not the only disaster that has impacted the United States or the world. Accidents, disasters, and wars great and small (there is no small war if you are in it) are enemies of God’s people. We echo David’s request for God’s speed in helping us!

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**Dear Lord, we ask for your help in dealing with seen and unseen enemies. We ask that you not tarry, but keep our spirits high and our faith strong during these times of need. Please help us to see how to help others, even during our times of need. Amen.**

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*Henry Behnke* is married to Marie Behnke, and they have been members of Nassau Presbyterian Church for almost twenty years. They have three sons, two of them married, and they are the proud grandparents of John and George—and of the newest, granddaughter Penelope! Henry is currently serving as an Elder, working on the Lighting Project Committee and Marie is serving as a Deacon. They both serve as ushers.

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Maundy Thursday, April 17, 2025

## John 13:1-17, 31b-35

Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him.

John 13:5 (NRSV)

I write this meditation having come through a difficult year: the death of my brother and completion of a contentious election process. Throughout both events the name of our Lord was frequently proclaimed.

My brother was not blessed with an easy life. He was diagnosed with schizophrenia in his teens and with leukemia in his late forties. Hopes and dreams for his life were severely curtailed. He frequently felt looked down upon because of his mental illness. Yet he accepted the lot he had been given and worked hard in his community to bring compassion and humor to family and friends, as well as to those who shared simi-

lar disabilities. He helped establish institutions in his community that are a model for supporting the mentally ill; he helped establish a peer counselor system in the state of Iowa; and he was the first registered peer counselor there. He helped me in my drug development work for the mentally ill. He was a faithful servant of Christ.

Last year we also chose a new leader for our country who often spoke of his faith. Yet the policies he advocated seem to fall short of stooping to be a servant leader ... washing the feet of others. May he demonstrate that service as he leads us.

Unlike in some Christian traditions, washing each other's feet in this season is not a ritual many of us Presbyterians follow today. It likely makes most of us too uncomfortable. Nevertheless, as we live our faith in 2025, may we be faithful servants and at least metaphorically wash the feet of others.

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**Dearest Lord Jesus, how have we offended? What have we left undone? Help us to be faithful in the service you require of us.**

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*Larry Alphs* has been a member of Nassau Presbyterian Church since 2007. During Sunday services he can usually be found on the organ side of the balcony.

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Good Friday, April 18, 2025

## John 18:1-19:42

This was to fulfill the word that he had spoken, "I did not lose a single one of those whom you gave me."

John 18:9 (NRSVue)

**I** did not lose a single one of those whom you gave me" is a comfort to read and to hear. With these words, Christ fulfilled a promise he had made earlier. This time, he is in Gethsemane, surrounded by belligerent soldiers and police that Judas leads. He confronts his attackers to protect his disciples, with "If you are looking for me, let these men go."

In today's challenging times, this scripture resonates in possible application to our daily lives. AI sources offer the following interpretation of



John 18:9 that it “signifies a strong commitment to safeguarding and preserving the values, relationships, and community built within a group, ensuring that no one within that community is ‘lost’ or left behind, even amidst potential challenges and uncertainties of the future year. It emphasizes the importance of active care and support for everyone involved, reflecting a sense of unity and resilience in the face of potential difficulties.” Christ saves the disciples, body and soul, because they keep the faith.

Let us, then, extend a hand of faith and fellowship to family, neighbors, colleagues and friends.

We can help each other keep the faith, in these troublous times, so that none will be “lost” by the risen Christ.

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**Savior, we give you myriad thanks for enduring excruciating pain on the cross for our sins. We are ecstatic that when we keep the faith, we are not “lost” to you. We await your rising with joy and anticipation. Hallelujah! Amen.**

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*Cecelia B. Hodges* joined Witherspoon Street Presbyterian Church in the 70s. She served as a ruling elder several times, chaired the Nominating Committee, served on the Pastor Nominating Committee, and is completing her 38th year as Founding Director of the Witherspoon Verse Speaking Choir. She taught at the former Performing Arts High School in New York City, at Talladega College, and as Associate Professor of Speech and Dramatic Art at the former Douglass College of Rutgers. She retired from Princeton where she taught in the English Department and was an Assistant Dean of the College. She has appeared in many community theatre productions and in her one woman shows.

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Holy Saturday, April 19, 2025

## John 19:38-42

Later, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Now Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jewish leaders. With Pilate’s permission, he came and took the body away. He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought

a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds. Taking Jesus' body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs.

