

An Apostle in Prison: *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*



Paul in Prison

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Linked-In Learning • Lent 2026

Study Guide

NASSAU PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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Aung San Suu Kyi, 2016. Photograph by 外務省ホームページ (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan). CC BY 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons.

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Cover Art: *Paul in Prison*

Hand-carved blocks printed with oil-based ink on paper, inspired by 2 Timothy 4:9-18

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Ways to Use this Study Guide

Everyone, leader and participants, should begin by reading the introduction for its important orientation to the theme for this study.

- * Leaders of small groups can prepare by reading the text in advance as well as looking over the discussion plan to see how it will fit your group and the events of the day.
- * Participants can best prepare for each meeting by reading the assigned text in advance at least once. They can also read the material that will guide the discussion, although this is not necessary to enter into the discussion.

If you are unable to attend a small group:

- * Use this guide each week to prepare to hear the sermon during the week on the Nassau Church website or in worship on Sunday.
- * Read the text and discuss the questions together as a family or couple.
- * Gather three or four friends on Zoom to talk about *An Apostle in Prison: Paul's Letter to the Philippians* using this guide.
- * Reflect on the text and discussion questions as a Lenten practice or discipline.

However and whenever you enter into this study, bring your own questions as you grapple with this material and the world today. May your faith come alive in new ways as you discover how to walk with Paul and other role models for following Jesus.

Carol A. Wehrheim, February 2026



An Apostle in Prison: *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*

Welcome to the Lenten 2026 Linked-In Small Groups Study Guide! Whether you join a small group, gather with your family or a couple of friends, or read this guide and ponder its words and questions on your own, surely your faith will be enriched by doing so.

Six sessions make up this Lenten study: Weeks One through Five are on Paul's Letter to the Philippians. The Adult Education presentations for those weeks will be by Matt Novenson, professor of New Testament at Princeton Theological Seminary. He will take us through this short (well, for Paul) letter to the church in Philippi. The sermons during those weeks will come from the chapter of Philippians under discussion.

The Sixth Week will focus on Christian living in these days—days unlike any most of us have experienced before. Our leader on Palm Sunday morning will be Hanna Reichel, professor of Systematic Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary. Hanna's book, *For Such a Time as This: An Emergency Devotional*, will provide a backdrop for our discussion.

To get the most out of a Linked-In series, join a small group, attend the adult education session, and attend worship so you also hear the sermon. If that is more than you can manage, even for six weeks in Lent, turn back to "Ways to Use This Guide" and decide the best fit for your life for digging into the content of the week before you hear the presentation and sermon on Sunday. Of course, you can listen to the live-streamed version of the sermon on your own time during the week. Recordings of the Sunday morning adult education classes will be made available to registered participants of the 2026 Linked-In Lent Small Groups.

Paul wrote to the Philippian congregation while he was under house arrest (not his first imprisonment), but he knew this congregation and could write very personally to the people there. Each week the study guide features a contemporary figure who was imprisoned, usually for advocating for their own people or for others. Each of them wrote about freedom and civic responsibility. Some wrote while they were incarcerated; others wrote after that experience.

Something new to these study guides this time is a **Key Verse**. It is a verse from the text discussed that you might want to commit to memory or tape to your bathroom mirror for the week. Keeping it before you for a week may help you focus your thought during this Lenten Season.

To prepare for this Lenten study, spend some time looking at the cover art of Paul in prison. Think about these questions:

- * What emotions or feelings does this portrayal of Paul stir in you?
- * Only two bright colors—the orange of Paul’s clothing and the golden halo or nimbus around his face—relieve the black and white of this block print. What might this say about Paul?
- * The artist carved this print so that one hand is outside the prison bars. What might that suggest about Paul in his later years?

As you travel through Lent this year, spend some time each day, however brief, sitting quietly with the text for the week. May you come to Holy Week and Easter with the joy Paul urges upon the Philippians.



WEEK ONE

A Prisoner for the Gospel

Acts 7-28 (selected verses); Philemon

Key Verse: Refresh my heart in Christ (Philemon 1:20b CEB).

Paul says that he experienced many imprisonments (2 Corinthians 7:23), the Book of Acts portrays him that way, and some of his letters like Philemon are expressly written from prison. Prison turns out to be a primary context for Paul's ministry as an apostle.

