

## Lent Devotional 2021

### INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the 2021 Lent Daily Devotional of Richfield United Methodist Church in Minneapolis, MN. The tradition of a member-created devotional returns and I'm glad you're taking a daily journey with your fellow worshipers and members as we journey the days of Lent from Ash Wednesday through Easter Sunday.

This year's theme is "Day by Day." Every day is a chance to see Jesus more clearly, to love Jesus more dearly, and to follow Jesus more nearly. Lent is the season of spiritual practice that leads to the cross of Good Friday and the resurrection on Easter Sunday. We take this journey trying on new methods of living our faith out loud so that we may more closely follow our beloved, holy teacher. We try on these methods, seeing how they fit, and put them to good use - all of this is guided by the Holy Spirit on the journey we take. All throughout Lent, you are encouraged to reflect on the times you had to make a **choice** and felt God present. Or you had to make a **commitment** to your ethics. Perhaps you found **truth** in a teaching of Jesus in your own life. Or you experienced new **birth** in a spiritual practice. **Death** sometimes brings new life. And maybe you have even found a way to share your faith in different points of the day, such as **daylight**, **dusk**, **twilight**, **midnight**, or **dawn**.

The devotional is assembled with rhythms and patterns in mind to give you tether on your Lenten journey. Sundays begin with a prayer and either an action to take or reflection to ponder from Bread for the World, an organization dedicated to eradicating world hunger from a system-and-policy changing justice perspective (learn more at [bread.org](http://bread.org)). Mondays feature spiritual practice ideas from Gail Johnson and Rev. Kent Johnson, and you'll find a photograph by Sarah Musgrave to ponder in the middle of the week on Wednesdays, as well as a few photos during Holy Week. Rev. Wayne Albertson provides yet another round of hymns on Saturdays, and for Thursdays I have written reflections based on my sermon prep as you prepare for the coming Sunday's worship service. A final consistent tether is a list of suggested scripture readings from the Revised Common Lectionary curated by Vanderbilt Divinity Library ([lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu](http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu)) which assigns readings to particular days. There isn't any intended connection with the submitted photos or writings, but rather it's an opportunity to do daily scripture reading that you can know many others are reading across the world at the same time as you.

Beyond these week-to-week tethers, you'll find a creative, and at times beautiful, collection of prose, poems, and prayers from a variety of writers from your church. Some submissions were written for this collection, others were dusted off from the archives. Some were typed, some were hand-written! All are crafted with love and offered with vulnerability and a desire to share in God's Spirit with you.

Place this devotional somewhere you can pick it up every day. Go to [facebook.com/richfieldunitedmethodistchurch](https://facebook.com/richfieldunitedmethodistchurch) to enjoy the daily posts there (please like and follow the page and share the posts with your friends). An electronic copy is available at [richfieldumc.org/devo](http://richfieldumc.org/devo). Blessings to you on your Lenten journey.

In Christ,  
Rev. Nate Melcher  
Senior Pastor

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**Wednesday, February 17, 2021**

Ash Wednesday

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17 or Isaiah 58:1-12; Psalm 51:1-17;  
2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10; Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

**“White Pelicans”**

**photo by Sarah Musgrave**

*Reflect on this photo of the day and  
this description by the photographer:  
“Getting together with friends for a  
casual lunch.”*

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**“Day of Piety” by Rev. Nate Melcher**

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

Where did you come from? St. Louis Park? Your family? Your mother’s womb? Are you born of God’s dream, is that your origin? Where are you going? Are you going, are you living, into God’s dream? Where did you come from? Where are you going? From both where you came and where you return, and in the precious space in-between in the center of it all, Jesus is your friend - all the way to the cross and beyond - and that in itself is a tremendous thing.

We aren’t quite sure where Ash Wednesday came from, as a tradition. Look up its origins and you’ll find varying stories and ideas. The one concept that rises from those stories, however, is that from the beginning, we have known that we come from somewhere and to that somewhere we return. On this day marking the beginning of Lent we experience tonight, we name it “dust.” You are dust. From dust you came and from dust you shall return. It is about mortality, a limited life as we know it.

May you journey into Lent knowing you are dust. We are all of the same dust. From that dust we came and to that dust we return. We who are cosmic dust, living our space in-between sharing the same elements of life as the stars, we breathe in and breathe out Lent with “faith on purpose.” We gather and affirm the mark of love God has put on our hearts, the mark of God’s dream, and we receive a mark of ash to remind us of it. We are born into Lent, we live a while in it, and we die with Christ and rise again in new life.

**Thursday, February 18, 2021**  
**Psalm 25:1-10; Daniel 9:1-14; 1 John 1:3-10**

**“Day of Choice” by Rev. Nate Melcher**  
**Mark 3:13-19**

While the Revised Common Lectionary, the 3-year cycle of scripture readings used by many church leaders when crafting worship, lists this Sunday’s Gospel text as Mark 1:9-15, this church has already explored that text in January. Instead to kick off Lent, we look a little further into the Gospel of Mark, to 3:13-19, to this list of Jesus’s disciples. At least, that’s what scripture usually refers to these twelve people as, yet here Jesus appoints them as “apostles.” A simple distinction is a “disciple” is like a student learner (observe the rabbi teach, take in the lessons) and an “apostle” is a like a student teacher (apply the lessons, teach like the rabbi).

At this point in the story, Jesus is entrusting his student learners to go out there and try being student teachers. They’ll report back to him later in chapter 6, but for now they get to put theory into practice. Faith isn’t a “get out of jail free” card or a product to own and keep on the shelf because it may come in handy someday. Faith is meant for praxis. All of these apostles are now to live faith out loud. Is it really all that different for us today? Choose to have faith without fruit and well, faith can fade fast.

Where have you been a student learner in your faith journey? Where are you still learning and what do you want to explore about faith next? When have you played the role of student teacher? How have you helped someone have new insight into the teachings of Jesus? On Sunday in worship, we will explore the active choices we make to put our faith into action.

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**Friday, February 19, 2021**

Psalm 25:1-10; Daniel 9:15-25a; 2 Timothy 4:1-5

**“Lent” by Meg Spicher**

What does it mean to me? Lent has a long and progressive history in my life. As I imagine it does for many Christians, as a child Lent seemed odd or even an exercise in punishment for no recognizable wrongdoing of my own. Or at least in those young years that is how I perceived it, up until my teenage years and college. All the sacrificing of things I liked yet what was the reward? What was the goal? I just couldn't see it, and then somewhere in the daily prayers, the extra time in quiet thought, the extra donations for the poor, something clicked in my heart. I matured and my spirituality awakened. I realized Lent was not about seeing change on the outside it was about realizing change on the inside. To see my life through God's eyes, making room in my life for the Holy. Now it is and has been for quite some time, a special time set aside each year to focus on forgiveness, prayer, and transformation.

