

Create in me a pure heart, O God...



*Westminster Presbyterian Church
2018 Lenten Devotional*

...and renew a right spirit within me.

Psalm 51:10



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Cover artwork by Lola Gonin. Inside cover artwork by Evan Gonin.

Dear Readers,

This year's written Lenten Devotional is focused primarily on readings from the Epistles of the New Testament (personal letters sent from apostles to ancient churches). Except for the Sunday readings, these were taken from the Daily Lectionary from the *Book of Common Worship*. Writers were each given a specific passage and asked to write a brief reflection on all or part of the passage, keeping in mind what it might mean if Westminster had received these parts of the Epistles.

In addition to the written Devotional, many of the children of Westminster created visual responses to verses from the Psalms (also from the Daily Lectionary). These visual responses are included along with the written responses where appropriate.

As you read, reflect, and pray, please note the great diversity of reflections. We had writers of all ages, writers with wide varieties of life experience, writers with much experience discussing their faith and writers with little, and, perhaps most significantly, writers in all different places on the faith journey. We are fortunate to have so many members of Westminster willing to share their personal thoughts.

Sincerely,

Sarah Almén & Catherine Colvin

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And special thanks to Jessica Green for ensuring the Devotional got printed, emailed,
and posted on the website!

Wednesday, February 14

Hebrews 12: 1-2 & 5-11

¹Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, ²looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.

⁵And you have forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as children: "My child, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, or lose heart when you are punished by him; ⁶for the Lord disciplines those whom he loves, and chastises every child whom he accepts." ⁷Endure trials for the sake of discipline. God is treating you as children; for what child is there whom a parent does not discipline? ⁸If you do not have that discipline in which all children share, then you are illegitimate and not his children. ⁹Moreover, we had human parents to discipline us, and we respected them. Should we not be even more willing to be subject to the Father of spirits and live? ¹⁰For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share his holiness. ¹¹Now, discipline always seems painful rather than pleasant at the time, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

When our girls were little, we splurged and purchased the encyclopedia *Childcraft: The How and Why Library*, thinking that it would be a great educational resource for our children. Unfortunately, our five-year-old daughter was only interested in one volume, the "Guide for Parents," which she read cover-to-cover. Thereafter, anytime we attempted to discipline her, she protested, citing the "Guide for Parents" as her authority for a critique of our disciplinary techniques.

I thought of my daughter as I was reading today's passage. The reading starts out with the familiar representation of our Christian life as a race, with God asking us to lay aside any hindrance to our performance, be it sin or otherwise, and to bear all of the hardships and weariness that running a long race entails. The saints who have run this race before us cheer us on throughout our journey, and if we persevere, at the end of the race we are welcomed into the loving arms of our Creator.

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The bulk of the reading, however, deals with a different metaphor--that of God as a parent. Like a human parent, God sometimes uses hardship to discipline his children. This hardship is not vindictive, but rather is motivated by God's great love for us and his desire to encourage us to mature in our faith. The hardships that we endure may not always seem fair, and like my daughter, we may push back, questioning why we must bear so much adversity and pain. But just as children may not fully understand their parents' intentions (even after reading the "Guide for Parents"), we cannot expect to understand God's purposes. God is always looking at the big picture, striving to teach us to be more God-like so that we may ultimately enjoy the "peaceful fruit of righteousness."

Prayer: Heavenly Father, during this Lenten season help us to surrender to your discipline. Give us the strength to endure all hardships, so that we may mature in faith and finish well the race that you have set before us. Amen.

-Cathy McGarity



Artwork by Anna Ward.

Thursday, February 15

Philippians 3:12-21

¹²Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. ¹³Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵Let those of us then who are mature be of the same mind; and if you think differently about anything, this too God will reveal to you. ¹⁶Only let us hold fast to what we have attained.

¹⁷Brothers and sisters, join in imitating me, and observe those who live according to the example you have in us. ¹⁸For many live as enemies of the cross of Christ; I have often told you of them, and now I tell you even with tears. ¹⁹Their end is destruction; their god is the belly; and their glory is in their shame; their minds are set on earthly things. ²⁰But our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. ²¹He will transform the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, by the power that also enables him to make all things subject to himself.

When I read this scripture passage, I took away that God has challenged us with the goal to live the life he has called us to live. It requires constant focus and attention to pursue this goal, and if we stray on our journey, God will provide guidance. The words “press on” struck me as words of encouragement and motivation to not give up on the pursuit of this goal.

Prayer: Dear Lord, please provide us the strength and guidance to press on and live the life that you have called us to live. Amen.

-Kevin Henry

I lie awake;

I am like a lonely bird on the housetop.

Feb. 15th Psalm 102: 7



Friday, February 16

Philippians 4:4-9

⁴Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. ⁵Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. ⁶Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

⁸Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. ⁹Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

When I was in high school, back in ancient times, we were still allowed to have a time of quiet or as we said "The Daily Devotional." Our school principal would often read a poem, a timely news article, or most often a Bible passage. These verses from Philippians, read in the lyrical King James version, must have been special for our leader, Mr. Thompson, who read the passage often and with enthusiasm. So much for memories; I'd say true and commendable words seem hard to find in today's world, whether at home, school or work. Philippians 4:8-9 bears rereading and rethinking. Looking at several modern translations, I have chosen my current favorite to share with you:

"Summing it all up, my friends, I'd say you'll do best by filling your minds and meditating on things true, noble, reputable, authentic, compelling, gracious – the best, not the worst, the beautiful, not the ugly, things to praise, not things to curse. Put into practice what you have learned from me, what you heard and saw and realized. Do that, and God, who makes everything work together, will work YOU into HIS most excellent harmonies."
(From *The Message* by Eugene Peterson)

Prayer: Gracious God, I do realize that I am not alone in my faith journey. I give thanks for those who have walked and talked with me in the past, for my current WPC family, and for those I have yet to meet. Amen.

-Mary Moody

Saturday, February 17

What is Lent? Lent is a time for devotion and renewal. It is 40 days long (not counting Sundays). We save coins to help feed others, and children of our church place these coins in the family's Fish Bank.

Activity: Design a spot for your family to gather to do Lenten devotions in the next few weeks. It could include: two sticks tied together with a small length of rope to form a cross, a small bit of purple fabric (napkin or paper) to drape over the top bars of the cross, or a candle. Here are two ways to mark the weeks to come: cut pieces of felt for each week like in this picture (with black for good Friday and white for Easter), or form a paper chain with 7 links to place near your family gathering spot.



Read these words (with different people reading each week):

- One gives the call: Create in me a pure heart, O God
- All respond: And renew a right spirit within me.

Consider what you would like to do focus your attention on God in the weeks before Easter. Consider what you would like to stop doing so that you can give more attention to God.

-Charlotte Trafton

Sunday, February 18

Mark 1:9-15

⁹In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. ¹¹And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

¹²And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. ¹³He was in the wilderness for forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

¹⁴Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, ¹⁵and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."

Unlike Matthew and Luke, in Mark's gospel, Jesus is baptized and quickly sent to be tempted in one very short paragraph. He doesn't linger over the details. Here, Jesus emerges in his baptismal gown that is barely dry from the river water's edge and then is quickly led by the Spirit in to the wilderness for a very long time. Mark tells this story, not to emphasize what Jesus or we might be tempted to do, but rather how Jesus and we might be tempted to set aside our first and true vocation as God's beloved.

Lent comes along and we give up things that are bad for us or take on things that are good for us, as if the most serious temptations in life were to eat the wrong things or stay in bed on Sunday mornings. But as C. S. Lewis reminds us, "the devil always comes to us disguised". Just like the serpent in the Garden of Eden, the devil is tempting Jesus to forget his role as Son and Beloved and still today, it is our biggest temptation as well. When we are in the wilderness times of life and we all have them, don't we...the first thing we forget is who and whose we are. In fact, we will become almost anybody in order for the wild beasts to be held at bay.

But, surrounded by angels (often also disguised), Jesus emerges from this test certain of his calling to proclaim the good news that the kingdom of God had come near. When the wild beasts of this world come nipping at your heels this Lenten season, remember whose

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you are. God is, after all, in the business of taking that which seems only to cause death and somehow wring from it resurrection life. And that's not a bad thing to remember at the beginning of Lent.

Prayer: May the presence of the Spirit of God, who ministered to Jesus, go also with you to all those lonely and forsaken deserts of your life and then lead you to live out a God sized vision of love. Amen.

-Lana Russell

Monday, February 19

1 Corinthians 1:10-19

¹⁰Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose. ¹¹For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there are quarrels among you, my brothers and sisters. ¹²What I mean is that each of you says, "I belong to Paul," or "I belong to Apollos," or "I belong to Cephas," or "I belong to Christ." ¹³Has Christ been divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? ¹⁴I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, ¹⁵so that no one can say that you were baptized in my name. ¹⁶(I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else.) ¹⁷For Christ did not send me to baptize but to proclaim the gospel, and not with eloquent wisdom, so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its power.

¹⁸For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. ¹⁹For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart."

This is a very powerful passage when reflecting on the divisions that have gripped not only our country, but also our world. While we may not all agree on the same political position, our position as Christians should be a unifying factor, giving us the ability to work together in the betterment of humanity. Further, even when our religious beliefs differ, Jesus' commandment of "Love Thy Neighbor" doesn't apply to only Christian neighbors.

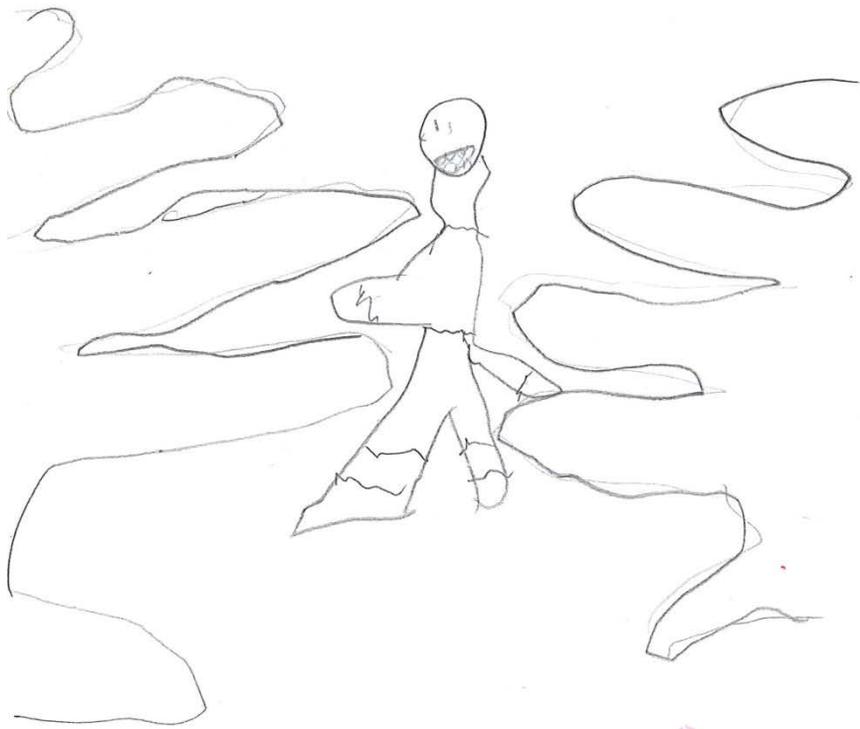
It is possible to disagree and still find common ground. And, even if common ground is hard to find, we are called to listen and understand different views civilly, recognizing the humanity in all people. As Brené Brown says in her book *Braving Wilderness*, "Most of us can build connection across difference and [still] fight for our beliefs if we're willing to listen."

For us, as Christians, the common ground is the cross, which symbolizes God's love for the world and all of humanity.

Prayer: Dear Lord, help us to remember the radical love that Jesus Christ exhibited across all divides. Let us be an example of his love in a world that is hurting, creating a foundation for healing and divine connections. May our love for humanity and justice shine a light in the darkness to guide our paths. In Jesus Christ's name, Amen.

-Jennifer Richmond

Your hands have made and fashioned me.
Feb. 19th – Psalm 119:73



Emmett

Artwork by Emmett Wise.

Tuesday, February 20

1 Corinthians 1:20-25

²⁰Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? ²¹For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe. ²²For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, ²³but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, ²⁴but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. ²⁵For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.