Transition from everyday life to the small group setting Invite the participants to introduce themselves and answer one of the questions on page 16 or a question of your own. If there are people who don't know each other in your group, you might choose a more general question to begin to build trust in this group setting. Just one new person changes the group dynamics.

Guidelines for Small Groups Review the "Group Covenant." Make any comments particular to your group, such as "I like to start promptly and end on the agreed time" or "I will have tea ready for you each week" or "Please let me know if you will not be here."

Pray Open with prayer or pray after the opening activities.

FEATURING THE BIBLE TEXT

The small group study this Lent will focus on Paul and his letter to the church in Philippi. Before we begin our exploration of this letter, we will take this session to focus on Paul. Having a rounded picture of Paul will be helpful as we search out his relationship with the Philippians and with the early church.

Assign each passage to a participant to report to the group:

If you don't have enough participants to report on all the references, combine some of those in chapter 9.

Acts 7:54-8:1a	9:26-31	17:1-10
9:1-2	13:1-3, 13-16	18:9-16
9:3-9	14:1-7	20:7-12
9:10-20	15:30-35	21:27-40
9:21-25	16:16-28	28:17-20, 30

Paul is a major figure in the Acts of the Apostles. When Paul first appears in Acts, he goes by his Jewish name, Saul, the name of the first king of Israel. In Acts 13, as he moves into the wider world, he becomes Paul, the Roman form of his name.

When all have read their assigned passage, ask them to report on one thing or characteristic they discovered in that passage, beginning with Acts 7.

Then ask:

- * Name a characteristic or fact about Paul you want to keep in mind during this Lenten small group study.
- * How did your image of Saul/Paul change as we talked about him?
- * To come to Paul from another angle, look at the block print on the cover of this guide. How does this depiction of Paul change or add to your image of him?

To get another picture of Paul, we will explore his letter to Philemon.

Read Philemon aloud.

- * In his letter to Philemon, how does Paul do his job as an apostle while under the extreme constraint of imprisonment?
- * How do we understand Paul's letters differently if we keep in mind his frequent imprisonments?
- * The sermon text on Sunday will be Philemon. What section of Philemon do you find the most relevant for the church today?

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

Perhaps the best-known letter written in a contemporary prison is Martin Luther King, Jr.'s *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*, written in April 1963. Similar in length to Paul's Letter to the Philippians, it too provides clear directives for living as followers of Christ, albeit creating something of a controversy. Here are brief sections from it:

I am in Birmingham because injustice is here. Just as the prophets of the eighth century B.C. left their villages and carried their "thus saith the Lord" far beyond the boundaries of their home towns, and just as the Apostle Paul left his village of Tarsus and carried the gospel of Jesus Christ to the far corners of the Greco-Roman world, so am I compelled to carry the gospel of freedom beyond my home town. Like Paul, I must constantly respond to the Macedonian call for aid.

We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.

Let us all hope that the dark clouds of racial prejudice will soon pass away and the deep fog of misunderstanding will be lifted from our fear drenched communities, and in some not too distant tomorrow the radiant stars of love and brotherhood will shine over our great nation with all their scintillating beauty.

- * In these quotations, what do you surmise the white pastors have written that King is responding to? Have you heard similar complaints in our time? In what circumstances?
- * What do you make of the second quotation above? How do you see this concept at play in the world?

Read the last quotation, the ending of the letter, aloud together.

- * In light of what you know about the treatment of civil rights workers like King, does this sound like "pie in the sky" or an achievable goal? Why?
- * To what action does this seem to lead for the church, for you?

Close with prayer Invite prayer requests for neighbors near and far. Incorporate these requests into a closing prayer, or be in an attitude of prayer as they are named and close with a sentence prayer, such as "You have heard our prayers of joy and for help. Keep us attuned to your guidance concerning our difficulties. Be with each one as we leave this group and enter the rest of our lives. Amen."





WEEK TWO

A Letter to Dear Friends

Philippians 1

Key Verse: Most important, live together in a manner worthy of Christ's gospel (Philippians 1:27a CEB).

Philippians is one of Paul's warmest letters, but his own circumstances while writing this letter are among the most dire. He expresses his great love for his readers and his confidence in their faith, but he also lets slip how close he himself is to death. So in this session we move from a general discussion of Paul's imprisonment to a particular moment under those circumstances.