Saturday, February 20, 2021  
Psalm 25:1-10; Psalm 32; Matthew 9:2-13

**“Over-Hearing” by Rev. Wayne Albertson**

People talk. I hear them, I hear them, I hear . . .  
Over them. I over-hear them.

Clerk to Customer: “Have a good one!”  
He said, for the ninety-seventh time today - as he  
handed over the receipt full  
of good wishes and called “Next!”  
I could go shopping some days just to hear  
“Have a good one” as every customer leaves  
to see a lover, play the horses, watch your father  
take his last breath, change a tire, nurse a baby.  
I hear them. I overhear them.

Wife to husband (I think): “Did I fill this out right?”  
as she waves the yellow hold-my-mail form to him  
in line at the post office where I stand  
mindless till I wonder how many times  
does she ask “Did I do it right?” I mean  
the form is not that hard, and  
has she (a mature woman) never done one.  
He doesn’t answer. I hear his silence.  
I hear them. I overhear them.

Young woman to mother (I think): “I DON’T do that!” with  
not-quite polite venom, paused into a stiff  
“But thanks for asking,” in the quiet,  
upscale clothing store where I wait as my wife buys socks.  
The older woman walks away - to the hats.  
I doubt it was about her favorite ice cream,  
but control, protection, the ambiguities of intimacy  
in an almost well-chosen place where we pay for the socks.  
I hear them. I overhear them.

Husband and wife: “I didn’t know what to say;  
So I didn’t say anything”, and “Me too” I heard  
behind me during the last hymn. Two lay people, eucharist-  
serving - bread-breaking, wine-holding - speechless good-hearts  
embarrassed for not knowing the proper sacramental linguistics.  
They are right: When bodies are broken  
we don’t know what to say, (“me too”).  
The silence speaks deeply, eternally.  
I hear them. I overhear them.

**Sunday, February 21, 2021**

First Sunday in Lent

Genesis 9:8-17; Psalm 25:1-10; 1 Peter 3:18-22; Mark 1:9-15

**“Jesus is baptized and blessed by the Spirit” by Bread for the World**

**Prayer:** O Christ, we give thanks that during this season of Lent you come into our lives, proclaiming God’s salvation. Renew our faith in this good news so that we who are baptized in your Spirit may raise our voices on behalf of those who hunger in our world. Amen.

**Action:** Bread for the World’s 2021 Offering of Letters launches a decade of education and action devoted to ending hunger. In the months ahead, you will have opportunities to communicate with your members of Congress about policies that address food systems, climate change, economic justice, and racial and gender equity. Plan to participate in one of Bread’s regional webinars and hear from your regional organizer. For info and to register, visit [bread.org/webinars](https://bread.org/webinars).

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Monday, February 22, 2021  
Psalm 77; Job 4:1-21; Ephesians 2:1-10

**“Prayer Practice, Part 1” by Gail Johnson**

I believe that God knows what each of us needs, where each of us is struggling. Therefore, I do not need to ask God to help a friend with a problem. What I do pray for is that the friend be able to feel the love of God, to know that God knows what is happening.

The prayer structure I use has five sections where I list the things and people around me who need to feel God’s presence in their life. The first three sections are...

For those who grieve:

- the loss of loved ones
- the loss of jobs, homes, health
- the loss of what they cannot bear to lose
- (name the people who are actively grieving in your life)

For those who wait:

- for test results
- for the treatment to work
- for their child to return
- (name the people)

For those in crises:

- Who do not have safety, housing, food,
- Who do not see a way to change what is happening
- Who do not have hope
- (name the people)

God, you know what we need better than we do. May all I have named and all who have no one to name them, know your loving embrace today and every day. Amen.

If you start with your hand closed and open a finger at each section, your hand will be open as you ask for God’s blessings.

*“Prayer Practice, Part II” appears on March 15, 2021.*



**Tuesday, February 23, 2021**  
Psalm 77; Job 5:8-27; 1 Peter 3:8-18a

**“Day by Day” by Sandy Nelson**

A few weeks ago I was writing a piece about anticipation for our Advent meditation booklet. I was writing about my husband’s bout with COVID-19 and anticipating the day when I could be allowed to return to visit him. Those were my goals...but God had other plans and shortly after I wrote that piece, my beloved Jim passed on to his heavenly reward. Though I miss him so much, I know he is in God’s hands. God works in mysterious ways—often unknown to us. Nevertheless, God is always at work. The Bible promises us that God will never leave us or forsake us. I treasure those words and rejoice that with every new morning: I do NOT have to be afraid, because God is walking with me step by step.

What I have to do is trust more fully. Some days are grey and sad as I live with grief. Many days are filled with amazing phone calls, texts, cards and wonderful friends and family encouraging me along the way. Each day I feel God letting me know that I am one of His beloved children. As we begin our Lenten journey, let us embrace these days with preparation, repentance, renewal, dreams, hopes, doubts, joys, and fears as we are trusting God and anticipating Jesus’s Resurrection and what it brings to our daily lives. Blessings to you on your very own Lenten DAY BY DAY journey.

Wednesday, February 24, 2021  
[Psalm 77](#); [Proverbs 30:1-9](#); [Matthew 4:1-11](#)

**“Protection” photo by Sarah Musgrave**

*Reflect on this photo of the day and this description by photographer Sarah Musgrave:  
“An adult eagle protecting the young eaglets.”*



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**Thursday, February 25, 2021**

Psalm 22:23-31; Genesis 15:1-6, 12-18; Romans 3:21-31

**“Day of Commitment” by Rev. Nate Melcher**

**Mark 8:31-38**

Mark 8:31-38 is an interesting scripture text because all throughout the Gospel of Mark there is a sense of mystery, an air of uncertainty on who this Jesus is and what he’s doing. But here, he goes ahead and tells the disciples exactly what’s going to happen! Forget foreshadowing, Jesus is in full-blown spoiler territory! It’s like, here’s all of Mark 14-16, be ready.

But Simon Peter isn’t ready. In fact, many of us aren’t. For many Christians, we have a tendency during Holy Week to skip the cross of Good Friday and go straight to the resurrection of Easter. While Easter is great, we must remember the cross of commitment Jesus faces, for that is what makes the resurrection such a triumph. Death shall not have the final word! What have been the hard parts of life you have wanted to skip? When have you had to confront hard truth? What have been the strongest, long-lasting commitments of your life?