The church in Corinth was a mission church made up primarily of Gentile converts, though there is evidence a few Jewish leaders had joined as well. The church represented a broad spectrum of differing social and economic classes, which created tensions and difficulties within the church. The Corinthians tended to think and act in ways deemed entirely normal in a cultural sense, but Paul called the church to see the world in dramatically new ways shaped by the Christian story. He wanted them to rethink their inherited norms and practices; to be transformed through the renewing of their minds: “a conversion of the imagination.”

The term “wisdom” in the Corinthian setting referred both to the possession of knowledge and the ability to express that knowledge in a powerful way. Much of the controversy at Corinth may have been caused by the tendency for the new Christians to regard Paul and other Christian preachers as vying for attention and approval alongside other popular philosophers. Paul put the Gospel, an announcement of God’s amazing intervention in the world for the sake of the world, in a category apart from other “wisdoms” in the current marketplace of ideas.

In today’s verses, Paul argues that the wise philosophers, the scribes (experts in Jewish law), the debaters of this age are all swept away –or simply made to appear ridiculous—by God’s manifesting grace. “Where are they now?” he asks rhetorically. The question presupposes that their talk has already been swept away by God’s shocking act of reversal: the cross.

The esteemed pundits of Paul's day failed to understand what was really going on. Their wisdom failed to grasp the truth about God. Paul suggests that this failure was itself a mysterious part of God's own purpose. It is "in the wisdom of God" that the world has failed to know God through wisdom. Why? Because God's ways are shocking and amazing, contrary to what one would consider common sense. How can the death of Jesus Christ on a cross be the event of salvation for the world? One would have to be a fool to believe *that*. Yet that is precisely what the gospel declares.

Throughout these verses Paul revels in the paradoxical twists of God's grace. The fundamental focal point is if the cross itself is God's saving event, all human standards of evaluation are overturned. This outlandish message confounds Jews and Greeks alike, who quite understandably seek evidence of a more credible sort: "signs" or rationally persuasive arguments, "wisdom." The apostle offers neither. Instead, "we proclaim Christ crucified."

To proclaim a "crucified" Messiah is to talk nonsense. Crucifixion was a gruesome punishment designed to demonstrate that no one should defy the powers that be. Yet Paul's gospel declares that the crucifixion of Jesus is somehow the event through which God has triumphed over those powers. It shatters the world's systems of authority and the world's systems of knowledge.

Paul's relentless focus on the cross is suggested in verse 25 in a way that is difficult to appreciate in English translation. The words translated by the NRSV as "foolishness" and "weakness" are not abstract nouns but substantive adjectives, so that a very literal translation would read, "For the foolish thing of God is wiser than humans, and the weak thing of God is stronger than humans." The cross is the key to understanding reality in God's new eschatological age. Consequently, to enter the symbolic world of the gospel is to undergo "a conversion of the imagination," to see all values transformed by the foolish and weak death of Jesus on the cross.

Prayer: Dear Lord, help us to rethink our norms and practices; to experience a conversion of the imagination. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

-Martha Richardson

He will cover you with his pinions,
and under his wings you will find refuge;

Feb. 20th – Psalm 91:4



Artwork by Meredith Trafton.

Wednesday, February 21

1 Corinthians 1:26-31

²⁶Consider your own call, brothers and sisters: not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. ²⁷But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; ²⁸God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, ²⁹so that no one might boast in the presence of God. ³⁰He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption, ³¹in order that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."

In this passage of his letter to the Corinthians, Paul explains that God calls all of us, no matter what. It doesn't matter at all that we are weak, foolish, low, and despised in the world. It doesn't matter whether we are powerful, wise, or of noble birth. Entry to God's presence is not merit-based. There is no visa application, no interview, no customs and border control. The road is clear and we are warmly welcomed. In fact, we are not just called by Christ to live in God's love, we already belong to God. Christ is our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Let us boast in the Lord, singing Alleluia!

Prayer: Welcoming God, lead my feet on the unobstructed path to your love, fill my senses with your beautiful world, use my hands to share your abundant love with others, and use my voice to sing your praises in Jesus' name. Amen.

-Adrienne Inglis

"Come" my heart says, "seek his face!"

Your face, LORD, do I seek.

Feb. 21st - Psalm 27: 8



Or else

Thursday, February 22

1 Corinthians 2:1-13

¹When I came to you, brothers and sisters, I did not come proclaiming the mystery of God to you in lofty words or wisdom. ²For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified. ³And I came to you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. ⁴My speech and my proclamation were not with plausible words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God.

⁶Yet among the mature we do speak wisdom, though it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to perish. ⁷But we speak God's wisdom, secret and hidden, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. ⁸None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. ⁹But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him" - ¹⁰these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. ¹¹For what human being knows what is truly human except the human spirit that is within? So also no one comprehends what is truly God's except the Spirit of God. ¹²Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. ¹³And we speak of these things in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things to those who are spiritual.

In Paul's letter to the church at Corinth he states, "When I came to you, brothers and sisters, I did not come proclaiming the mystery of God to you in lofty words or wisdom" (2:1). What if we at Westminster had been the recipients of these words? Would we be disappointed that we were not going to hear an eloquently crafted sermon, rich with theological and philosophical allusions?

In her short story, "Good Country People," the great Catholic writer Flannery O'Connor presents Joy, a young woman with a wooden leg who has a PhD in philosophy and a smug belief in "nothing." When a con-artist Bible salesman, whom Joy thinks she is seducing, ends up stealing her glasses and artificial leg, she is left dazed and helpless. In her fiction, O'Connor's most prideful characters are ironically haughty about social status or intellect.

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They are contrasted with and brought low by “simple” people, some of whom have a primitive faith that brings them much closer to God.

Paul writes in verse 12 that “we speak of these things [the gifts bestowed upon us by God] in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things to those who are spiritual.” God speaks to us through the Holy Spirit, not through our heads but our hearts.

Prayer: Eternal and loving God, in this season of Lent, help us to empty our minds of illusions and clutter and open our hearts to the love of Jesus Christ, our Lord, who died for all our sins. Amen.

-Maxine Montgomery



Artwork by Emmett Wise.

Friday, February 23

1 Corinthians 2:14-16

¹⁴Those who are unspiritual do not receive the gifts of God's Spirit, for they are foolishness to them, and they are unable to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. ¹⁵Those who are spiritual discern all things, and they are themselves subject to no one else's scrutiny. ¹⁶"For who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.

In the rush of daily life, I do not always remember to discern the mind of Christ. Often as I go through the day, I am distracted by big and little decisions and projects. In those moments I spin in place instead of moving forward.

In the peaceful times of my day, when my distractions are quiet, I contemplate the mind of Christ. In the early morning before I begin my day, or in the evening when I have gone to bed, I contemplate the mind of Christ. Do I allow Christ to inhabit my mind?

It's true that in much of my outer behavior, I'm an obvious Christian: helping an elderly neighbor, volunteering at a local charity, nurturing a friend. However, in my "closet," that place where God hears what I pray in secret, I know I fall short. When I am offended, do I ask the Father to forgive instead of trying to think of the perfect retort I could have made to retaliate? Do I judge others? Am I kind toward and tolerant of each and every person I encounter? I believe that God makes me yearn for the mind of Christ and that he will show me the way and give me the power to carry through.

Prayer: God, help me to discern the mind of Christ throughout this day and every day whatever distractions may occur. Help me to let the mind of Christ be my guide in all I do. Amen.

-Sally Hanners

Saturday, February 24

Gather at your family's spot for Lenten devotionals. It might be good to gather at a meal that works for everyone in the family (breakfast, lunch or dinner).

Read these words (with different people reading each week):

- One gives the call: Create in me a pure heart, O God
- All respond: And renew a right spirit within me.



Activity: Photo Journal of Nature. Consider how things look outside right at this moment. Will they look the same when Easter comes? Talk about what you could take a picture of now that will look different in a few weeks' time when Spring unfolds. You could take a picture of just one thing, or have each member of the family take a picture of something different in the yard. You may want to come back in two weeks and snap a picture again to see how it looks different. As Spring arrives, consider also the Bible verse-- 2 Corinthians 5:17-- and how God transforms us into new creations.

-Charlotte Trafton

Sunday, February 25

Romans 4:13-25

¹³For the promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith. ¹⁴If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. ¹⁵For the law brings wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there violation.

¹⁶For this reason it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (for he is the father of all of us, ¹⁷as it is written, "I have made you the father of many nations") — the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. ¹⁸Hoping against hope, he believed that he would become "the father of many nations," according to what was said, "So numerous shall your descendants be." ¹⁹He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was already as good as dead (for he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. ²⁰No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, ²¹being fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. ²²Therefore his faith "was reckoned to him as righteousness." ²³Now the words, "it was reckoned to him," were written not for his sake alone, ²⁴but for ours also. It will be reckoned to us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, ²⁵who was handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification.

The writer of the book of Hebrews defines faith this way: "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." Paul writes to the Romans about faith using Abraham as his example. As we look at Abraham's faith, we see a person who hoped against hope that God's promises to him were true. He absolutely believed in God's faithfulness, in God's grace, in God's love.

Abraham and Sarah were called by God to leave their home and go to the place God would show them. And they went, not knowing where they were going, but trusting completely in God. God also promised that Abraham would become a great nation even though he was "as good as dead" as Paul writes, and his wife Sarah was barren. But Abraham's faith never wavered. He believed God and God called him righteous.

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During the Lenten season, we take time to reflect on the faithfulness of God, but also on the strength of our own faith. Can we, like Abraham, be assured that God will be with us in all circumstances, that God's love and grace are sure, that the unknown future is in God's loving care? Let us continue our Lenten journey in that kind of faith.

-Judy Skaggs

Monday, February 26

1 Corinthians 3:1-9

¹And so, brothers and sisters, I could not speak to you as spiritual people, but rather as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. ²I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for solid food. Even now you are still not ready, ³for you are still of the flesh. For as long as there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not of the flesh, and behaving according to human inclinations? ⁴For when one says, "I belong to Paul," and another, "I belong to Apollos," are you not merely human?

⁵What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you came to believe, as the Lord assigned to each. ⁶I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. ⁷So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. ⁸The one who plants and the one who waters have a common purpose, and each will receive wages according to the labor of each. ⁹For we are God's servants, working together; you are God's field, God's building.

"I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for solid food." This phrase in Corinthians is meaningful to me because it takes me back to the days when my children were babies. For the first six months of their lives, they only nursed. Then, we introduced bland Gerber rice cereal before adding in pureed fruits and vegetables—delighting in their scrunched up faces as they tasted their first tart foods.

When I contemplated this passage, I wondered if Paul was as uncertain as to the best method to lead a people to spirituality as I was clueless about the best way to feed, bathe, or comfort a newborn baby. And my confusion didn't end with toddlerhood. As our children grew, the parenting issues we faced became more and more complex.

Like Paul, I realized that my parenting job should be temporary. Paul hoped the Corinthians would not remain "infants in Christ" forever. He wanted them to grow into God's servants and work together with common goals. He hoped they would one day no longer look to him for guidance but rely on each other, the church, and God to come together as one.

Prayer: Dear God, We ask for your guidance to grow in the church, each of us working together for a common purpose. Whether we are the planters or those who water, we are your servants, your field, your building. In Jesus Christ's name we pray, Amen.

-Kathy Cox

The eyes of all look to you, and
you give them their food in due season.

Feb. 26th – Psalm 145:15



Artwork by Hudson Booth.

Tuesday, February 27

1 Corinthians 3:10-15

¹⁰According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building on it. Each builder must choose with care how to build on it. ¹¹For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ. ¹²Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw - ¹³the work of each builder will become visible, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each has done. ¹⁴If what has been built on the foundation survives, the builder will receive a reward. ¹⁵If the work is burned up, the builder will suffer loss; the builder will be saved, but only as through fire.