Pray Open with prayer or pray after the opening activities.

Transition from everyday life to the small group setting Invite the participants to introduce themselves and answer one of the opening questions on page 16 or your own question.

Review Ask for any comments or reflections on the previous story of Paul's life as a prisoner and his letter to Philemon, or comments on the adult education presentation or the sermon as it related to the discussion in Week One.

FEATURING THE BIBLE TEXT

Read Philippians 1 aloud.

Paul is in prison as he writes this letter, just one of many occasions when he landed in prison, alone or with a traveling companion.

- * Why is Paul in the situation that he is in?
- * How is he coping with it?
- * What is his attitude toward the Philippian Christians?
- * What information in this first chapter accords for his attitude?
- * What can you surmise about the Philippians' feelings for Paul from this chapter?

The sermon text for Sunday is Philippians 1:27-30. Read it aloud again from a different translation than was read earlier, if possible.

- * This passage begins with “More important, live together in a manner worthy of Christ’s gospel”. What is your initial reaction to or interpretation of that verse?
- * What themes that might support a sermon do you hear in this passage?

DOROTHY DAY

Dorothy Day was an American journalist and a social activist. As an adult, she converted to Catholicism and is known for founding, with Peter Maurin, the Catholic Worker Movement in the 1930s. From this movement, came the *The Catholic Worker* newspaper and houses of hospitality across the nation where works of mercy could be practiced. The first sites housed their young workers. In her 20s, Dorothy was active in the anti-violence suffrage group founded by Alice Paul. Dorothy was jailed during a protest with that group in Washington, DC. The terrors of that imprisonment are described in a chapter “Jail” in her autobiography *The Long Loneliness*.



Non-violent protest was a common way to confront any opponent. When the Diocese of New York ordered her to stop the publication of *The Catholic Worker* in 1951, she wrote in *The Catholic Worker*: “We were ready to go to St. Patrick’s, fill up the Church, stand outside it in prayerful meditation. We were ready to take advantage of America’s freedoms so we could say what we thought and do what we believed to be the right thing to do.” But there was no further comment from the diocese and the matter was dropped.

As part of her advocacy on behalf of people living in poverty she was imprisoned in 1955 and 1957. In 1970, she was held in jail for ten days for picketing with Cesar Chavez and his campaign for farm workers. Her last arrest was in 1973, three years before she died.

The quotation below was not written while she was imprisoned, but surely includes her reflections over the years, and is from *Loaves and Fishes* published in 1963:

Young people say, “What can one person do? What is the sense of our small efforts?” They cannot see that we can only lay one brick at a time, take one step at a time; we can be responsible only for the one action of the present moment. But we can beg for an increase of love in our hearts that will vitalize and transform these actions, and know that God will take them and multiply them, as Jesus multiplied the loaves and fishes.

Invite comments about Dorothy Day and her life and the quote above:

- * What other information do you know about Dorothy Day or the Catholic Worker movement?
- * How does or doesn't her answer to the question of what one person can do satisfy the question for you?
- * What is required to take that “one step at a time”? What are examples of some steps that might be taken?

Close with prayer Invite prayer requests for neighbors near and far. Incorporate these requests into a closing prayer, or be in an attitude of prayer as they are named and close with a sentence prayer, such as “You have heard our prayers of joy and for help. Keep us attuned to your guidance concerning our difficulties. Be with each one as we leave this group and enter the rest of our lives. Amen.”



WEEK THREE

Imitate Christ

Philippians 2

Key Verse: Instead of each person watching out for their own good, watch out for what is better for others (Philippians 2:4 CEB).

Philippians 2 is, among other things, one of the most important Christological passages in the New Testament. It paints a picture of Jesus' glorification that is commensurable with, but also adds a great deal to, what we know about Jesus from the rest of the New Testament. In this chapter, Paul gives us a lens through which to see Christ Jesus and a glimpse of the theology of the early church.

Pray Open with a brief prayer to gather the group together, or pray after the opening activities.

Transition from everyday life to the small group setting To continue to form the group and help the participants get to know one another better, ask one of the opening questions on page 16 or one of your own. Anyone can choose not to answer, of course.