None of what Jesus lays out that will happen to him necessarily rebukes the humanity of Jesus, by the way. Whether through divine insight or by his gut, Jesus knows there’s only one path that the kind of ministry he undertakes will lead. The writing is on the wall. Speaking truth out loud can help one process it, come to terms with it, even live into it. As Lent continues, may we contemplate the many forms of Jesus’s commitment to humankind and our commitment to Jesus.

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**Friday, February 26, 2021**

Psalm 22:23-31; Genesis 16:1-6; Romans 4:1-12

**“The Question” by Mary Martha Butler**

An ageless question follows me through life,  
pursues me to the farthest reach of my escape.  
Confronts me in the dark moments of my days  
and offers me new life.

"Will you decide to leave your cozy tomb",  
He asks, "and go beyond this death to live again?

I shut my ears, and snuggle down  
wrapped in a quilt patchworked from my pain.

But in the dark each heartbeat calls to me...  
"Will you..decide..will you..come out..?  
"I send you Love..You can..come out..!

The question murmurs on, relentless, in this tomb.  
My quilt grows hot, no comfort there,  
I feel the confines of this space.

Then choosing for this moment, God's power,  
I rise up, cast off the shrouds  
of life-destructive thoughts,

And I am free again!  
To step into the light, and love.

**Saturday, February 27, 2021**

Psalm 22:23-31; Genesis 16:7-15; Mark 8:27-30

**“Giving Up” by Rev. Wayne Albertson**

Jane is giving up chocolates  
for Lent, - Who Cares?  
She could give up Facebook, hot dates,  
Her selfish prayers,  
All by which she swears.

God is giving up listening  
for Lent, - self-care!  
Unending needs, upward raining, -  
“Help, help, nothing spare.”  
Even God might swear.

**Sunday February 28, 2021**

Second Sunday in Lent

Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16; Psalm 22:23-31; Romans 4:13-25; Mark 8:31-38

**“Jesus invites us to take up the cross” by Bread for the World**

**Prayer:** O God, you desire that all people should eat and be satisfied. As we follow Jesus to Jerusalem and the cross, may our hearts be so transformed that we lose our lives in sharing your bounty with all in need. Amen.

**Reflection:** Dietary quality, nutritional content, affordability, and accessibility are factors that support resilient and efficient food systems. Strong food systems are essential to protecting everyone’s health and reaching those most at risk of falling further into hunger and poverty. Notice where your groceries come from and reflect on how our food systems are interconnected.

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**Monday, March 1, 2021**  
Psalm 105:1-11, 37-45; Genesis 21:1-7; Hebrews 1:8-12

**“The Necklace” by Rev. Kent Johnson**

I have long believed that each person must try out many spiritual practices before they can find the ones that come naturally and fit their soul. Ironically, when we find one that brings us joy, we often get too excited telling others and forget that it will not be right for everyone. But it is good to encourage those around us to give it a try.

For years I wore a Jerusalem Cross hoping it would attract questions and give me a chance to explain why I was wearing it. It has four small crosses around one central cross. Some say they stand for the four quarters of the Holy City, but I wore it as a symbol of the power of Small Group Ministry. Listen again to Matthew 18:20, “For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.”

My most powerful spiritual practice has been to be a member of a small group. I first discovered this as a teen in the UMYF (youth group). The kind of small group doesn’t matter; it could be a Bible study, book group, support group, service group, music group or task group as long as it gathers in the name of Christ and we take time to share our lives with each other.

What spiritual practices have you tried? What could you try during this pandemic? What might bring you light and joy!

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**Tuesday, March 2, 2021**

Psalm 105:1-11, 37-45; Genesis 22:1-19; Hebrews 11:1-3, 13-19

**“Leave-Giving” by Rev. Wayne Albertson**

When someone departs from a brief visit, takes off for college, the close of a meeting, and a host of other experiences, we speak of this as a leave-taking. In Jesus’ anticipation of his leaving his time among us as recorded in the 13th and 14th chapters of John’s gospel, he talks of what I think of more as a leave-giving. There is a gift of servanthood in a foot-washing, of a new commandment of love, of peace, and of a place prepared to meet Jesus in the experiences of our own lives. These are powerful stories and statements on Jesus’ part, and while we all know the reality of missing each other at many levels and in many ways when we are apart, there is a holiness in our expressions of giving even in the varieties of times we have of leaving. Leave-taking does not stop our faithfulness in leave-giving, in loving. No matter how mundane or important our good-byes, our lives call us, in Jesus’ name, to the reverence of leave-giving.



Wednesday, March 3, 2021

Psalm 105:1-11, 37-45; Jeremiah 30:12-22; John 12:36-43

**“Reflection” by Sarah Musgrave**

*Reflect on this photo of the day and this description by photographer Sarah Musgrave:  
“Contemplating reflections during a time of change.”*



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**Thursday, March 4, 2021**  
Psalm 19; Exodus 19:1-9a; 1 Peter 2:4-10

**“Day of Truth” by Rev. Nate Melcher**  
John 2:13-22

This year in the Revised Common Lectionary, the 3-year cycle of scripture readings used by many church leaders when crafting worship, the Gospel that gets the most focus is Mark, yet this year also features many readings from the Gospel of John. Here in John 2:13-22, we see Jesus cleansing the Temple in Jerusalem while in town for the Passover. This happens much later in the three synoptic Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and here it is depicted as an early act in Jesus’s ministry, and we might approach it with that in mind this time around.

What Jesus calls out in his prophetic act, at least in this version of it, is not malpractice but a system that needs dismantling. The marketplace is integral to how Temple life happens, that’s the system. Jesus says we can do better than that; we need a new system. Of course, there are questions about his authority to do and say these sorts of things and Jesus responds with the truth - a truth both cryptic and necessary.

When new truth comes to us, we weigh whether we hold our ground and insist we already know what we need to know... or if we will open ourselves up and discover what God has in store for us next. What truths has Jesus revealed to you? Have you taken comfort you understood truth in one season of your life only to discover new truth later down the road? How does faith guide you to what is true? One potential test: if a new truth brings you to a place of doing no harm, doing good, and staying in love with God, you may be on the right path.

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**Friday, March 5, 2021**  
Psalm 19; Exodus 19:9b-15; Acts 7:30-40

**“Never Alone” by Dorothy DeFreese**

My older son recently gave me a homework assignment. He would send me two sheets of paper with a topic about my life experience at the top of each page each week. From these he will create a book or booklet. That is both easy and hard. But it made me think about my history.