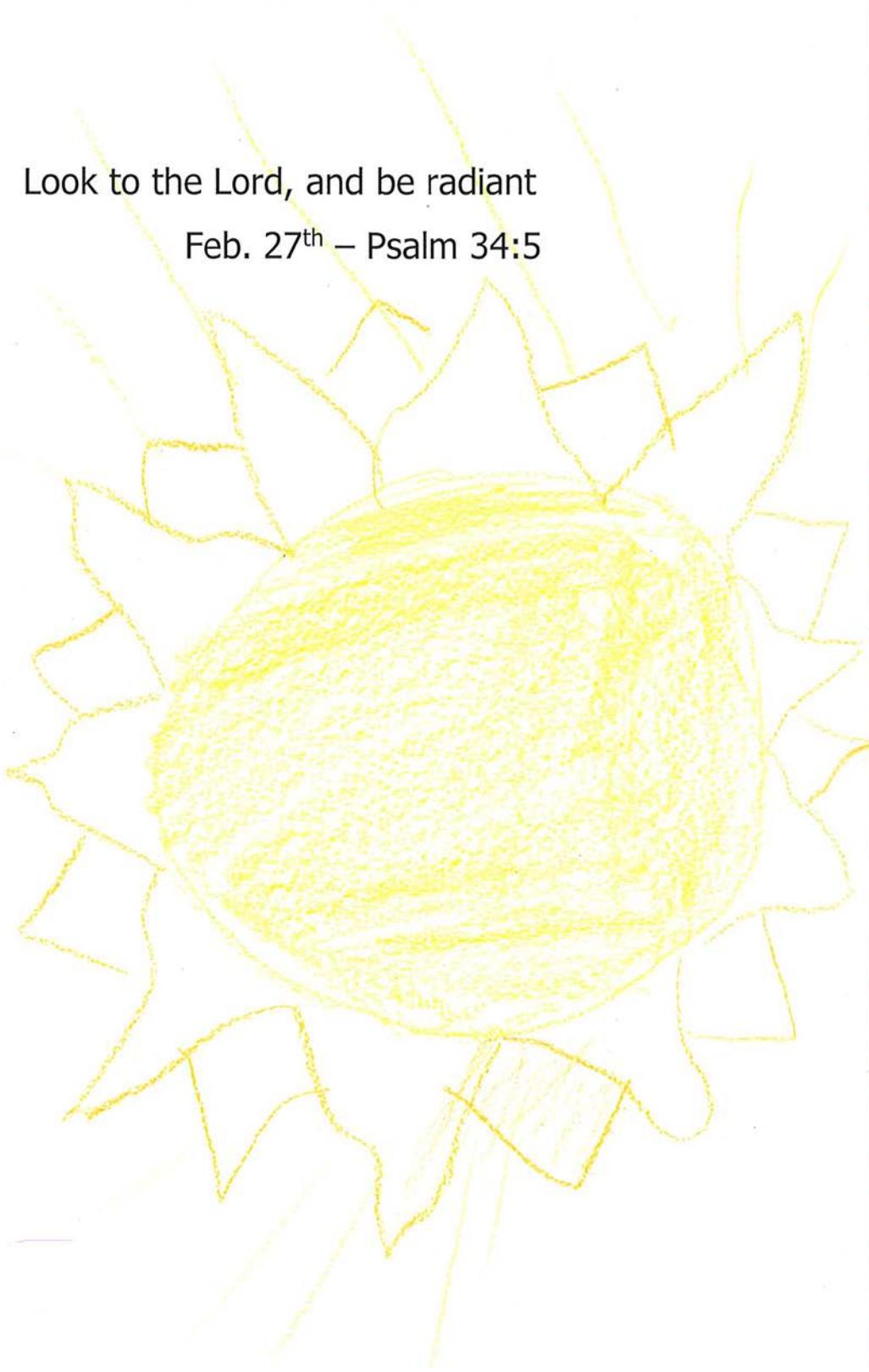
I've used the phrase "My brother and I were not the poster children for how you're supposed to grow up" when describing the trouble we got into. Verse 15 of this passage reminds me of my journey learning to "do life" so to speak. Making mistakes is the fire; learning from them is the Savior. Life is a tricky thing and has many ups and downs, and I don't believe that we necessarily understand that early on. I think it is only when we build on that foundation and see it burn that we truly understand how He can save.

"The Sinner's Prayer" by Dr. Ray Pritchard: Lord Jesus, for too long I've kept you out of my life. I know that I am a sinner and that I cannot save myself. No longer will I close the door when I hear you knocking. By faith I gratefully receive your gift of salvation. I am ready to trust you as my Lord and Savior. Thank you, Lord Jesus, for coming to earth. I believe you are the Son of God who died on the cross for my sins and rose from the dead on the third day. Thank you for bearing my sins and giving me the gift of eternal life. I believe your words are true. Come into my heart, Lord Jesus, and be my Savior. Amen.

-John Young

Look to the Lord, and be radiant

Feb. 27th – Psalm 34:5



Artwork by Meredith Trafton.

Wednesday, February 28

1 Corinthians 3:16-23

¹⁶Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? ¹⁷If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.

¹⁸Do not deceive yourselves. If you think that you are wise in this age, you should become fools so that you may become wise. ¹⁹For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, "He catches the wise in their craftiness," ²⁰and again, "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile." ²¹So let no one boast about human leaders. For all things are yours, ²²whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future - all belong to you, ²³and you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God.

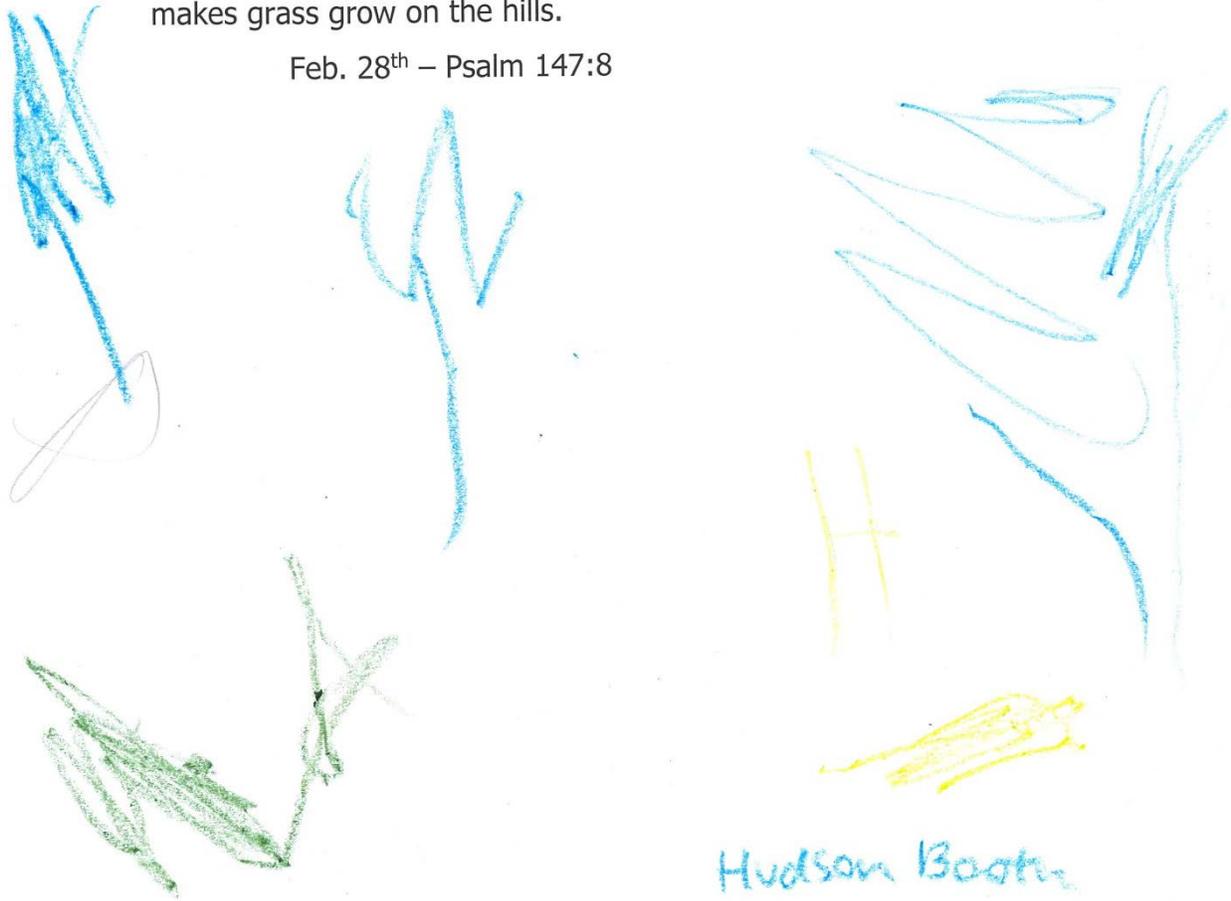
"Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?" Verse 16 reminds me that I am God's and that the Holy Spirit is always at work within me. This verse comforts me as it reassures me of God's love and calls me to reflect on my discipleship. This verse tells us "you are God's temple." So many people and committees at Westminster care for and tend to our physical buildings and the spiritual life inside of them. When I read "temple" I immediately think of a holy space, like Westminster, that is lovingly cared for. I imagine that if we are God's temples, then God cares for us like we care for Westminster. This verse also invites me to examine how God's spirit dwells in me. What does being God's temple mean to me? What privileges do I have and how do my actions affect the world and people around me? I am reminded of the language in Westminster's mandate: How do I live out a God-sized vision of love? Participating in the CROP Walk, taking responsibility for how my actions affect the world, volunteering to provide a meal for youth fellowship, and offering to share my passion for ceramics with our community are a few ways I can act out the great responsibility of belonging to God.

Prayer: Thank you for the comfort of your love. Open my heart and mind to accept your care. Help me discern the works of your Spirit within me so that I can live out your love within myself and my community. Amen.

-Sadie Pass

He covers the heavens with clouds,
prepares rain for the earth,
makes grass grow on the hills.

Feb. 28th – Psalm 147:8



Hudson Booth

Artwork by Hudson Booth.

Thursday, March 1

1 Corinthians 4:8-13

⁸Already you have all you want! Already you have become rich! Quite apart from us you have become kings! Indeed, I wish that you had become kings, so that we might be kings with you! ⁹For I think that God has exhibited us apostles as last of all, as though sentenced to death, because we have become a spectacle to the world, to angels and to mortals. ¹⁰We are fools for the sake of Christ, but you are wise in Christ. We are weak, but you are strong. You are held in honor, but we in disrepute. ¹¹To the present hour we are hungry and thirsty, we are poorly clothed and beaten and homeless, ¹²and we grow weary from the work of our own hands. When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; ¹³when slandered, we speak kindly. We have become like the rubbish of the world, the dregs of all things, to this very day.

This is an interesting passage, and the point Paul is trying to make is not immediately clear to me. But the message I take from it is especially relevant for we the privileged few, who are so blessed to live in a land of plenty. We live lives more comfortable and more full of luxury than kings of the past could ever have dreamt of living, and yet here is Paul speaking to us from the past about what the life of an apostle is really about: to be foolish and weak, to be a spectacle, to be held in disrepute, to be hungry and thirsty, to be weary, reviled, persecuted and slandered, to be rubbish and the dregs of all things.

Prayer: Dear Gracious God Who Showers Us with Blessings, Let us be fools and spectacles to the world as Paul was before us. Our wisdom and our strength comes from you. We honor you; we serve you alone. In the name of our Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

-James Gonin

Friday, March 2

1 Corinthians 5:6-8

⁶Your boasting is not a good thing. Do you not know that a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough? ⁷Clean out the old yeast so that you may be a new batch, as you really are unleavened. For our paschal lamb, Christ, has been sacrificed. ⁸Therefore, let us celebrate the festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

This passage deals with the behavior of the church at Corinth, specifically a case of immorality within. The Apostle Paul chastises the church for covering a grievous sin while the church boasts of doing great things— equating the act as an infection that will soon affect the rest of the body if left unchecked (a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough). He calls the Corinthians to take responsibility, to acknowledge the scandal and to remove the offending member from their church.

Paul moves from a specific reprimand to a call for individual action. All human beings have the capacity for malice and evil. Small malevolent thoughts can snowball into onerous actions that can have a grave effect on the surrounding community. The way to overcome such thoughts is to recognize them, cast them out, and take the straight and narrow path toward a higher ideal. Paul's call is to remember the sacrifice Christ made for our sake, and to boldly live as a community of sincerity and truth. This not only keeps the community strong and healthy, but also acts to help those who maybe struggling to find their way. If more people were to model their behavior accordingly, who knows what great things would come about?