Review Ask for any comments or questions about the previous text or the story about Dorothy Day. Perhaps someone, as a result of further reflection on the adult education presentation or sermon, has a new thought or question about that text or the story.

FEATURING THE BIBLE TEXT

Having expressed his great joy and love for the Philippian Christians, Paul continues his letter to them with a deep expression of who Christ Jesus is to him.

Read Philippians 2 aloud.

Pause at vv. 6-11 and invite everyone to read those verses, probably an early hymn, in unison. If several versions are being read, the sound may be a cacophony, but that is fine.

- * Looking first at verses 5-11, what do we learn about Jesus from these verses?
- * What does Paul ask for, and expect of, the Philippian Christians in the verses before and after this hymn?

The sermon text for Sunday will be drawn from verse 19-30.

- * Timothy was a favorite travel companion of Paul's, as is suggested in verses 19-24. What does Paul admire about this young man?
- * What do you make of Paul's emphasis on being glad (CEB) or rejoicing (NRSVue) (vv. 17-18)?
- * What sermon themes in these verses seem to be especially appropriate for this time?

REFLECTIONS

PRAYERS

MARTIN LUTHER

Martin Luther was a German monk who changed Christianity forever when his “95 Theses” ignited the spark that began the Protestant Reformation, and, subsequently, a Catholic reformation. His imprisonment was seclusion in the Wartburg Castle where he hid from his accusers because he was a convicted heretic. While there, he translated the New Testament into German so the church members who were literate could read it and not be dependent upon priests for their interpretation.



His Reply to the Diet of Worms, 1521

Since then your serene Majesty and your Lordships seek a simple answer, I will give it in this manner, neither horned nor toothed. Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason (for I do not trust either in the pope or in councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted, and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. May God help me. Amen.

From *On Christian Liberty*

Although the Christian is thus free from all works, he ought in this liberty to empty himself, take upon himself the form of a servant, be made in the likeness of men, be found in human form, and to serve, help and in every way deal with his neighbor as he sees that God through Christ has dealt and still deals with him.

Talk together about Luther's imprisonment and writings:

- * From where do you think Luther drew strength to respond to his accusers at the Diet of Worms as he did?
- * As you think about Philippians 2 and the way Paul describes Christ, what is Luther describing for Christians in the quote from *On Christian Liberty*?
- * How do Luther's words connect with our lives today?

Close with prayer Invite prayer requests for neighbors near and far. Incorporate these requests into a closing prayer, or be in an attitude of prayer as they are named and close with a sentence prayer, such as “You have heard our prayers of joy and for help. Keep us attuned to your guidance concerning our difficulties. Be with each one as we leave this group and enter the rest of our lives. Amen.”



WEEK FOUR

A Model to Follow

Philippians 3

Key Verse: In Christ I have a righteousness that is not my own and that does not come from the Law but rather from the faithfulness of Christ (Philippians 3:9b CEB).

In Philippians 3, Paul refers to conflict with some other unidentified people who preach contrary to him. Christians have often read this passage in an anti-Jewish way, but there is no good reason for this. The passage does teach the incomparable beauty of Christ relative to anything else in the world. Paul also offers himself and other leaders with him as models for the Philippian Christians as they strive to live as followers of Christ Jesus.

Pray Open with a brief prayer to gather the group together, or pray after the next activity.

Transition from everyday life to the small group setting Continue to form the group and help the participants get to know one another better by asking one of the opening questions on page 16 or one of your own. Anyone can choose not to answer, of course.

Review Ask for any comments or questions about the previous text or the story about Martin Luther. Perhaps someone, as a result of further reflection on the adult presentation or sermon, has a new thought or question about the text or Luther.

FEATURING THE BIBLE TEXT

Paul continues to encourage the Philippian church to be glad and rejoice, which makes verse 1 of chapter 3 feel like it really ends chapter 2. But then he gets more serious about false teachings and how the Philippians should live.

Read Philippians 3 aloud

Then have a second reader, preferably a man, read verses 4b to 6 aloud.