I realize now how many choices I had made were the result of good parenting, good influences of farm life, and a small town education. Church attendance was always a given. My father was an usher, my mother taught Sunday School and I attended Sunday School, church, and Methodist Youth Fellowship or MYF. In college I attended church and Wesley Foundation. I have many friends from that time.

I met my future husband, Stan, in the college band and choir. We had much in common which made me think I made the right choice. After teaching in our respective fields we retired and spent several winter seasons in the south of Florida. That stopped when my husband's health concerns caused a change of plans. He needed to have regular doctor visits so we entered the next chapter of our life together. After 59 ½ years together he passed away in January, 2013.

Living alone in a senior building as I do now, I find myself thinking about many things in my life and hope that God is tuned in to my thoughts. I consider them my running prayer. I am never alone.

**Saturday, March 6, 2021**

Psalm 19; Exodus 19:16-25; Mark 9:2-8

**“My Chores I Do” by Rev. Wayne Albertson**

I do my chores  
    *Con amor,*  
Not with roar  
    As a boor  
Or to score,  
    Get favor;  
But restore,  
All the more,  
That great lore,  
    Human core,  
Love that’s for  
Those so poor.

**Sunday, March 7, 2021**

Third Sunday in Lent

Exodus 20:1-17; Psalm 19; 1 Corinthians 1:18-25; John 2:13-22

**“Jesus calls us to true worship” by Bread of the World**

**Prayer:** O Christ, you enable us to worship God with our entire lives. Grant us the courage to speak out against greed and injustice in our world. Embolden us as we challenge our nation’s leaders to change the conditions that allow hunger to persist. Amen.

**Action:** Sustained economic growth is vital to ending hunger. In the United States, 1 in 6 families struggles to get enough to eat. For African American and Latino families, the level of hunger is disproportionately higher. To ensure economic justice for all, workers must be paid enough to afford a healthy diet for themselves and their families. Bread for the World Institute’s Racial Wealth Gap Learning Simulation will help you learn more about the connections among racial equity, hunger, and poverty. To learn more, visit [bread.org/simulation](https://bread.org/simulation).

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**Monday, March 8, 2021**  
Psalm 84; 1 Kings 6:1-4, 21-22; 1 Corinthians 3:10-23

**“The Journal” by Rev. Kent Johnson**

Have you tried the spiritual discipline of journaling? Most people I know have started journaling but gave up writing daily entries years ago. We look upon life-long journal writers like John Wesley, Methodism’s founder, and Agatha Christie, the mystery writer, with some awe for their shelves full of daily reflections. They have a discipline I do not have.

This Pandemic year got me thinking that maybe my view of journaling is too narrow. I always make daily entries in the Ship’s Log when we are traveling on the sailboat and dating all the way back to college I have journaled when I was traveling. Maybe this is just a different short-term style of journaling.

I want to make the case that you might already be journaling. Do you have persons you correspond with? Have you saved that correspondence? Do you write birthday cards or the Christmas letter each year? Do you have certain times in your life when you write out your feelings? Do you make “to do” lists? Have you kept them? Do you pull out your phone and record events in your life? Maybe you are a journal keeper after all.

Now that you are reading this devotional book for Lent, how about journaling your reflections in the margins each day? You could make this a spiritual discipline for this Lent. I think you could be a journal keeper after all.

**Tuesday, March 9, 2021**  
Psalm 84; 2 Chronicles 29:1-11, 16-19; Hebrews 9:23-28

**“L.E.N.T.” by Meg Spicher**

L : Learning

E : Expanding

N :Needing

T: Testing

As I look to Lent and Ash Wednesday, I read scripture about the time that Jesus spends praying in the desert, and being tested by the Devil. I understand that Lent is about Learning to love as God loves, it's about Expanding our compassion for those who are hungry, it is a time of Needing God in our lives, and it's about the Testing we experience daily. Ultimately we can find strength in the Holy Spirit. Lent lives in this time and commitment, and all of this combined creates a preparation for Easter, when we give thanks and praise for God's gift of life eternal in Jesus.



Wednesday, March 10, 2021  
Psalm 84; Ezra 6:1-16; Mark 11:15-19

**“Food for the Journey” photo by Sarah Musgrave**

*Reflect on this photo of the day and this description by photographer Sarah Musgrave:  
“Grabbing a quick meal and eating on the fly.”*



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Thursday, March 11, 2021  
Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22; Genesis 9:8-17; Ephesians 1:3-6

**“Day of Birth!” by Rev. Nate Melcher**  
John 3:14-21

A Pharisee named Nicodemus approaches Jesus under cover of night to ask him questions in John 3:1-21. He can't ask big questions in front of his friends because he's afraid of what they'll think of him (a feeling many of us have experienced, too). There is much about Jesus's response Nicodemus doesn't expect nor understand. Jesus tells him one must be “born from above,” sometimes referred to as “born again,” to see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus is being very literal and starts going on about the womb. Thankfully, Jesus is relatively patient with him, and thank God, with us!

This passage is where we get the famous verse, “For God so loved the world that God gave God's only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.” This is great, yet we cannot let it overshadow the next verse, filled with grace, when it reads, “God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.” Wouldn't it be wonderful if this lovely verse were just as well-loved, well-known, and well-quoted?

Sometimes, a few of us get really concern about what we're being saved from, particularly whether we are saved from certain doom in the afterlife, if that is something one has as part of their belief system. Perhaps a healthier question is what are we being saved *for*? The crux of Christianity isn't about condemnation, but salvation, redemption, resurrection. What has the love of God meant in your life? How have you been “born from above” and witnessed the kingdom of God, witnessed God's will being done on earth as it is in heaven? How have you been saved? You don't need a glossy, sprawling testimony. Sometimes, a simple conflux moment will suffice, yes?

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**Friday, March 12, 2021**

Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22; Daniel 12:5-13; Ephesians 1:7-14

**“Dream Food” by Jim Vetsch**

You feed my dreamworld  
With images of noble life  
Not Jericho walls falling.  
Or Goliaths dying,  
But children standing tall And confident  
Parents sharing wisdom  
And ancestors finding pride that their lessons took root.  
You show me burning bushes everywhere  
And whole fields of holy ground  
Indeed Lord, you took away my heart of stone  
The heart of flesh you gave me is a drumbeat.  
It echoes everywhere  
Reminding me of your promise, my promise.  
You gave me work to do  
And gifts to do that work.  
And my dream is a gift too  
Even when I fill my ears with dirt, I can hear your song.