Prayer: Lord, help me to cast out malevolent and evil thoughts. Show me the path to sincerity and truth so that I may celebrate the festival made possible by your sacrifice. Amen

-Sean Newton

And all the families of the nations shall
worship before him.

Mar. 2nd – Psalm 22:27b



Artwork by Meredith Trafton.

Saturday, March 3

Gather at your family's spot for Lenten devotionals.

Read these words (with different people reading each week):

- One gives the call: Create in me a pure heart, O God
- All respond: And renew a right spirit within me.

Activity: Count Your Blessings Jar – Cut out small strips of paper for each member of the family. Locate a bowl or jar that can hold your paper strips. Ask everyone at the table to write or draw things God has given that makes you glad. As an alternative, have each person complete the same number of paper strips that matches their age (like a 7-year-old writes down 7 blessings).

Consider reading this Bible verse together--Matthew 7: 7-11--celebrating the good gifts God gives us.

-Charlotte Trafton



Sunday, March 4

John 2:13-22

13 The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 14 In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. 15 Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. 16 He told those who were selling the doves, "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!" 17 His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me." 18 The Jews then said to him, "What sign can you show us for doing this?" 19 Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." 20 The Jews then said, "This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?" 21 But he was speaking of the temple of his body. 22 After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

In the first three gospels, Jesus clears the money changers out of the temple in his final stay in Jerusalem, not long before he is arrested, tried and crucified. Making a scene in the temple court does nothing to improve his popularity with the authorities who are already seeking his life. But in the gospel of John, Jesus overturns the tables of the money changers and drives out the sellers of animal sacrifices right at the *beginning* of his ministry. John makes a theological point with his order of events: Jesus's cleansing of the temple establishes his status as a prophet like the prophets of the Old Testament, concerned that worship in the temple is pure and pleasing to God.

Some of us love this table-turning Jesus – this prophet who is not afraid to get angry, not afraid to call out injustice and hypocrisy, not afraid to do something about it. We may be ready right now to get out our whips and start prophesying. But the season of Lent calls us to introspection and repentance. If Jesus entered Westminster Presbyterian Church, what might he call us to change? Where have we settled into doing things the way we've always done them, instead of serving God with energy, intelligence, imagination and love?

In the words of one pastor, "Jesus speaks for us, yes, and with us, but also *to* us and even *against* us." As followers of Jesus, we are called to let the word of God continually reform us.

Prayer: "Almighty God, since You have been pleased to choose us as priests to Yourself, not that we may offer beasts to you but consecrate to You ourselves with all that we have, grant that we may with all readiness strive to depart from every kind of uncleanness to purify ourselves from all defilements, so that we may duly perform the sacred office of priesthood and thus conduct ourselves toward You with chasteness and purity. May we also abstain from every evil work, from all fraud and all cruelty toward our brethren, and so deal with one another that we may testify with our whole life that You are really our Father, ruling us by Your Spirit, and that true and holy brotherhood exists among us." -John Calvin

-Ellen Williams

Monday, March 5

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

¹⁹Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own? ²⁰For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body.

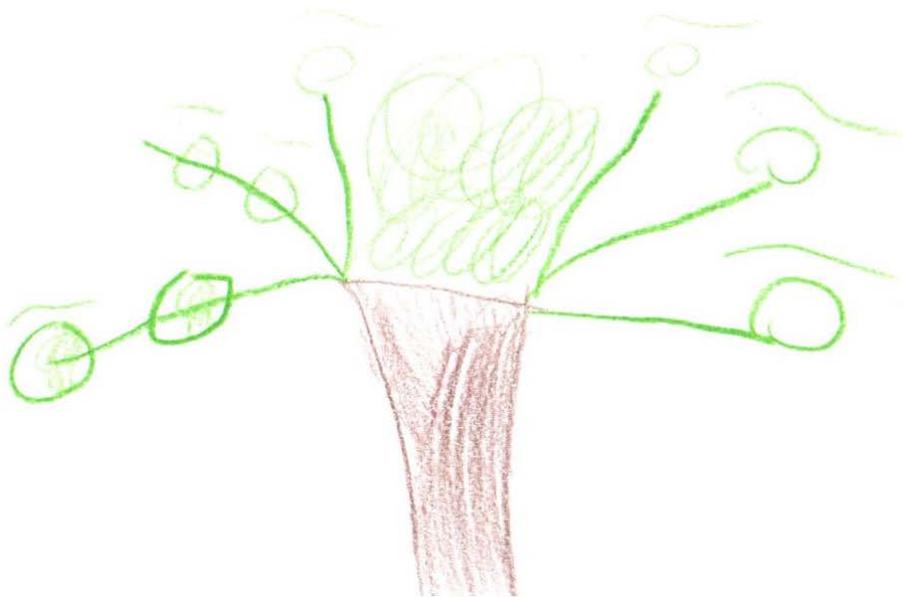
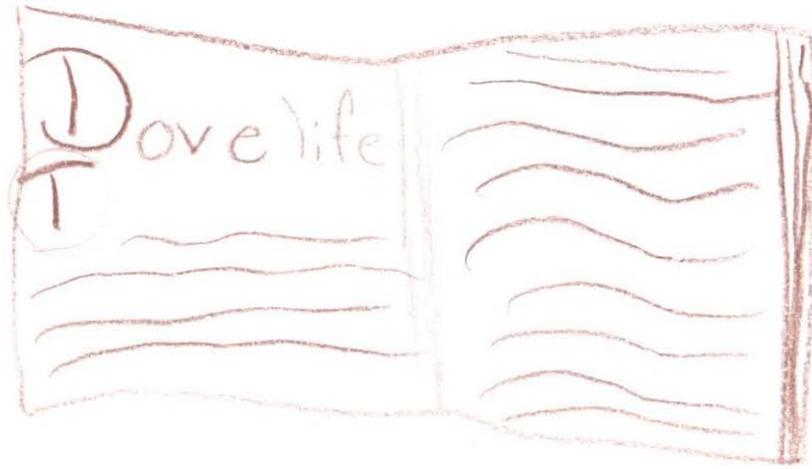
I first heard this verse when I was in the 6th grade. As I get older, I feel more demands on my body: from physical training for tennis; managing my time to get enough sleep and still cram in homework, sports and fun; and dealing with social pressures from my peers. This passage has always stuck with me and reminds me in times of struggle that it's my duty to treat my body the best I can in order to glorify Christ.

Prayer: God, help me remember the price that Christ paid for me, so that I may glorify You in all things. Amen

-Christian Tatu

One generation shall laud your works to another.

Mar. 5th – Psalm 145:4



Artwork by Meredith Trafton.

Tuesday, March 6

1 Corinthians 7:25-31

²⁵Now concerning virgins, I have no command of the Lord, but I give my opinion as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy. ²⁶I think that, in view of the impending crisis, it is well for you to remain as you are. ²⁷Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be free. Are you free from a wife? Do not seek a wife. ²⁸But if you marry, you do not sin, and if a virgin marries, she does not sin. Yet those who marry will experience distress in this life, and I would spare you that. ²⁹I mean, brothers and sisters, the appointed time has grown short; from now on, let even those who have wives be as though they had none, ³⁰and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no possessions, ³¹and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away.

I'm not sure that Paul would make it as a marriage therapist. Perhaps he is a bit too blunt. He certainly doesn't sugarcoat marriage. And I have never heard this scripture read at a wedding ceremony, although I must admit I would like to see reactions of the wedding guests if it were! Fortunately for those in love (and the wedding industry), Paul makes it clear that he is only giving his opinion, not a command from God.

So what is Paul telling us? I have read that the "impending crisis" that Paul mentions might refer to a coming famine. He seemed to believe that the difficulties we face in life on Earth would be lessened if one were single. I believe he thought it might be easier to follow God more faithfully without any distractions. No doubt, trying to get along with another person for life would at times cause some "distress" and take your focus off God. Paul warns that, "The appointed time has grown short" – meaning that in the big picture of eternity, we don't have much time on this earth, we must make the most of it. He tells us not to let mourning, rejoicing, material possessions or worldly dealings distract us from honoring and serving God.

"For the present form of this world is passing away" – he might be suggesting the end of the world, but more likely for us it means that our lives as we know them will pass away, and we must prepare for what is ahead.

Prayer: Dear Lord, We fill our lives with busyness and often overlook the most important things. Please forgive us for that, and help us to stay more focused—not on the present form of this world, but your world that is to come. Amen.

-Randy Cain

This poor soul cried,
and was heard by the LORD,

Mar. 6th – Psalm 34:6



Artwork by Meredith Trafton.

Wednesday, March 7

1 Corinthians 9:16-23

¹⁶If I proclaim the gospel, this gives me no ground for boasting, for an obligation is laid on me, and woe to me if I do not proclaim the gospel! ¹⁷For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward; but if not of my own will, I am entrusted with a commission. ¹⁸What then is my reward? Just this: that in my proclamation I may make the gospel free of charge, so as not to make full use of my rights in the gospel.

¹⁹For though I am free with respect to all, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I might win more of them. ²⁰To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though I myself am not under the law) so that I might win those under the law. ²¹To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law) so that I might win those outside the law. ²²To the weak I became weak, so that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some. ²³I do it all for the sake of the gospel, so that I may share in its blessings.

After reading this portion of Paul's letter to the Corinthians, a specific verse resonated with me. Verse 23 says, "I do it all for the sake of the gospel, so that I may share in its blessings." In fact, I imagine this verse speaks to all of us at WPC. When we care for each other we are indeed sharing in the blessings of the gospel.

I think of the ministry of home communion we share at Westminster. Three times a year our members go out and serve communion to the homebound. I imagine that each person who has served has felt the blessing of the gospel as they have shared the bread and the cup. Likewise when we worship at the Trinity Center we share the blessings of the gospel together with the homeless present in worship. When we bring bags of food for the Manos food pantry forward during communion we are sharing in the blessings of the gospel. I believe the teachings of Jesus Christ tell us to share our abundance with those in need, and this is a way we can share the gospel.

Prayer: Dear God, We thank you for the gifts we have been given and we ask your guidance in how to best share them with others. We ask for openness to receive your blessings from others and the courage and strength to live as Jesus Christ taught us. Amen.

-Margaret Pass

O LORD,

in the morning you hear my voice;

Mar. 7th – Psalm 5:3a



Artwork by Lola Gonin.

Thursday, March 8

1 Corinthians 10:14-17

¹⁴Therefore, my dear friends, flee from the worship of idols. ¹⁵I speak as to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say. ¹⁶The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? ¹⁷Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.

The message of this passage is a warning against false idols. However, the speaker clearly doesn't want us to believe him outright, so he tells us that we are sensible enough to be able to figure this out on our own. The speaker also does this for another reason. He is being consistent with his message and if people were to believe him outright, then he might be perceived as a false idol and his message could be perverted from its true intent.

Prayer: Lord, there are a lot of ravenous wolves in the world disguised as sheep, just waiting to pounce on the weak, the needy, the helpless, the hopeless and those who lack knowledge of your word. Lord Jesus, help them. Help them to see, open their eyes. Help them to hear, open their ears. Help them feel, open their hearts. Help them to understand, open their minds. Help them to embrace you, open their lives. Lord, please open the eyes of our hearts, we want to see you high and lifted up. Pour out your power, love, and blessings upon our lives, let it rain. Lord, we hunger and thirst after you. Teach us to understand your word and impart it to others righteously. Amen. (Prayer credit: christianstt.com/prayer-wolves-in-sheep-clothing/)

-Alex Clark

Friday, March 9

1 Corinthians 10:23-27; 31-33

²³"All things are lawful," but not all things are beneficial. "All things are lawful," but not all things build up. ²⁴Do not seek your own advantage, but that of the other. ²⁵Eat whatever is sold in the meat market without raising any question on the ground of conscience, ²⁶for "the earth and its fullness are the Lord's." ²⁷If an unbeliever invites you to a meal and you are disposed to go, eat whatever is set before you without raising any question on the ground of conscience.

³¹So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God. ³²Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God, ³³just as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, so that they may be saved.