- * What, if anything, can we surmise about the “evil workers” (NRSVue) or “people who do evil things” (CEB) that Paul warns against in verse 2?
- * In verse 9, how would you define the “faith” that characterized the “righteousness of God”?
- * After acknowledging that he has not been perfected, he urges the Philippians to model their lives after him and others who live as he does. Some others, he says “live as enemies of the cross” (v. 18 CEB). How might you recognize the difference?
- * The sermon text for Sunday is verse 17-21. Which passage would you urge the preacher to concentrate on?

NELSON MANDELA

In the Foreword to *Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela*, President Bill Clinton describes Mandela as “a son who breaks from his family and tradition; a voice for liberty who is captured, isolated, and imprisoned; a revolutionary who transcends conflict to become a peacemaker and unifier; and a rare human being who, in freeing himself of his demons, also became free to give his extraordinary leadership to his country and the world.” An apt description, indeed.



Nelson Mandela and F. W. de Klerk, president of South Africa when apartheid policies were enforced, were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1993 for their peaceful termination of the apartheid regime, and for laying the foundations for a new democratic South Africa. About this honor, Mandela wrote in *Long Walk to Freedom*:

I was often asked how could I accept the award jointly with Mr. de Klerk after I had criticized him so severely. Although I would not take back my criticisms, I could say that he had made a genuine and indispensable contribution to the peace process. I never sought to undermine Mr. de Klerk, for the practical reason that the weaker he was, the weaker the negotiations process. To make peace with an enemy one must work with that enemy, and that enemy becomes one's partner.

Imprisoned for 25 years, Mandela was still able to write this in his autobiography:

I always knew that deep down in every human heart, there is mercy and generosity. No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite. Even when my comrades and I were pushed to our limits, I would see a glimmer of humanity in one of the guards, perhaps just for a second, but it was enough to reassure me and keep me going. Man's goodness is a flame that can be hidden but never extinguished.

Ponder together the strengths of Mandela's words:

- * What do you imagine it took for Mandela to work with de Klerk and then to accept the Nobel Peace Prize jointly?
- * What does it take to see the humanity in someone who treats you brutally?
- * How might lessons of love overcome lessons of hate in our world?

Close with prayer Invite prayer requests for neighbors near and far. Incorporate these requests into a closing prayer, or be in an attitude of prayer as they are named and close with a sentence prayer, such as "You have heard our prayers of joy and for help. Keep us attuned to your guidance concerning our difficulties. Be with each one as we leave this group and enter the rest of our lives. Amen."



WEEK FIVE

Back to the Basics

Philippians 4

Key Verse: I can endure all these things through the power of the one who gives me strength (Philippians 4:13 CEB).

Philippians 4 is very practical, but includes some profound theological ideas. We learn about women leaders in the congregations, the importance of reconciliation among believers, the virtue of contentment, and the Christian practice of sharing food, shelter, money, and other material goods. We also catch a glimmer of Paul's strength to endure these trials.

Pray Open with a brief prayer to gather the group together, or pray after the opening activities.

Transition from everyday life to small group time Continue to form the group and help the participants get to know one another better. Ask one of the opening questions on page 16 or one of your own. Anyone can choose not to answer, of course.

Review Ask for any comments or questions about the previous text or the story about Nelson Mandela. Perhaps someone, as a result of further reflection on the adult education presentation or sermon, has a new thought or question about that text and story.

FEATURING THE BIBLE TEXT

As Paul concludes his letter to his friends in Philippi, we can see how close he is to these Christians, especially the church leaders. And, yes, he continues to urge them to be glad and rejoice.

Read Philippians 4 aloud.

- * What do we learn about the church in Philippi from the brief exhortation to Euodia and Syntyche in verses 1-3?
- * How do you understand Paul's statement in verse 13: "I can endure all these things through the power of the one who gives me strength" (CEB)? How might that change depending upon your economic status, immigration status, or any other category?
- * Sunday is Youth Sunday so we have no information as to the texts for their brief sermons. What would be your best guess as to the passages in chapter 4 that will appeal to the youth preachers?
- * If you were selecting a text for the sermon, what would you choose from chapter 4?

DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, German theologian and pastor, preached and acted against the Nazi regime. He was charged with taking part in a plot to assassinate Hitler. As the result, he was taken to Flossenbürg concentration camp and executed there by the Nazis on April 9, 1945, just two weeks before the United States liberated the camp. While incarcerated, he wrote *Letters and Papers from Prison*, which includes the following quotes:



One of the great advantages of Good Friday and Easter Day is that they take us out of ourselves, and make us think of other things, of life and its meaning, and its sufferings and events. It gives us such a lot to hope for. Ever since yesterday it has been strangely quiet in the house. I heard many people wishing each other a happy Easter, and one can hardly begrudge them it, for it is a hard life, being a warder here.