Saturday, March 13, 2021

Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22; Numbers 20:22-29; John 3:1-13

**“Who Do You Say I Am?” by Rev. Wayne Albertson**

1. Jesus asks me every day,  
In the lives of those I meet,  
“Who do you say I am to you?  
Who is it that you do greet?”  
For each life that I meet  
Is Christ at hand to me,  
Who calls God’s love forth into life,  
Revealing grace blessed and free.
2. “Who do you say I am?”  
Asks the life of dearest friend,  
The long-lost soul, and the beggar poor,  
The rich and in between.  
“Who do you say I am?”  
Rings from the heart of all -  
Their lives demand we answer them;  
It is Christ’s inner call.
3. “Who do you say I am?”  
Is voiced by enemies  
Whose lives can so disturb me much,  
That I am without peace.  
Yet Jesus asks me still,  
And unrelentingly  
The question that shapes who I am  
And our shared destiny.

Scriptures: Mark 8:27-29 & Matthew 25:40;

Tune: Terra Beata (“This Is My Father’s World”, #144 in UM Hymnal)

Note 1: In last line of second verse, the words “human” or “holy” or “sacred” could be substituted for “inner.”

Note 2: The last half of verse one could be sung as a concluding refrain.

**Sunday, March 14, 2021**

Fourth Sunday of Lent

Numbers 21:4-9; Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22; Ephesians 2:1-10; John 3:14-21

**“Jesus is lifted up for our salvation” by Bread for the World**

**Prayer:** O God, you lift up your Son Jesus on the cross so that the whole world might be saved. Sustained by your love, may we not grow weary in working to help protect and restore the natural environment that sustains us all. Amen.

**Action:** Because of climate change, widespread drought is making it harder to grow crops and make a living. The U.S. government should support efforts to help farmers plant drought-resistant crops—and join international efforts to reduce the carbon emissions that cause climate change. To learn more and take the pledge to be a climate steward, visit [bread.org/climatepledge](https://bread.org/climatepledge).

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**Monday, March 15, 2021**

Psalm 107:1-16; Exodus 15:22-27; Hebrews 3:1-6

**“Prayer Practice, Part 2” by Gail Johnson**

I believe that God knows what each of us needs, where each of us is struggling. Therefore, I do not need to ask God to help a friend with a problem. What I do pray for is that the friend be able to feel the love of God, to know that God knows what is happening.

The prayer structure I use has five sections where I list the things and people around me who need to feel God’s presence in their life. The fourth and fifth sections are...

For those who do not know:

- That there is another way
- That your love is for everyone
- That people care and want them to thrive
- (name the people)

For those who do:

- Too much, thinking they need to earn their value
- the wrong things for the right reasons
- embody your love and live as an example
- (name the people)

God, you know what we need better than we do. May all I have named and all who have no one to name them, know your loving embrace today and every day. Amen.

If you start with your hand closed and open a finger at each section, your hand will be open as you ask for God’s blessings.

*“Prayer Practice, Part 1” appears on February 22, 2021.*

**Tuesday, March 16, 2021**

Psalm 107:1-16; Numbers 20:1-13; 1 Corinthians 10:6-13

**“Your way” by Marilyn Dodge**

Sometimes life just does not go your way. The year 2020 did not go according to plan for anyone! Like most people, I learned to be a hermit! By the end of December I was starting to get really cranky! The last straw came when I was unable to get the new refrigerator that I had ordered in August, 2020 and now it is January, 2021 at the time of this writing! I am ashamed to say that I was stressed about it. This is minuscule compared to the ravages of COVID-19 and political unrest.

The song Day by Day started to creep into my head like an ear worm. Finally, I googled it and instantly I had a conflux moment! There are two renditions. The original hymn that was written in 1865 by Karolina W. Sandell. The other was in the theater production of *Godspell*. Both versions are based on scripture. And, most importantly, because of this ear worm, I realized that my stress was my doing! I had to live day by day and trust God. Every so often I must recognize this fact! God is with me in the big things like pandemics and little things like refrigerators!

“So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand” Isaiah 41:10 (NIV).

If you have a chance, look for the song, you are in for a treat!

Wednesday, March 17, 2021  
Psalm 107:1-16; Isaiah 60:15-22; John 8:12-20

**“Clearing” photo by Sarah Musgrave**

*Reflect on this photo of the day and this description by photographer Sarah Musgrave:  
“The morning fog that is hiding much that will be uncovered when the sun breaks through.”*



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Thursday, March 18, 2021

Psalm 51:1-12; Isaiah 30:15-18; Hebrews 4:1-13

**“Day of Death” by Rev. Nate Melcher**

John 12:20-33

Jesus has returned to Jerusalem in John 12:20-33 and as he did in a passage from the Gospel of Mark that we explored earlier in Lent, he speaks of his impending death and resurrection. Not everyone around him understands, and we do well to put ourselves into their shoes. We often take advantage of 2,000 years worth of this story being told. We know how it ends (and how the story of the resurrected Jesus continues today!), but they don't. What do you think was going through the disciples' heads when they hear Jesus speak of his death and resurrection to come? How would that make you feel?

Part of this passage often makes its way into the liturgy for a funeral or memorial service. It's verses 24-25, "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. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life." In the first verse, Jesus is speaking of the cycle of life, and in the second he uses stark language to say let go of clinging to life, afraid you'll lose it, and embrace a life of serving God, a life that makes life worth living now and into eternal life.

While a tough topic, we all will die some day and it is reasonable to consider: in what ways have you experienced death in your life? What preparations are in order for your own death, in terms of practical matters like paperwork and also spiritual matters like planning a funeral? What has made you comfortable or uncomfortable to talk about this? And what does your faith say about death, and life, and eternal life?

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Friday, March 19, 2021  
Psalm 51:1-12; Exodus 30:1-10; Hebrews 4:14-5:4

**“The Gift” by Ann Johnson**

When I went away to college, I received an unwanted “gift,” an incurable skin disease. By spring of my freshman year, I was a mess - covered in lesions and my hair was falling out. I was put on a strong drug that made the symptoms go away but had very nasty side effects. So, I began looking for healing in other ways.

I changed my major to music which has always spoken to my heart and soul. I began my spiritual journey first with meditation and guided meditations, daily devotional time and Bible study, many forms of praying including breath prayers and prayer walking, journaling, and spiritual direction. My friends from Bible studies, prayer and book groups have been very precious to me. Their insights have been priceless. Yoga has helped as does Reiki, healing touch, seeing a nutritionist and changing my diet.