To me, this scripture passage urges me to pause in my rush of a million must-dos and decisions. Stop. Reflect. Expand. Listen for God's voice and guidance. While all things or at least many things may be possible, not all paths are true. I feel this passage is calling me to be in a relationship of genuine presence with God, myself and others that leads to considered choices and a life of practical, practiced Christianity. Perspective helps eliminate distractions and illuminates the big picture, which, as we are reminded, is the Lord's. My goal should be to not do things simply because they are permissible or available, but to do those things that are pathways and leaps into that which is in the image and service of God's love and grace.

Quoting Mary Oliver's *Praying*: "It doesn't have to be the blue iris, it could be/weeds in a vacant lot, or a few/small stones;" the earth and its fullness are the Lord's. Amen.

-Cara Firestone

Since my mother bore me,
you have been my God.

Mar. 9th – Psalm 22:10



Artwork by Meredith Trafton.

Saturday, March 10

Gather at your family's spot for Lenten devotionals.

Read these words (with different people reading each week):

- One gives the call: Create in me a pure heart, O God
- All respond: And renew a right spirit within me.



Activity: Lent is a great time to dedicate yourself anew to finding ways to help others. When there is less school or work activities, finding ways to be with and for other people is key to responding to the good gifts of God. Could you clean out an area of the house and give things you are not using to others? Could you spend half a day at the Capital Area Food Bank? Could you send a message to a family member or church friend who has been in your thoughts?

Activity 2: Freedom Bubbles – As you think about reaching out in love to others, think about someone in particular that you need to forgive or someone who has been worrying you. Invite your family to join you outdoors with a container of bubbles and a bubble wand. Tell your family that these are not bubbles to pop, but bubbles to watch fly to freedom. As each person in the family blows the bubble, think of about the person you have in mind. Read Matthew 18: 21-22 as you consider how to serve and forgive others.

-Charlotte Trafton

Sunday, March 11

John 3:14-17

¹⁴ “And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.¹⁶ “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.¹⁷” Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

John 3:16 is a familiar passage to many of us. Not so familiar is its bizarre introduction. What does a serpent lifted up in the wilderness have to do with “For God so loved the world...”?

During their journey through the wilderness the Hebrew people encountered venomous snakes whose bite could be lethal. The antidote to this sting of death was to gaze upon a serpent that their leader, Moses, had raised high on a pole. John, the gospel writer, recalls this image from the Hebrew Scriptures and likens it to Jesus. All who gaze upon God’s beloved Son “lifted up” on a cross and “lifted up” from the grave will be saved.

Granted, it’s a strange comparison to our modern ears. But before we dismiss it, let us consider all of the venom that is present in our world today. There is an abundance of rancor, envy, and hatred that permeates the world around us. That same venom can be found even pulsing through our own veins. It is toxic to the life that God intends for us to live.

God raises a cross amid the vipers and the venom. When God’s love is lifted up among us, it draws out all of our venom and all that poisons the world. From his cross where he reigns, Christ is still speaking on this fourth Sunday in Lent:

Let it go. Let it all go. Let all the backbiting go. Let go of everything that poisons our lives, that corrupts our community, and demeans our humanity. Let it go. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

-Bill Clark

Monday, March 12

1 Corinthians 12:4-11

⁴Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; ⁵and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; ⁶and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. ⁷To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. ⁸To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, ⁹to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, ¹⁰to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.

God gave each and every one of us our own way to share the Holy Spirit with others; we each have unique gifts to offer. In this time of waiting, we devote our time to God through prayer, reflection, and observation. We share with one another our gifts of wisdom and knowledge according to the Spirit.

The gifts listed in the scripture become more spectacular as they go on, starting with things like the utterance of knowledge and wisdom, and ending with working miracles, prophecy, and interpretation of tongues. It's hard to imagine working a miracle or telling a prophecy for a Lenten devotional, but there is an important takeaway found in these gifts: they are active. They show us that waiting for Christ is not just about watching, but about working to make our world more like his vision for us.

This season of Lent, I encourage you to actively take part in making the world a better place in preparation for the coming of Christ. Simple acts of kindness play no small part in the task of bringing the Kingdom of God to Earth. Use your unique talents to share your gift of Spirit with others, whether those talents be knowledge and wisdom, or things like music, effort, and generosity. Or working of miracles, if you're up for it.

Prayer: Gracious God, encourage us this season of Lent to use the gifts you have given us to share your Spirit with the world, as we wait for your son Jesus Christ. Amen.

-Marianna Vanden Bout

Tuesday, March 13

1 Corinthians 12:12-20; 26

¹²For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body - Jews or Greeks, slaves or free - and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

¹⁴Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. ¹⁵If the foot would say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁶And if the ear would say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁷If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. ¹⁹If all were a single member, where would the body be? ²⁰As it is, there are many members, yet one body.

²⁶If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.

The doctrines of our government state that "all men are created equal." But we are not actually equal. We are infinitely unique & diverse, which is actually pleasing to God.

In this letter to the Corinthians, Paul wants to point out that each member of the church has his or her place—that they are distinct, yet necessary to form the church family in Christ. All Christians are dependent on one another, and each receives help from the rest. The good of the whole should be the object of all. We should all rejoice with our fellow members that each of us is so important to our church, and to "the body of Christ."

Prayer: Dear God, Help us to rely on Jesus as our Savior, and to remember how we rely on each other. We are all so special in God's eyes. Help us realize our gifts and the importance of what each of us bring to our church family. Amen.

-Marcia Kiger

O taste and see that the LORD is good;

Mar. 13th – Psalm 34:8



Bread

Artwork by Meredith Trafton.

Wednesday, March 14

1 Corinthians 12:27-13:3

²⁷Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. ²⁸And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues. ²⁹Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? ³⁰Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? ³¹But strive for the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.

¹If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ²And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. ³If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

To me, this passage reminds us of many things, but first, that we are better together, as both the body and church of Christ. It reminds us that we are all brought together with various gifts and that together we are more complete as a church family and with Christ.

“But strive for the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.” What a special sentiment we find in verse 31—a notion to keep trying and striving for those great gifts, and we will be enlightened, blessed, and shown a more excellent way.

And then finally Love; this passage ends telling us that love is paramount to excelling at what God wants us to do. As disciples of Christ and lovers of the Lord we are called to show the world His love, day by day, and minute by minute. May He walk with us as we strive to show His love to the world today and every day.

Prayer: Lord, We come to you with grateful hearts and humble, quiet minds today. We thank you for bountiful blessings you have showered upon us. We ask that you walk with us today and every day as we use our gifts you have given us and strive to share your Love with the world. In Jesus’ name we pray.

-Mirand Zepeda

I believe that I shall see
the goodness of the LORD

Mar. 14th – Psalm 27:13



Artwork by Harper Magierski.

Thursday, March 15

1 Corinthians 13:4-7

⁴ Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant⁵ or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; ⁶it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. ⁷It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

I'm not sure I've ever attended a wedding (except my own!) where this passage from 1 Corinthians wasn't incorporated in some way. And now I rarely hear it elsewhere (except when it appears in the Daily Lectionary every two or three years). Yet restricting its relevance to the opening day of a marriage, or to the regular rotation of the Lectionary, misses Paul's point. He certainly never intended it for single use.

Its relevance to the rest of my life became acutely clear early last year when I found myself spread too thin. I didn't experience a life-changing tragedy or acute personal disaster, I was simply caught between the ordinary demands of my nearly two year old son and my too-full life here in Austin, and the needs of my seventy-seven year old widowed, lonely dad nearly 900 miles away. I believe the popular term is the "sandwich generation" phenomenon. There were not enough hours in the day to meet each of their needs and still preserve my sense of self. It was so easy to lose patience with my fiercely independent young son and to be irritated by my dad's endless computer problems and seeming inability to part with a single sheet of paper. It was so hard to be effortlessly kind to a toddler repeatedly telling me "no", and to honor and appreciate my dad's life experiences instead of resenting him for being "stuck" in the past. But Paul's words were actually far more relevant to me then than they would have been on my wedding day. Love is not merely an abstract philosophical ideal; it is also a way of being, a way of living, a way of behaving. I had to consciously choose to embrace that more hands-on version of love that required me to practice patience and kindness deliberately, to swallow my pride, to rejoice in the good in each situation, and to live in love, not in negativity. I loved them both with a deep, abiding, ferocious passion, but I still had to thoughtfully practice choosing joy and modeling kindness and celebrating all of our differences.

And if I had to work that hard to abide by the teachings of 1 Corinthians with two people whom I loved fiercely, how much harder it must be to do with the rest of humanity! (And I

wonder what stories Paul had heard about the members of the church at Corinth that prompted this part of his Epistle?) I do know that we are human; we have human failing and frailties and faults, and loving our neighbors in the way that Paul describes is inherently difficult. Yet we are also without a doubt called to be like Christ, to imitate his love, and we have his perfect example on which to model our own attempts at bearing all things, believing all things, hoping all things, and enduring all things as many times as we need to.

Prayer: God of Grace, We thank you that nothing can separate us from your love. Help us to show that love to all those around us--to act with kindness, to practice patience, to live humbly, to rejoice in truth, and to be Christ-like in all of our living. Amen.

-Sarah Almén

"Come," my heart says, "seek his face"

Your face, LORD, do I seek.

Mar. 15th – Psalm 27:8



Artwork by Lola Gonin.

Friday, March 16

1 Corinthians 13:8-13

8 Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. ⁹For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; ¹⁰but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. ¹¹When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. ¹²For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. ¹³And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

I think Paul is conveying two things here. First, that even though it may be confusing or “fuzzy” at times trying to understand God’s purpose for us it will get better and changes are coming. These changes are brought on by spiritual growth as God is revealed to them. That they should not let the lack of clarity dissuade or discourage them from seeking His way. He is trying to give them the benefit of his understanding and Christian maturity. Second, Paul is showing them the way to not only know God’s purpose for our lives, but also how to be more Godlike. Paul breaks down all our existence and subordinates them to Love. It is the process, the priority and will win out in the end. Even if you lose faith and hope, hold out for Love and you will have made the right choice.

Prayer: Please God, give me the focus and understanding to choose Love as my purpose and the solution to the trials of my life. Help me to spread a message of Love with my actions and words. Please Lord, show me the way you have chosen for me, but when that way is hidden, give me the strength to follow my heart and trust in your Love is guiding me.

-Shayne Bennett

Saturday, March 17

Gather at your family's spot for Lenten devotionals. Read these words (with different people reading each week):

- One gives the call: Create in me a pure heart, O God
- All respond: And renew a right spirit within me.



Activity: Build a Holy Week garden-in-a-box. Ask everyone in the family to contribute something. In one part of the box, build a dusty road for Jesus to walk on into Jerusalem. In another part of the box, use a smaller box to show a two-story building where the disciples gathered with Jesus for the Passover meal. Use potting soil and the bottom of a garden pot to build a Golgotha hill in a corner of the box, and plant quick growing seeds in the soil (like grass seeds, zinnia, sunflower or lima beans). Use this box to retell the story of Holy Week as the days get closer.

-Charlotte Trafton

Sunday, March 18

John 12:20-33

20 Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. 21 They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." 22 Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. 23 Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. 24 Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. 25 Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. 26 Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.

27 "Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. 28 Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." 29 The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him." 30 Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. 31 Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. 32 And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." 33 He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.

Earth, by Helen C.L. McPeak

**God is digging in the garden of my soul,
the rich, moist dirt sticking under her fingernails,
turning and blending the soil of my life,
now and then adding the compost
of tossed-out experiences
that I believed were useless.**

**She seems to understand
that this bed can sustain life,
that the deadened seeds and withered sprouts
will not be all there is.**

Like the herb jungle
in my friend Elaine's backyard,
my soul, under God's care,
will grow green and wild.



Monday, March 19

1 Corinthians 14:1-5; 13; 19

¹Pursue love and strive for the spiritual gifts, and especially that you may prophesy. ²For those who speak in a tongue do not speak to other people but to God; for nobody understands them, since they are speaking mysteries in the Spirit. ³On the other hand, those who prophesy speak to other people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation. ⁴Those who speak in a tongue build up themselves, but those who prophesy build up the church. ⁵Now I would like all of you to speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy. One who prophesies is greater than one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be built up.

¹³Therefore, one who speaks in a tongue should pray for the power to interpret. ¹⁹In church I would rather speak five words with my mind, in order to instruct others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue.