- * An appropriate quote as we draw close to Holy Week, notice how Bonhoeffer writes of Good Friday and Easter Day together. Why is it important for him to hold the events of these two days together?
- * A warder is a prison guard. Why might Bonhoeffer call the life of a warder a hard life?
- * What does this suggest about Bonhoeffer's relationship with the warders at Flossenbürg?

The great masquerade of evil has wrought havoc with all our ethical preconceptions. This appearance of evil in the guise of light, beneficence and historical necessity is utterly bewildering to anyone nurtured in our traditional ethical systems. But for the Christian who frames his life on the Bible it simply confirms the radical evilness of evil.

- * What is Bonhoeffer describing as "the great masquerade of evil"?
- * How do you understand "the radical evilness of evil"?
- * What does this quote suggest to you about living the Christian life today?

Close with prayer Invite prayer requests for neighbors near and far. Incorporate these requests into a closing prayer, or be in an attitude of prayer as they are named and close with a sentence prayer, such as "You have heard our prayers of joy and for help. Keep us attuned to your guidance concerning our difficulties. Be with each one as we leave this group and enter the rest of our lives. Amen."



WEEK SIX

For Such a Time as This

Esther 4:1-14

Key Verse: “Perhaps you have come to royal dignity for just such a time as this” (Esther 4:14b NRSVue).

How do we live faithfully in an age of rising authoritarianism, spreading politics of cruelty, and the erosion of democratic culture? By reminding ourselves that we are not alone, grounding ourselves spiritually, diving into the resources of our faith tradition, and practicing communal discernment. We can draw from scripture as well as historical precedents like the Confessing Church’s resistance to Nazi Germany to offer theological framing and practical wisdom for a Christian response to the present moment.

Pray Open with a brief prayer to gather the group together, or pray after the opening activities.

Transition from everyday life to small group time Continue to form the group and help the participants get to know one another better. Ask one of the opening questions on page 16 or one of your own. Anyone can choose not to answer, of course.

Review Ask for any comments or questions about the previous text or the story about Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Perhaps someone, as a result of further reflection on the adult education presentation or sermon, has a new thought or question about that text and story.

FEATURING THE BIBLE TEXT

The story of Esther in the Old Testament is familiar: Queen Vashti will not come to King Ahasuerus upon his command so she is banished from his court. Without a queen, the king agrees to hold a contest and Esther, a beautiful Jewish maiden, wins the beauty contest. She becomes the new queen but she doesn't reveal that she is Jewish. When the king's right-hand man sets out to destroy all the Jews, Esther's uncle, Mordecai, urges her to go to the king to save her people.

Read Esther 4:1-17 aloud.

- * What is being asked of Esther?
- * How is Esther's life like being imprisoned?
- * How does Esther prepare spiritually, mentally and physically to make this decision?
- * Esther used her place of privilege to help her people. What place of privilege do you have and how might you use it for others?

AUNG SAN SUU KYI

A politician in Burma/Myanmar, Aung San Suu Kyi was the State Counsellor of Myanmar and Minister of Foreign Affairs from 2016 to 2021. Prior to that she was leader of the National League for Democracy, a party working for democracy. In 1991 she received the Nobel Peace Prize for her non-violent struggle for democracy and human rights. She is a Buddhist.

In 2021, after a military take-over, she was arrested on charges of corruption and over several trials was sentenced to 33 years in prison, which was later reduced to 27 years.



The following quotes come from her book, *Freedom from Fear*:

Saints, it has been said, are the sinners who go on trying. So free men are the oppressed who go on trying and who in the process make themselves fit to bear the responsibilities and to uphold the disciplines which will maintain a free society. Among the basic freedoms to which men aspire that their lives might be full and uncramped, freedom from fear stands out as both a means and an end.

It is not power that corrupts but fear. Fear of losing power corrupts those who wield it and fear of the scourge of power corrupts those who are subject to it.

If you're feeling helpless, help someone.