John 19:38–40 (NIV)

Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus. These two have a lot in common. Both are prominent, both are wealthy—Joseph having a new tomb available and Nicodemus bringing 75 pounds of spices—and both are followers of Jesus, in secret and questioning. Scripture tells us plainly that Joseph was a disciple in secret and scripture also tells us that Nicodemus came to Jesus at night to question him. Regardless of how strong their beliefs were, their faith in Jesus was evident by their actions as they provided Jesus with a burial according to custom, no easy feat. The others, Jesus' outward believing disciples, were nowhere to be found.

Joseph and Nicodemus were in the right place at the right time with the right resources and they were the right people for the task. God used them to carry out critical steps in the plan of salvation for all humanity. The proper burial is key testimony to the resurrection itself—the body was wrapped and laid to rest in a sealed, guarded tomb. The only way out was the resurrection, as Jesus stated, “The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day” (Luke 24:46).

Today, in this world with so much confusion, discord, evil and hate spinning, we can begin to wonder if our personal faith is enough to have any impact. This account encourages us that as we seek Jesus, wherever we are in our faith, God will have us in the right place at the right time. God will use us all, including those who are in secret like Joseph or questioning like Nicodemus.

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**Good and gracious God, thank you that your plans and purposes include us all. Amen.**

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*Karen Berliner* is wife to Jeff and mom to Rachel and Sarah. They have been at Nassau for about 14 years. Karen currently serves as a ruling elder, participates in children and family ministries and a variety of other activities. Additionally, she's a bit of a renaissance gal with a variety of interests, part-time jobs and activities.

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Easter Sunday, April 20, 2025

## John 20:1-18

Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the LORD,” and she told them that he had said these things to her.

John 20:18 (NRSVue)

*“It is well known that Christ consistently used the expression ‘follower.’ He never asks for admirers, worshippers, or adherents. No, he calls disciples. It is not adherents of a teaching, but followers of a life, Christ is looking for.”  
~ Søren Kierkegaard*

To say “I have seen the LORD” is to be a follower of Christ and to be a follower of Christ is to be a follower of a way of life. On Easter morning when we announce, “I have seen the LORD!” it becomes our credo, our proclamation, our declaration body, and soul, of who we are and to whom we belong:

“I have seen the LORD!”—Witnesses to a way of living shaped by the glory of the resurrection.

“I have seen the LORD!”—Turns the world on its head as a demonstration of mercy and justice.

“I have seen the LORD!”—Rolls back the stones of our tombs and helps us to live with God-given dignity and respect.

At the center of the Easter Gospel is our testimony that we’ve been met by the risen Christ. And when we allow ourselves to be found, when we can take off our shrouds and come out of our graves, there is no more resistance or hiding—only embracing and welcoming the Shepherd who comes to us: his friends, his sheep, his flock.

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**God of ever flowing mercy, you have given us life through death and we are giving ourselves to you this Easter with gratitude for loving us so. Amen.**

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*Lauren McFeaters* gratefully serves as Nassau Presbyterian Church’s Associate Pastor. She has a love of writing liturgy, reading mysteries, walking old-growth forests, watching films from the 1940s, and traveling to Old Québec City whenever possible.

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# Lenten Worship

In the Sanctuary unless otherwise indicated.

\*Services that will be livestreamed.

## ***Ash Wednesday***

Wednesday, March 5, 12:00 PM\*

ECCLESIASTES 3:18–22

## ***Lent I (Communion)***

Sunday, March 9, 9:15\* & 11:00 AM

GENESIS 1:1–2:3

## ***Lent II (Youth Sunday)***

Sunday, March 16, 11:00 AM\*

(adult education, 9:30 AM)

GENESIS 2:4–9, 15–23

## ***Lent III***

Sunday, March 23, 9:15\* & 11:00 AM

GENESIS 3:17–19

## ***Lent IV***

Sunday, March 30, 9:15\* & 11:00 AM

EXODUS 16

## ***Lenten Communion***

Tuesday, April 1, 1:30 PM

at Stonebridge

## ***Lent V***

Sunday, April 6, 11:00 AM\*

LUKE 9:1–9

## ***Lenten Communion***

Tuesday, April 8, 1:30 PM

at Windrows

## ***Palm Sunday***

April 13, 9:15\* & 11:00 AM

LUKE 22:1–23

## ***Service of Wholeness & Healing***

April 13, 2:00 PM

Niles Chapel

## ***Maundy Thursday***

## ***Communion & Tenebrae***

## ***Worship***

April 17, 7:30 PM\*

MARK 14:10–11, 17–24

## ***Good Friday Worship***

April 18, 12:00 PM\*

## ***Easter Sunday***

April 20, 6:15 AM

Princeton Cemetery

## ***Easter Sunday***

April 20, 9:00 & 11:00 AM\*

MATTHEW 28:1–10

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