Speaking in Tongues is not something we give a lot of thought or attention to in our modern Presbyterian worship – not even in the traditional Southern Baptist church I grew up in, for that matter. And Prophecy seems to be a close second in the category of “weird things we don’t do at MY church.” So at first, this passage was difficult for me to consider. We know from reading the previous chapters of I Corinthians, that Paul has been writing to the new Church, providing instruction and guidance on how to “be” a Church to one another, and also on how to “do Church” when they come together and worship. We read that we all come with many gifts, and just as a body is comprised of many members – hands, hearts, and mind – our worship should encompass many forms – a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue or interpretation. And, that any gift without love is just a noisy gong or clanging cymbal. So Paul admonishes us to “Pursue love and strive for spiritual gifts.” Paul says he hopes that we are all able to speak in tongues, which to us may look more like a private prayer inspired by the mysteries of the spirit, for God’s ears only, so that we may deepen our love and wonder of God.

But even more, Paul would like us to prophesy – to teach and tell of things to come, so that we may build up, encourage, and console each other. It’s hard to imagine being a “prophet” in this day and age. But many times over the years that I have been a member of

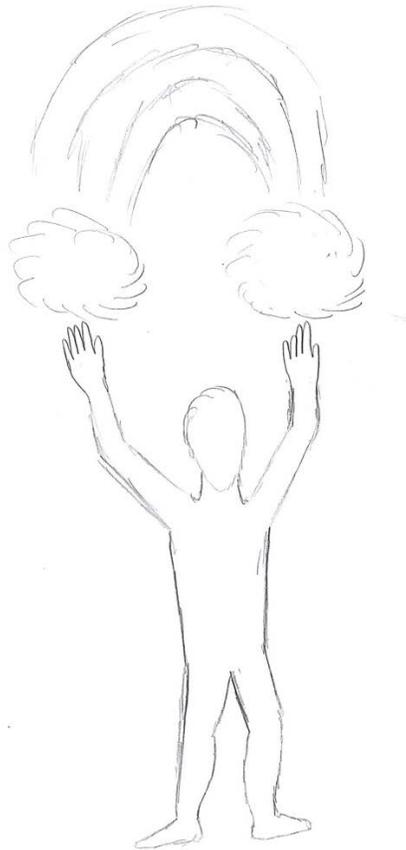
Westminster, I have gleaned an insight from another member, often unintended, whether it was while chatting with another mom on the playground after worship, or a kind word from an often older, wiser, or more experienced church member during a difficult life passage. And I hope that I have been able to uplift others in a similar manner. And so it is through these everyday prophesies, that we build a Church, a community of saints, to share the greatest gift—the gift of God’s love.

Prayer: Dear God, Your gifts are so many and mysterious. Open our ears to hear your prophesy, even when it comes unexpectedly, and to receive the gifts that you have blessed upon each of us. Form our tongues, oh Lord, to speak to you with the love from the depth of our hearts.

-Kim Edwards

Every day I will bless you,

Mar. 19th – Psalm 145:2



Artwork by Evan Gonin.

Tuesday, March 20

1 Corinthians 14:26b-33a, 39-40

When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up. ²⁷If anyone speaks in a tongue, let there be only two or at most three, and each in turn; and let one interpret. ²⁸But if there is no one to interpret, let them be silent in church and speak to themselves and to God. ²⁹Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said. ³⁰If a revelation is made to someone else sitting nearby, let the first person be silent. ³¹For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged. ³²And the spirits of prophets are subject to the prophets, ³³for God is a God not of disorder but of peace.

³⁹So, my friends, be eager to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues; ⁴⁰but all things should be done decently and in order.

This passage reminds me of many of the meetings I have attended over the years. They can so easily turn into chaos as everyone tries to force their opinions and ideas into the conversation. One of the wisest leaders I have worked with introduced the concept of the “talking stick” as used by several indigenous tribes of the Northwest. At council meetings a stick is passed around the circle. Only the person holding the stick is allowed to speak, and that person is only allowed to hold it for a set period of time. The shy are allowed to speak and the “blowhards” are not allowed to dominate. In our meetings when one person interrupted another, she would simply say, “Who has the stick?” to bring the meeting back to order.

I think Paul is saying that, at its worst, speaking in tongues can be an egotistical act. It is like those meetings where participants are constantly talking over one another saying, “Look at me! Look at me!” Yet Paul says if used wisely and correctly it is a valuable gift. He is telling all of us we must use our gifts, whatever they may be, selflessly and for the good of the community. If we do not, they are of no use to God.

Prayer: God of Grace, help us in this day to know when it is time to speak and when it is time to listen. When we speak, let us speak wisely and with compassion. When we listen, let us be attentive and open to the wisdom of those around us. Amen

-Rick Colvin

Come, O children, listen to me

Mar. 20th – Psalm 34:11



Artwork by Meredith Trafton.

Wednesday, March 21

2 Corinthians 2:14-3:6

¹⁴But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads in every place the fragrance that comes from knowing him. ¹⁵For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; ¹⁶to the one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things? ¹⁷For we are not peddlers of God's word like so many; but in Christ we speak as persons of sincerity, as persons sent from God and standing in his presence.

¹Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Surely we do not need, as some do, letters of recommendation to you or from you, do we? ²You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all; ³and you show that you are a letter of Christ, prepared by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

⁴Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. ⁵Not that we are competent of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us; our competence is from God, ⁶who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of letter but of spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

Letters of recommendation are ubiquitous. We need them for schools, jobs, camps, country clubs. It is often not possible to recommend ourselves through our actions; we must prove our worth through the recommendation of others. The practicality of this process is not lost on me. An employer or organization has often not had the advantage of witnessing an applicant in their everyday lives.

But if that organization could see us going through our everyday lives, they would see how hard we try, how honest we are, how loving we strive to be. Hopefully. Hopefully, they would not see the time we cut someone off in traffic, or became impatient with a well-meaning colleague. Thinking about the alternatives, being a living recommendation for oneself is a lot harder than getting a quality letter of recommendation.

How much harder and more important is it to be a living recommendation to God! In a world that little notes what we say, but long remembers what we do (to steal from "The Gettysburg Address"), how much harder is it to live out the best version of our Christian

selves than to repeat a passage from the bible. For instance, it is infinitely more difficult to commit to the ongoing practice of devotion than to write a Lenten devotional.

Prayer: God, guide us by your word to be a living recommendation for you. Fill us with your spirit, so that we may diffuse that spirit in to the world. Give us the strength to live out your word through our deeds.

-Ann Strauser Palmer

and I shall be clean; wash me,
and I shall be whiter than snow.

Mar. 21st – Psalm 51:7



Artwork by Meredith Trafton.

Thursday, March 22

2 Corinthians 3:7-18

⁷Now if the **ministry of death**, chiseled in letters on stone tablets, came in glory so that the people of Israel could not gaze at Moses' face because of the glory of his face, a glory now set aside, ⁸how much more will the **ministry of the Spirit** come in glory? ⁹For if there was glory in the **ministry of condemnation**, much more does the **ministry of justification** abound in glory! ¹⁰Indeed, what once had glory has lost its glory because of the greater glory; ¹¹for if what was set aside came through glory, much more has the permanent come in glory!

¹²Since, then, we have such a hope, we act with great boldness, ¹³not like Moses, who put a veil over his face to keep the people of Israel from gazing at the end of the glory that was being set aside. ¹⁴But their minds were hardened. Indeed, to this very day, when they hear the reading of the old covenant, that same veil is still there, since only in Christ is it set aside. ¹⁵Indeed, to this very day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their minds; ¹⁶but when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. ¹⁷Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. ¹⁸And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.

Paul makes it very clear to the Christians at Corinth that the Law as promulgated by Moses, the Ministry of Death and Condemnation, has lost its glory and been supplanted by the Ministry of the Spirit and Justification made possible by Christ's death and resurrection—what comfort there is in these words! No longer are we bound to the Law that leads to certain condemnation, since we are all sinners. This frees us from veil of the old covenant, set aside by Christ, and allows us to see the glory of the Lord without obstruction. Such a clear view leads to a gradual sanctification, as we are transformed “into the same image from one degree of glory to another.”

Father Richard Rohr, in his book *Immortal Diamond: The Search for Our True Self*, discusses this transformation in detail. The following quotation, adapted from this book, is taken from one of his recent Daily Meditations and offers an interpretation of this gradual transformation:

“The indwelling divine image moves toward fulfillment in each of us throughout our lifetimes. “Likeness” refers to our personal and unique embodiment of that inner divine

image. It is our gradual realization of this gift. We all have the same objective gift, but different ways of saying yes and consenting to it. There are as many ways to manifest God as there are beings in the universe. Our personal and collective embodiments reveal aspects of the sacred through our personhood, relationships, fields of work and study, culture, economy, politics, and justice. Though we differ in likeness, the imago Dei persists and shines through all created things."

Prayer: Eternal Father, you said, "Let us make mankind in our image and likeness." Thus, you were willing to share with us your Own greatness. You gave us the intellect to share your truth. You gave us the wisdom to share your goodness. And you gave us the free will to love that which is true and just. Why did you dignify us? It was because you looked upon us and fell in love with us. It was love which first prompted you to create us; and it was love which caused you to share with us your truth and goodness. Out of the same love that caused you to create us, you have now sent your only Son to save us. He is your perfect image and likeness, and so through Him we can be restored to your image and likeness. (St. Catherine of Siena)

-Andy Lottes

I am like a little owl of the wilderness,
Mar. 22nd – Psalm 102:6



Artwork by Meredith Trafton.

Friday, March 23

2 Corinthians 4:5-12

⁵For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake. ⁶For it is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness", who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

⁷But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us. ⁸We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; ⁹persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; ¹⁰always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies. ¹¹For while we live, we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be made visible in our mortal flesh. ¹²So death is at work in us, but life in you.

This verse is part of a letter from Paul to the people of Corinth after they humiliated and rejected his efforts to build a church. The majority of the church finally repented, and he wanted to express joy at the warm response he received from them. He wanted to show them what it means to be a servant and ambassador for Christ.

He reminds them that he is only a messenger from Jesus much as we all are today. We carry the precious message around in our imperfect, weak, ordinary bodies like a plain clay pot. We are just ordinary people and sometimes our lives can become difficult, but by depending on God, he shows us the way. The power of God's love can be surprising.