This journey is not over yet. After 50+ years, my “gift” is still with me. Who knows where I would have been without this “gift”? It put me on this journey of searching for health and wholeness.

Each one of us has received gifts that have not always been welcome. We each must find our own path. Try what speaks to you. If one thing doesn't work for you, try another. Try any combination, too. Just don't give up. Remember God loves you and wants you healthy and whole. May you find what works for you.

Saturday, March 20, 2021  
Psalm 51:1-12; Habakkuk 3:2-13; John 12:1-11

**“That Where I Am” by Rev. Wayne Albertson**

1. There is no place that's unprepared  
By Christ, for God's purpose,  
For all who seek God's holy way  
And follow to the cross.
2. For Christ has promised he will go  
To make a place for us -  
A place we'll find that we are loved  
No matter what the cost.
3. The cross' the place prepared for us,  
Where Christ has gone before,  
A place he's promised we will be  
In faith to meet him there.
4. If in the worst place we can be  
We find we're not alone,  
But held within the love of Christ,  
In us God's work is done.
5. Lo, Jesus meets us where we are,  
No matter who we be;  
For everywhere Christ joins our lives  
With grace abundantly.
6. A place prepared I make for you,  
Come, at the cross abide.  
Open your hearts and follow me,  
And set aside your pride.
7. It's at the cross we hear one say,  
'This is the Son of God'.  
It's at the place prepared for us  
We know Christ's promise kept.

Scripture: John 14:6; Common Meter; to tunes: Land of Rest (#695 in UM Hymnal);  
Morning Song (#198); AZMON (#57)

**Sunday, March 21, 2021**

Fifth Sunday in Lent

[Jeremiah 31:31-34](#); [Psalm 119:9-16](#); [Hebrews 5:5-10](#); [John 12:20-33](#)

**“Jesus nears Jerusalem - and the cross” by Bread for the World**

**Prayer:** O Christ, we give thanks that, in your suffering and death, you reveal God’s glory and offer us the gift of new life. As you create a new heart in us, may our eyes be opened to new ways we can create hope and opportunity for those who hunger and live in poverty. Amen.

**Reflection:** Disparities and inequities are built into the social fabric of every country. Women and girls are more disadvantaged than their male counterparts. In the United States, African American and Latino communities experience higher unemployment rates as well as higher levels of hunger and poverty. In order to truly end hunger, measures that overcome systemic racism and gender inequity must be put in place for those who struggle with hunger. Pray that you might have a heart that repents of racial and gender inequity and that asks for God’s grace to move you to love all people.

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**Monday, March 22, 2021**  
Psalm 119:9-16; Isaiah 43:8-13; 2 Corinthians 3:4-11

**“The Footlocker” by Rev. Kent Johnson**

Could you imagine saving family letters or writing letters to a friend as a Spiritual Discipline? No? I would not have thought about letters this way before my experience of last summer. While cleaning out my parent’s house we found the box containing all the letters Sue and I wrote each other, while working at different camps, the summer before we were married. These were a hoot to read. We seem so young, wide-eyed and innocent in those letters.

Even more interesting, we also found a footlocker with all the letters my mother and dad wrote each other during WWII while my dad served in the Navy. Reading them felt like meeting two young people I never knew. It was so much fun to be in my dad’s head trying to woo my mom from afar.

If part of our spiritual life is developing an understanding of who we are and where we have come from our letters can be a direct source of information. Paul’s letters in the Bible are not the only letters that can change you.

Maybe this Lent is a time to find a safe place to keep old letters or to set up files for email correspondence that matters to you. Or maybe this is a day to email or write a note to someone you have not seen in a while. Be sure to save that email, you might enjoy it years later.

**Tuesday, March 23, 2021**  
Psalm 119:9-16; Isaiah 44:1-8; Acts 2:14-24

**“God Moments” by Gail Johnson**

For over a year now we have been celebrating our Conflux moments - times when we feel our lives connected to God’s plan. It is soul filling to watch for these moments as the week progresses, seeking times when my soul feels touched. I think of these as “little” moments, sort of a tap on the shoulder or wink of an eye.

There are other times when I have felt God acting in my life in a bigger manner, more like being shaken or wrapped in the kind of hug that stops a toddlers’ tantrum. These God moments mark significant moments in my faith journey. Times when I learned God cared about me as an individual, that I matter to God (something that was not part of my upbringing).

Some of these moments have been fairly traumatic: when my mother was dying, when my husband died. Others much more routine: a prayer at a church committee meeting, a layover at an airport.

In each case my world was rocked, my life’s direction changed.

I have made a list of these moments. They are on a bookmark in my study Bible. Reading them reminds me just how involved God is in my life. I leak with joy when I realize that God did in fact know me before I knew God.

I encourage you to do this as well. Take time to think through the times of your life when God has taken a personal interest in you. Make a list. Revel in the knowledge that you matter to God.

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Wednesday, March 24, 2021

Psalm 119:9-16; Haggai 2:1-9, 20-23; John 12:34-50

**“Seasons” photo by Sarah Musgrave**

*Reflect on this photo of the day and this description by photographer Sarah Musgrave:  
“Those times you hide from all because you need solitude.”*



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Thursday, March 25, 2021  
Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29; Deuteronomy 16:1-8; Philippians 2:1-11

**“Holy Daylight” by Rev. Nate Melcher**  
Mark 11:1-11

Palm Sunday is a big day in the life of the church. A scene depicted in some form in all four gospel accounts of the life of Jesus found in the Christian Newer Testament, there is action, there is joy, there is comedy! In Mark 11:1-11 Jesus tells disciples to go get a colt and if someone asks you why you’re doing it, say the Lord needs it and we’ll be right back. Perhaps we can use that next time we happen to be at the car dealership?

The people shout “Hosanna!” as Jesus enters the city. “Hosanna” appears in Psalm 118:25 in an Ancient Hebrew form, used as a prayer to God that essentially means, “Please save us now!” Here, it rings in a similar way, though perhaps an extra layer of joy is thrown on for good measure. Maybe taking those two parts together, it’s not merely a cry for salvation nor a cry of joy but a cry of joy for salvation! “Thank goodness, we are saved! Here’s Jesus!”

Some people can remember moments of their lives when they intentionally welcomed Jesus into their lives. For others, faith has simply always been. And still for others, welcoming Jesus isn’t a once and done thing but an ongoing thing, perhaps even a day to day thing. What about you? Do you have moments you can remember Jesus entered your life? What does it mean to welcome Jesus over and over? What has been a faith-filled “Hosanna!” moment for you? May you ponder this as we enter Holy Week.