It is not enough merely to provide the poor with material assistance. They have to be sufficiently empowered to change their perception of themselves as helpless and ineffectual in an uncaring world.

Although a small sample of all that Aung San Suu Kyi has written, these few quotations present a view of the world that we might consider for today.

- * How does Aung San Suu Kyi understand fear and power? Does her description make sense to you? Why or why not?
- * What do you think is her primary goal? Why did that goal get her into trouble?
- * What from these quotes has meaning for you?

Close with prayer Invite prayer requests for neighbors near and far. Incorporate these requests into a closing prayer, or be in an attitude of prayer as they are named and close with a sentence prayer, such as “You have heard our prayers of joy and for help. Keep us attuned to your guidance concerning our difficulties. Be with each one as we leave this group and enter the rest of our lives. Amen.”

Notes for Small Group Leaders

Whether you have led small groups before or this is your first time, this leadership can be a Lenten spiritual practice for you. Relax. Leading a small group is not the same as leading a Bible study, where you might be expected to have some expertise, or considerable advanced preparation. The primary goal for a small group is to deepen the relationships among the participants as each one grows in relationship with God and Jesus and as Christ's disciple. This Lenten theme, *An Apostle in Prison: Paul's Letter to the Philippians* provides opportunities to consider our call to discipleship in the midst of a congregation as well as focus on other incarcerated advocates for those who had no voice.

At the first gathering, take time to review the group covenant on the back page of this booklet. It is important that each member of a small group is clear about the guidelines that make for a successful time together. Invite the group to add to the covenant.

A simple process for each week of "An Apostle in Prison" could be:

- * Prayer
- * Ask the opening question (see below)
- * Read the Bible passage aloud.
- * Discuss it with the questions suggested for each week.
- * Read about the incarcerated person and discuss their activism with the questions there.
- * Close with prayer. Inviting prayer requests is one more way to build connections in the group.

OPENING QUESTIONS

Since a frequent reason for joining a small group is to meet other members of the church, don't overlook the importance of this time for conversation. As you get to know the group, you or group members may want to pose a question other than the ones suggested here. Even if the participants recognize each other from church events and worship, they may not know much about each other. This is a time to deepen friendships as well as to make the transition from the life around them to the life of the small group.

Week One

- * What event of note has happened thus far in 2026? In the world, to you, in your community, at Nassau Church?
- * Have you ever had a friend for some years who revealed something surprising, maybe even shocking, to you? How did that affect your friendship?

Week Two

- * Do you have a good friend who lives elsewhere? How do you maintain your friendship?
- * What do you think are the strengths of congregational life at Nassau Church?

Week Three

- * When was a recent time you laughed really hard? Why?
- * If you needed help of any kind and wanted to turn to someone outside your family, who would it be? Why?

Week Four

- * Whom, in your childhood or adolescence, did you know personally and you admired?
- * What is one characteristic that you look for in a leader?

Week Five

- * When was the first time (approximately) that you heard a woman preach?
- * Have you ever been involved in an argument in a congregation? What was the issue?

Week Six

- * What is one thing you would like to change in the world today?
- * What is something you gained from the exploration of the Letter to the Philippians?

Give the group a moment to think about their response. You can model the amount of time for each person by answering the question first. You may need to remind them to keep their answers short; there is much more to discuss. Anyone may choose not to answer.

Thank you for leading a Lenten small group. May your experience be a joy as well as a spiritual gift for you. May "An Apostle in Prison" refresh the Season of Lent and be a stepping stone for you to travel down a new path as Christ's disciple.

Group Covenant

- * What happens in the group stays in the group. To build and maintain an atmosphere of trust, confidentiality is essential.
- * Speak and make space for others to speak. Each voice is important. If you are usually quiet, make an effort to offer your thoughts. If you speak out easily, hold back for others to speak or invite someone who hasn't spoken to speak.
- * Physically, be present at each gathering rather than treat attendance as just another option.
- * Mentally, listen to others and participate.
- * Focus on ideas, not the person. If you disagree, disagree with the idea, but don't belittle the person.
- * Speak from your own awareness. When offering an opinion, claim it as your opinion rather than make generalizations.
- * Everyone in the group is a learner. In a small group, there are no experts. Learning is a lifelong process.