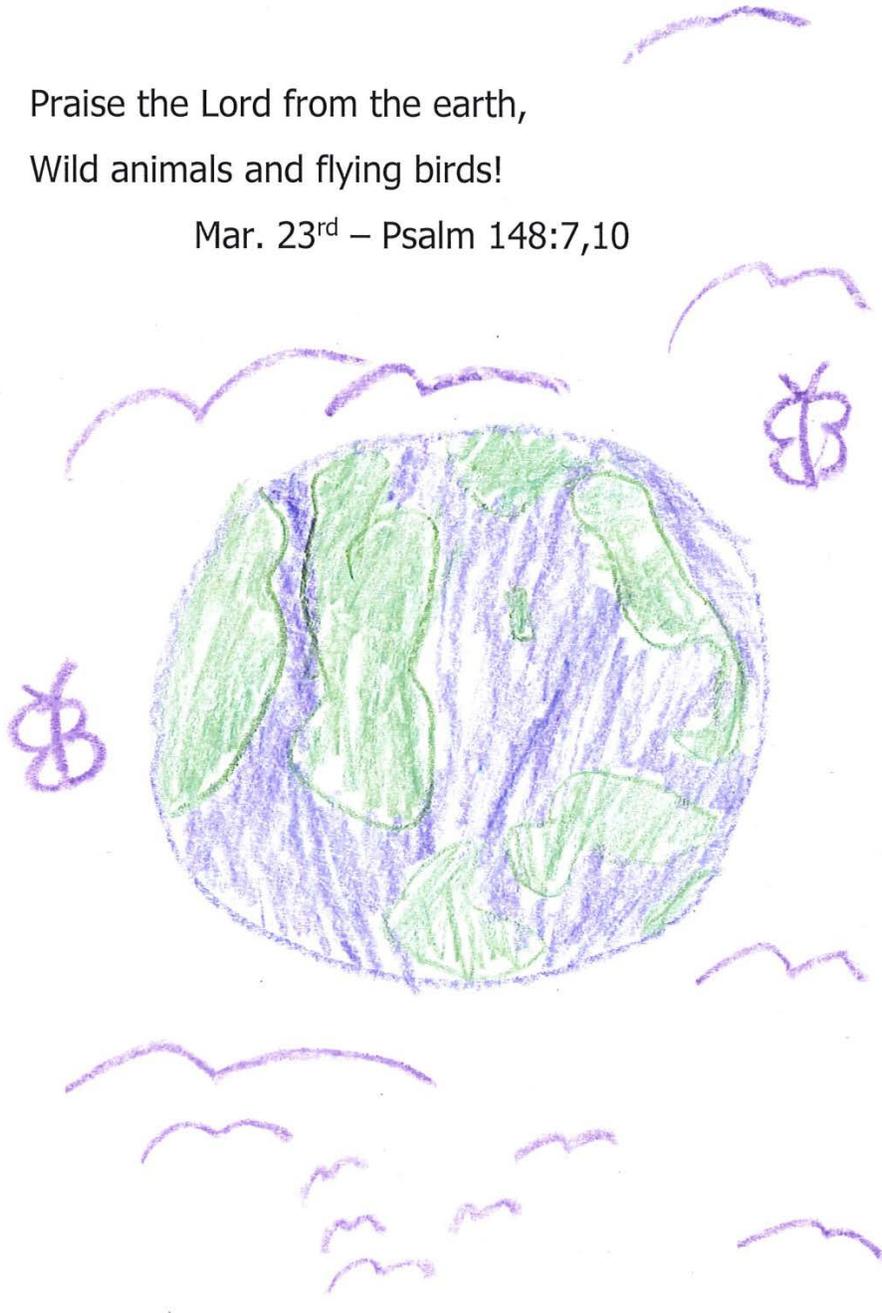
During this Lenten season we can remember what they did to Jesus and how we sometimes feel weak and helpless in our own lives but God shows us the way. What Jesus did among the people he does in us—he lives!!!

**Prayer: Dear God, Make us all messengers of Christ. Fill our hearts with light as we
"Light up the Darkness." Amen.**

-Ann Humphreys

Praise the Lord from the earth,
Wild animals and flying birds!

Mar. 23rd – Psalm 148:7,10

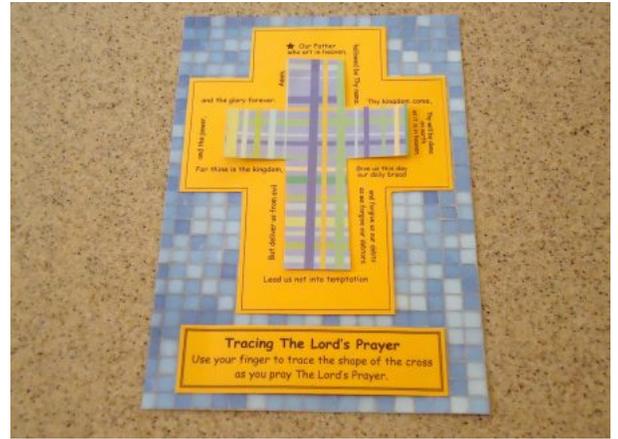


Artwork by Meredith Trafton.

Saturday, March 24

Gather at your family's spot for Lenten devotionals. Read these words (with different people reading each week):

- One gives the call: Create in me a pure heart, O God
- All respond: And renew a right spirit within me.



Activity: Read the verses of Mark 11:1-11. Create a colt on paper to help act out the story. Cut small branches from a local plant to wave as Jesus moves on the colt down the path into Jerusalem (in miniature).

Activity 2: Here's a centering movement to do as you say the Lord's Prayer. Using the guide from <https://www.buildfaith.org/lords-prayer-tracing-cross/#gref>, print a copy of this design on thick paper. Use decorative paper behind it and for the center cross piece. Consider adding this cross to your family's Lenten gathering area to say throughout this Holy Week.

Instructions:

1. Print on color cardstock and apart.
2. Glue to scrapbook paper cut slightly larger than cross.
3. Laminate.
4. Punch hole in top corner and insert key ring or add ribbon loop to attach to handle of worship bag.

Tracing The Lord's Prayer
Use your finger to trace the shape of the cross as you pray The Lord's Prayer.

Tracing The Lord's Prayer
Use your finger to trace the shape of the cross as you pray The Lord's Prayer.

Sunday, March 25

Philippians 2:5-11

5 Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,

6 who, though he was in the form of God,

did not regard equality with God

as something to be exploited,

7 but emptied himself,

taking the form of a slave,

being born in human likeness.

And being found in human form,

8 he humbled himself

and became obedient to the point of death —

even death on a cross.

9 Therefore God also highly exalted him

and gave him the name

that is above every name,

10 so that at the name of Jesus

every knee should bend,

in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

11 and every tongue should confess

that Jesus Christ is Lord,

to the glory of God the Father.

“Realism” by Beth Bachmann

God said, your name is mud and the thing about mud is you got to throw it down repeatedly to remove the air and sometimes cut it and rejoin it with another part. If stars are made of dust, it's not the same stuff, God said; you can't make a hut out of it, only heaven, and when I said dust to dust, that's not what I meant.

Monday, March 26

2 Corinthians 1:1-7

¹Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,
To the church of God that is in Corinth, including all the saints throughout Achaia:

²Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation, ⁴who consoles us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to console those who are in any affliction with the consolation with which we ourselves are consoled by God. ⁵For just as the sufferings of Christ are abundant for us, so also our consolation is abundant through Christ. ⁶If we are being afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation; if we are being consoled, it is for your consolation, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we are also suffering. ⁷Our hope for you is unshaken; for we know that as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our consolation.

This scripture passage teaches me to be thankful. I have been blessed with many gifts from God and am able to use these gifts to help my family and friends and a stranger in need. I was called to help my church on a day when I was sitting there wondering and asking God what he wanted me to do. Being called to be a Deacon is God's way to use me to help the church. We are all called to God's church and his teachings. As Paul greets the church in 2 Corinthians 1:2: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Prayer: Thank you Lord for blessing me in so many ways. Please continue to give me strength and wisdom in helping my church. I pray in Jesus name, Amen.

-Kevin Blockinger

The Lord is good to all,

Mar. 26th – Psalm 145:9



Tuesday, March 27

2 Corinthians 1:8-11

⁸We do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, of the affliction we experienced in Asia; for we were so utterly, unbearably crushed that we despaired of life itself. ⁹Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death so that we would rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. ¹⁰He who rescued us from so deadly a peril will continue to rescue us; on him we have set our hope that he will rescue us again, ¹¹as you also join in helping us by your prayers, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many.

In this reading, Apostles Paul and Timothy are telling the church at Corinth (all “brothers and sisters”) about the troubles they experienced while in Asia. They were so overwhelmed with problems that they thought they would die.

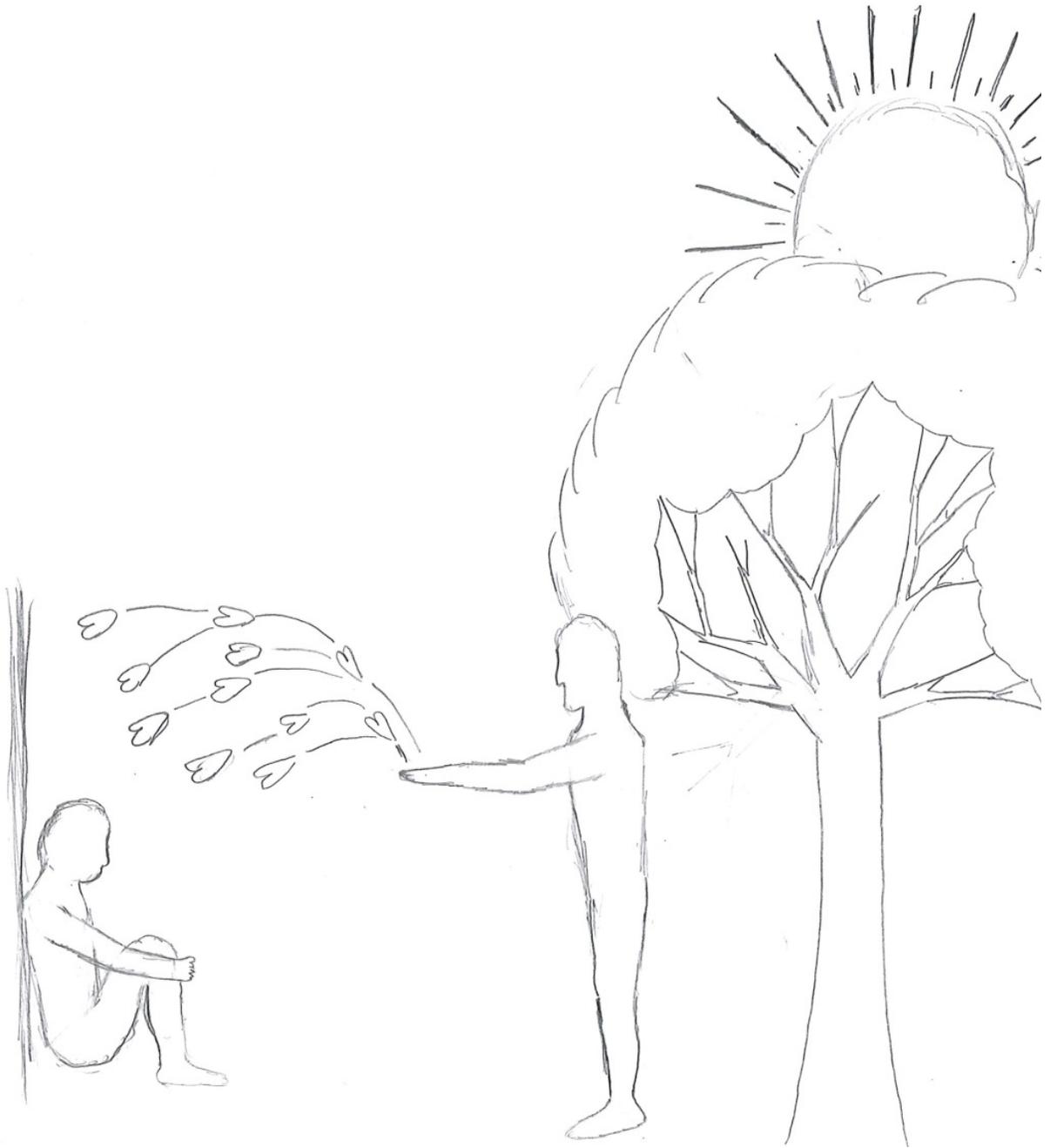
But due to this fear of dying, they stopped relying just on themselves to be rescued, and learned to rely on God, WHO RAISES THE DEAD, to rescue them.

By placing their confidence in God, God rescued them; with the promise to always rescue them.

Paul and Timothy also thanked the church for their continued prayers.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, who listens more than we pray; hear our prayers. Always keep us mindful that we are not alone in our suffering, that we can’t heal our sufferings by ourselves, that You, along with all “brothers and sisters” are there for us, now and forever. Amen

-Stan Shaw



Artwork by Evan Gonin.

Wednesday, March 28

2 Corinthians 1:12-22

¹²Indeed, this is our boast, the testimony of our conscience: we have behaved in the world with frankness and godly sincerity, not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God - and all the more toward you. ¹³For we write you nothing other than what you can read and also understand; I hope you will understand until the end -¹⁴as you have already understood us in part - that on the day of the Lord Jesus we are your boast even as you are our boast.

¹⁵Since I was sure of this, I wanted to come to you first, so that you might have a double favor; ¹⁶I wanted to visit you on my way to Macedonia, and to come back to you from Macedonia and have you send me on to Judea. ¹⁷Was I vacillating when I wanted to do this? Do I make my plans according to ordinary human standards, ready to say "Yes, yes" and "No, no" at the same time? ¹⁸As surely as God is faithful, our word to you has not been "Yes and No." ¹⁹For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we proclaimed among you, Silvanus and Timothy and I, was not "Yes and No"; but in him it is always "Yes." ²⁰For in him every one of God's promises is a "Yes." For this reason it is through him that we say the "Amen," to the glory of God. ²¹But it is God who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us, ²²by putting his seal on us and giving us his Spirit in our hearts as a first installment.