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**Friday, March 26, 2021**

Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29; Jeremiah 33:1-9; Philippians 2:12-18

**“Where Are You, God?” by Meg Spicher**

Where are you God at this very moment?

Where are you hiding in my world?

What direction should my life take now amongst the stresses and  
distractions?

Settle my wild heart and calm my many thoughts.

Focus my feelings on You God.

And surely as the dawn I will be safe in your Holy Spirit.

Life is unpredictable, events out of my control test my faith.

Yet in you I find the calm from the windy storms of this world.

In daily prayers my mind settles, and my heart slows.

And today I feel strong in your ever lasting love.

Peace is where you are, love is where you abide,

Hope is where you bring me home.

Amen.



**Saturday, March 27, 2021**

Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29; Jeremiah 33:10-16; Mark 10:32-34, 46-52

**“God Has Made Us More Than Conquerors” by Rev. Wayne Albertson**

1. God has made us more than conquerors  
Through the Christ who did us love.  
God has made our victories futile  
On the cross lifted high above.  
Save us from our boasts of winning  
For these are goals far too small.  
God has made us more than conquerors  
Through the Christ who did us love.
2. In the contests of my willing  
Let me see a grace within.  
Change me to a way of being  
Seeing others as my kin.  
Let the purpose of my choosing  
Never be others' losing.  
God has made us more than conquerors  
Through the Christ who did us love.
3. O to be more than a conqueror,  
O to put victories aside;  
O to live with holy being  
With those lives where I abide.  
Bring Your kingdom to fruition  
In the “more” than we would do.  
You do make us more than conquerors,  
Thanks to Christ who does us love.

Scripture: Romans 8:37; to tune: Holy Manna (#150 in UM Hymnal) or Austria (#731)

**Sunday, March 28, 2021**

**Palm/Passion Sunday**

Liturgy of the Palms: [Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29](#); [Mark 11:1-11](#)

Liturgy of the Passion: [Isaiah 50:4-9a](#), [Psalm 31:9-16](#),  
[Philippians 2:5-11](#), [Mark 14:1-15:47](#), [Mark 15:1-39, \(40-47\)](#)

**“Jesus is anointed for burial” by Bread for the World**

**Prayer:** O Christ, grant us grace and hope as we prepare for Good Friday. By your crucifixion and resurrection, you overcome death and all the powers of evil. As you raise us up to new life, use our hands, hearts, and voices to see that all people benefit from the abundance of God’s creation. Amen.

**Action:** Bread for the World’s Offering of Letters is an opportunity for individuals, congregations, campuses, or groups to gather and write personalized letters or emails to their members of Congress on hunger and poverty issues. Plan now to organize your own Offering of Letters to Congress and be encouraged by Christ’s words “... where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there among them” (Matthew 18:20). To learn how you can organize an Offering of Letters, visit [bread.org/2021-offering-letters](https://bread.org/2021-offering-letters).

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**Monday, March 29, 2021**

Monday of Holy Week

Isaiah 42:1-9, Psalm 36:5-11, Hebrews 9:11-15, John 12:1-11

**“The Nest” by Rev. Kent Johnson**

Last spring I needed to paint all four sides of our house. After several days of effort I hung the ladder on the side of my house to take a sabbath break. Two days later I was ready to go back to work but there on the ladder was a woven robin’s nest. What to do? I considered making the mother robin start over but instead opted for an unexpected several week painting break.

In these years of COVID-19 we have tested our resilience during unexpected breaks in our lives. How are you doing with all the change?

Do you know the song “This is the day that the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it.” It is so hard to let go of our expectations. Is there something about this COVID-19 year that you can’t accept and keeps you up at night? Can you take an action to let it go and rejoice in this day of life you have been given?

It was later in the summer before I finished painting the house and that was just fine for me and the robins.

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**Tuesday, March 30, 2021**

Tuesday of Holy Week

Isaiah 49:1-7, Psalm 71:1-14, 1 Corinthians 1:18-31, John 12:20-36

**“The Journey” by Barb Rogers**

Since December 2018, I’ve been on a physical and spiritual journey involving Leukemia, Chemo, hospital stays, a bone marrow transplant with complications, and recently, a heart attack. I think I’m safe in saying the last year of isolation has been crazy and challenging for us all, but for me, the isolation started in 2018 and I have a year on most of you. During this time, I’ve had lots of ups and downs - physically, mentally and spiritually.

Although challenging and not a cake walk, I’ve found God’s always at work even in times like these. I’ve had God’s blessing of much needed rest from “life on a treadmill” and room for considerable reflection and time with God. I’ve also had time to devote to spiritual practices that were never really consistent before. Several of these have led me to a deeper life in God - prayer, bible study, meditation, walking labyrinths, fellowship, and getting out in nature. I’ve also realized being human - with a physical body, varying energy levels, and outside circumstances - consistency isn’t always possible. I’m gentler on myself when I have days - or weeks - when I don’t actively seek God. Life can be hard and I don’t think God wants us to feel guilty when we fall short.

God’s there in the midst of those times too. I’ve become comfortable, when not intentionally engaging in “practice,” just resting in God, letting God’s love quiet me (Zephaniah 3:17), and trusting, knowing we’re all loved every day no matter how good we are at sticking to a faith regiment.

Wednesday, March 31, 2021

Wednesday of Holy Week

Isaiah 50:4-9a, Psalm 70, Hebrews 12:1-3, John 13:21-32

**“In Bloom” photo by Sarah Musgrave**

*Reflect on this photo of the day and this description by photographer Sarah Musgrave:  
“A lot of single flowers nourishing a lot of pollinators so they can change the world.”*



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**Thursday, April 1, 2021**

Maundy Thursday

Exodus 12:1-4, (5-10), 11-14, Psalm 116:1-2, 12-19,  
1 Corinthians 11:23-26, John 13:1-17, 31b-35

**“Weavings” photo by Sarah Musgrave**

*Reflect on this photo of the day and this description by photographer Sarah Musgrave:  
“The simplicity and complexity that make up our days.”*



**“Holy Dusk” by Rev. Nate Melcher**

John 13:1-18, 31b-35

While the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke depict Jesus leading the Last Supper - the basis for the sacrament of Holy Communion - the Gospel of John 13:1-18 and 31b-35 takes a different tack (yet again!). Here, Jesus doesn't serve the disciples food, but simply serves the disciples. He gets down and washes their feet, doing what a servant would do. These feet have traveled many dusty roads following this teacher. This teacher... who now washes these feet as an example for them, and for us all.