Paul uses questions about his own faithfulness to his word with the Corinthians as a springboard to proclaim the faithfulness of God and the fulfillment of all of God's promises in Christ.

"For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we proclaimed among you, Silvanus and Timothy and I, was not 'Yes and No'; but in him it is always 'Yes.' For in him every one of God's promises is a 'Yes.'" (2 Corinthians 1:19-20a)."

No doubt, the Corinthians are disappointed in Paul; by analogy, we sometimes are disappointed in God. However, we should not be because we should have faith that God will care for us and fulfill His promises to use.

Prayer: Our Father, we are thankful for the care you provide to us and for your promise of eternal life. Help through periods of doubt and disappointment by helping us to remember that You are always with us, and that Your word and promises will be fulfilled. Amen.

-Jack Wilhelm

Listen to the sound of my cry,
my King and my God,
for to you I pray.

Mar. 28th – Psalm 5:2



Artwork by Meredith Trafton.

Thursday, March 29

1 Corinthians 10:14-17

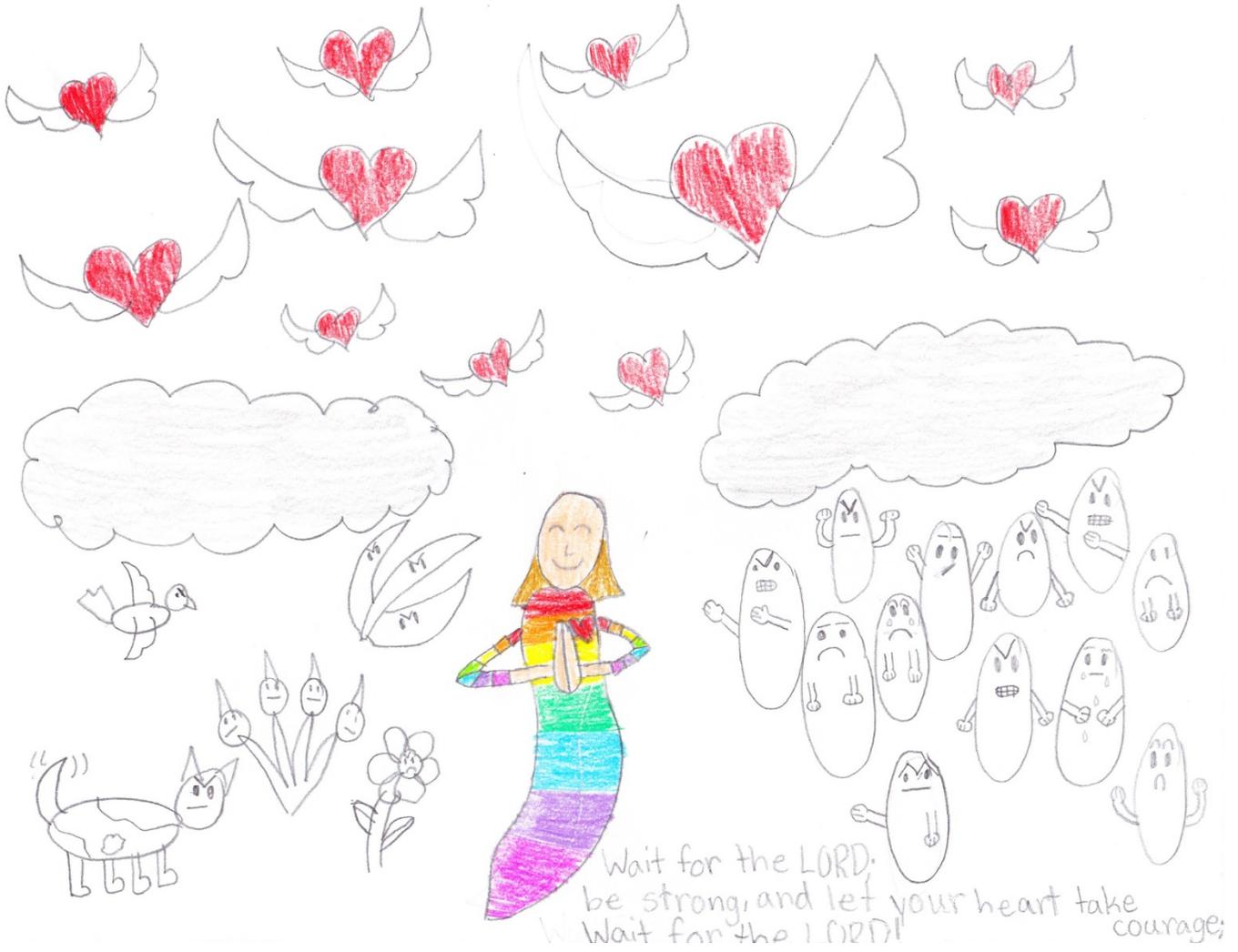
¹⁴Therefore, my dear friends, flee from the worship of idols. ¹⁵I speak as to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say. ¹⁶The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? ¹⁷Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.

In my mind, this passage is about God telling us that we are all His children through the sacrament of communion, through the sharing of the blood and body, God claims us as His own. Because of this fact, no matter our differences we are all the children of God.

We share a common experience as Christians where we go out during the week among people who may not agree with us, people who may not be Presbyterians. However, as is stated in this passage, we all partake of the body and blood of Christ, and through this, are all claimed by God as His children. No matter the denomination, we are all the children of God.

Prayer: Dear God, You created us in your image and made us each your own, you gave your only Son to save us. We thank you for all of your works and know that you made us all and we should all be thankful for that.

-John Clark



Artwork by Anna Ward.

Friday, March 30

1 Peter 1:13-16

¹³Therefore prepare your minds for action; discipline yourselves; set all your hope on the grace that Jesus Christ will bring you when he is revealed. ¹⁴Like obedient children, do not be conformed to the desires that you formerly had in ignorance. ¹⁵Instead, as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct; ¹⁶for it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."

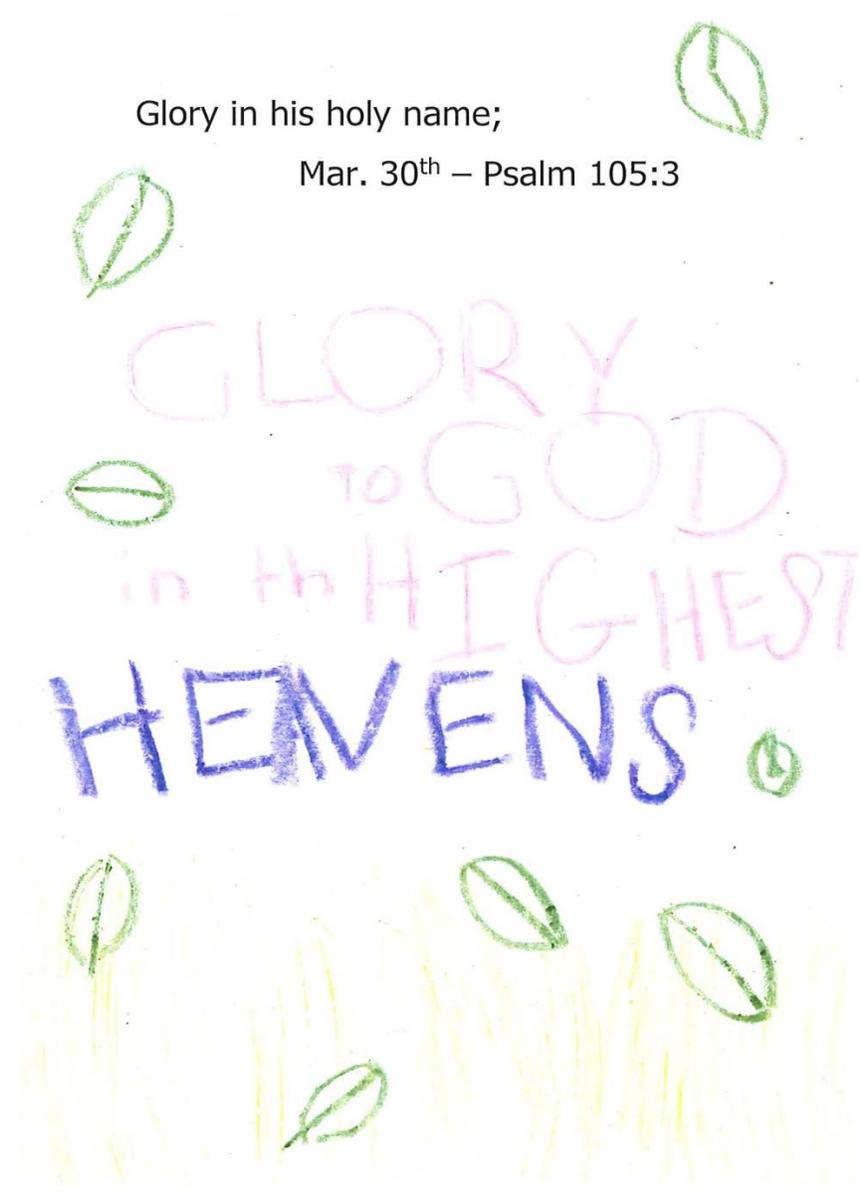
This passage has always given me pause; the words "discipline" and "obedience" carry a somewhat negative connotation for me. For instance, every January, I'm one of the many Americans who tells myself "This year, I'm going to be healthy! I'm going eat more vegetables, drink more water, exercise at least five days a week, etc." What I found this year, and often in the past, is that I didn't keep it going: this commitment that I made, even though my desire was heartfelt. However, one time a few years ago, I was determined to be more "disciplined." The difference then was that I took the time to prepare: every week I made out a grocery shopping list. I had the right supplies: I made sure my tennis shoes were in good shape. I got in the right mindset: I wrote about my thoughts and experiences every day. I read encouraging blogs, and I joined a community of others striving for the same outcome. Being around supportive people was key in bringing my desire to action. Maybe being disciplined wasn't so bad after all.

"Do not be conformed to the desires that you had in ignorance...be holy in all your conduct." This is certainly easier said than done. However, the first part of our verse for today gives us a way to do this: prepare our minds, discipline ourselves, set our hope on grace. Just as I needed the right planning, supplies, and supportive people to reach my goal a few years ago, similarly we need these things to help us in our journey of obedience and holiness. I can plan to make regular church attendance more of a priority. I can ensure that my Bible and other devotional materials are within easy reach. I can intentionally spend time with others who encourage my Christian growth. Oh, I'll still mess up. Even with perfect planning, I'll still eat too much sugar. Even with my Bible on my bedside table, I'll still focus on things I shouldn't. I'll never be without need of forgiveness. But ultimately, this verse tells us to focus on hope. Because we know Jesus, and because his grace has been given to us, we can live in joy, and with the assurance that we are loved,

forgiven, imperfect people. This is true even when our discipline is half-hearted, and even when our obedience falls short.

Prayer: Holy God, Thank you for giving us different ways to know you. Thank you for giving us a community of faithful people to remind us of your goodness and grace. Amen

-Sara Shippey



Artwork by Meredith Trafton.

Saturday, March 31

Gather at your family's spot for Lenten devotionals.

Read these words (with different people reading each week):

- One gives the call: Create in me a pure heart, O God
- All respond: And renew a right spirit within me.

Activity: Retell the salvation history of God's people that we know from the Bible. Ask each family member to write or draw a story they know that happened before Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Then work as a family to put those pictures in order. As you go, remember the amazing ways that God works in the world.



Activity 2: Take a 2nd picture in the location you photographed Feb. 24th. How do the locations in your yard look different now than they looked a few weeks ago? What else is God doing new in the world? Consider these questions as you dye Easter eggs together as a family. What things are being made new and transformed by the love of God for the world?

Sunday, April 1

1 Corinthians 15:1-11

1Now I should remind you, brothers and sisters, of the good news that I proclaimed to you, which you in turn received, in which also you stand, 2through which also you are being saved, if you hold firmly to the message that I proclaimed to you — unless you have come to believe in vain.

3 For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, 4and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, 5and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. 6Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. 7Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. 8Last of all, as to someone untimely born, he appeared also to me. 9For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. 10But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace towards me has not been in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them — though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. 11Whether then it was I or they, so we proclaim and so you have come to believe.