The new commandment to “love one another just as I have loved you” is bittersweet. It's the crux of Jesus's teachings in John, yet there is a sadness that Jesus would have to say this is a new commandment at all. That we would have to be reminded, “Oh, yeah, we're supposed to love each other as we're loved!” is a sign of just how much further we can each go to live up to the goodness created in us.

Where have you seen servant leadership modeled? What has that meant to you as you witness leaders be there for you or others? How have you returned what was modeled for you by Jesus into the world? Would you have a tough time washing somebody else's feet (figuratively speaking, that is)? And who has washed yours? On Maundy Thursday, we thank Jesus for this holy act of his servant heart.

**Friday, April 2, 2021**

Good Friday

Isaiah 52:13-53:12, Psalm 22, Hebrews 10:16-25,  
Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9, John 18:1-19:42

**“Passage” photo by Sarah Musgrave**

*Reflect on this photo of the day and this description by photographer Sarah Musgrave:  
“Strolling from the darkness to the light at end of path.”*



**“Holy Twilight” by Rev. Nate Melcher**

John 18:1-19:42

The story of Jesus’s betrayal, arrest, suffering, and death encompass the narrative of John 18:1-19:42. Many of us have seen it depicted in movies or TV shows or even plays. Aspects of it are touched upon in popular culture, too, from reverence to parody. While we know this story, we do often turn from it. For example, if one were to count the number of times they have participated in an Easter worship experience vs. a Good Friday worship experience, where would you stack up?

Let’s face it: looking to the cross is not easy. Experiencing that suffering, that tragic death, it’s not a “feel good” story. Yet it is an integral story for what Jesus is. He has told the disciples and us in several passages we explored in Lent that this is where his ministry is leading. Even if they didn’t understand, even if they missed the part about his resurrection, when it finally happens they can’t escape its reality (no matter how hard they try to physically flee from the cross!). Thank God for the strong women who stand with Jesus at the foot of the cross in this passage. These disciples do not stray and they bare witness to what is hard for any of us to do, as well.

Of all the examples of the life and ministry of Jesus, this story has the most sustained narrative structure. It has many scenes, lots of dialogue, a beginning, middle, and end. Other stories are told briefly, some even as summary or montage. If you were to take this story and summarize it, how would you explain it? What is a story about Jesus told in summary that you wish was built out to see the full scene? What helps you confront the cross on a day like Good Friday? May this Good Friday be an experience you are able to embrace, even when it is challenging.

## **Saturday, April 3, 2021**

### **Holy Saturday**

Job 14:1-14, Lamentations 3:1-9, 19-24, Psalm 31:1-4, 15-16,  
1 Peter 4:1-8, Matthew 27:57-66, John 19:38-42

Easter Vigil Readings: Genesis 1:1-2:4a and Psalm 136:1-9, 23-26, Psalm 46,  
Genesis 22:1-18 and Psalm 16, Exodus 14:10-31; 15:20-21, Isaiah 55:1-11 and Isaiah  
12:2-6, Psalm 19, Psalm 42, Psalm 143, Psalm 98, Psalm 114

### **“I Am the Way” by Rev. Wayne Albertson**

1. I am the Way, said, He, said He, to serve God’s loved humanity,  
Including our worst enemy. This is the Way we’re truly free, -  
This is the way to eternity. We hear the Christ say, ‘Follow me.’
2. I am the Truth, He said, He said, before he took his cross and bled, -  
A gift of love, God reveal-ed. Imago Dei, it’s how we’re made -  
Giving our lives, e’en when afraid. ‘Come, follow me,’ He bade, He bade.
3. I am the Life, said He, said He. Made in the flesh of all who be,  
Including those despised, unfree. My trust’s in God who madeth me  
To care with all humility. ‘Come, follow me,’ called He, called He.
4. No one does come to God, said He, excepting one does follow me  
In service to humanity. Take up your cross, give all you be;  
Exalt all those of low degree, and you will live with God, said He.

Based on John 14:6; To tune: Old 113th, “I’ll Praise My Maker,” #60 in UM Hymnal.

### **“Holy Midnight” by Rev. Nate Melcher**

**Matthew 27:57-66**

After Jesus dies, Matthew 27:57-66 depicts what happens to Jesus’s body. His remains are laid to rest in a tomb and it seems like the authorities are all trying to get their stories straight in case something happens. That “something” in their minds being his followers doing something with his remains to bring about Jesus’s prediction of real resurrection. It wasn’t enough to crucify him; they have to guard his body and keep his people away.

Holy Saturday often has a ritual of Easter Vigil. That is, a time of prayer and meditation that sits in that holy, mysterious space between the cross on Good Friday and the resurrection on Easter Sunday. Like his followers in the day, we might do well to set aside what we know of Easter to really dwell. Desires are dashed. Grief is fresh. Family is scattered. These aren’t easy things. Can hope even continue?

Take time today to wade into the murkiness and sit a while. What does grief look like? What does hope look like even in the midst of grief? How has a spiritual life that uses rituals such as prayer, meditation, or contemplation enhanced your ability to get through the tough stuff? May Holy Saturday be a time and space to ponder, to wonder, and yes, to continue to hope.



**Sunday, April 4, 2021**

Easter Day

Acts 10:34-43, Isaiah 25:6-9, Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24, 1 Corinthians 15:1-11,  
Acts 10:34-43, John 20:1-18, Mark 16:1-8

**“Holy Dawn” by Rev. Nate Melcher**

Mark 16:1-8

Easter has arrived and he is risen! He is risen, indeed! The Gospel of Mark’s endings are fascinating (yes, endings, plural!) and there is a delightful irony at play. Jesus constantly tells people throughout Mark to keep his ministry a secret so things don’t proceed too quickly - after all, he’s trying to build something here - and yet those who are healed or those who witness it or experience a miracle, they all go and tell people! They just can’t keep it to themselves!

The funny thing then, is in Mark 16:1-8 the women who experience the empty tomb are specifically told to tell everyone... so they don’t! They ran away, afraid, and didn’t tell anyone! Obviously, at some point, they did, and that’s how we have the story. It’s an amazing piece of irony though, isn’t it? Don’t tell people. I’ll tell people. Tell people. I won’t!

What do you tell people about Jesus? What do you tell others about your faith? What empowers you to be open? What keeps you closed up? What is the story about Jesus that is worth telling, worth sharing, worth giving away? May you give away Easter to everyone, for resurrection is for the world. Jesus is risen. He is risen! He is risen, indeed!

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