

UNAFRAID



2022 LENT DAILY DEVOTIONAL

RICHFIELD UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA
richfieldumc.org/devo

INTRODUCTION:

If you search for the pithy saying “You only get out of life what you put into it,” you’ll likely find several would-be attributed gnomists. Likely no one knows who said it first, yet its echo rings true. One does not put in minimal effort and expect amazing results (well, perhaps the hare when he raced the tortoise, but we know how that went). Might this be true of Lent? May this be a season when you practice faith on purpose! Read your Bible, fully participate in worship, open your heart to pray, partake in healthy fasting for a season, and so on. Put on Lent and dive deep!

If the idea of putting faith into practice - for whatever reason - is scary, you’ve come to the right place. The 2022 Lent theme is **Unafraid**, based on the book *Unafraid: Living with Courage and Hope in Uncertain Times* by Rev. Adam Hamilton. To enrich your journey through Lent, watch the accompanying video series with your free Amplify Media account at richfieldumc.org/amplify or pick up a copy of the book, if you like. You were asked to write about big questions like: What is your greatest fear? Is it one you’ve faced or one you expect to confront some day? Who knows about this fear? What is your support system for it? We all live with fear in our lives. What we do with that fear is what counts.

This daily devotional has rhythms and patterns to give you tether on your Lenten journey. Sundays feature prayer and action from Bread for the World (bread.org), an organization dedicated to eradicating world hunger from a system-and-policy changing justice perspective. Mondays and Saturdays are filled with prose and poems from retired clergy and members in the life of the church. Rather than words, you’re invited to reflect upon photographs by Rev. Kent Johnson on Wednesdays, and my Thursday reflections are from my sermon prep. Tuesdays and Fridays feature a special treat: we have permission to reprint poems from my old friends, Jenny Yang Cropp and John Roedel, plus prayers from church favorite, Rev. Arianne Braithwaite Lehn. Their books are cited with their pieces, if you’re inspired to get a copy for yourself or a friend. May each writing and photo give you something to ponder, perhaps spurring you to write, as well.

A duo of features returns. The scripture listed from the Revised Common Lectionary curated by Vanderbilt Divinity Library (lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu) have no intended connection with the photos or writings but give you daily scripture readings that you can know others are reading across the world with you. There’s also a curated list of words for a Lenten “Photo-A-Day” Challenge. Each day you can read the word, reflect on it, then take a photo based on your interpretation of that word. You’re encouraged to share your photo with a friend or post it in the comments of that day’s devotional when it appears on the Richfield UMC Facebook page (facebook.com/richfieldunitedmethodistchurch).

God is devoted to you daily. May this daily devotional be a tether of courage for you.

In Christ,
Rev. Nate Melcher
Senior Pastor

P.S. The Advent 2022 daily devotional just a few months away. Start writing!

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Wednesday, March 2, 2022
“Fear as a Feeling” by Rev. Kent Johnson

Reflect on this photo of the day and this description by the photographer: “Fear is an important feeling that keeps us safe. But too much fear keeps us inside and we never go out to do anything. Reflect today on a time or times you have struggled to take a risk or not. Why did you risk it or not?”



Photo-A-Day Challenge: Sky

Daily Readings: [Joel 2:1-2, 12-17](#), [Psalm 51:1-17](#), [2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10](#),
[Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21](#)

Thursday, March 3, 2022
“Understanding and Countering Fear” by Rev. Nate Melcher

One way to think about the story of Jesus’s temptation in the desert as depicted in Luke 4:1-14 is to consider what comes before it and what comes after. Right before this story is a genealogy, a form of legitimation (and before that, his baptism in the river Jordan). It’s as if to say Jesus is the real deal and here’s the receipt. Right after this story is his return to his hometown Nazareth where he invokes ire by asserting his legitimation. The crowds are not ready. Are there things Jesus could have done to convince them otherwise? Yes, and it’s in this story of Jesus tempted to power that could have led to a different outcome. If he worships the power within his reach, he cannot worship and serve God. While his dialogue is brave - he swiftly responds to each temptation with scripture - we don’t know his state of mind. How hard was it to say no? How scary was it to look at the alternative, to see the harder path and the cross to which it leads, and to say yes? Understanding fear as a gift can be a strange prospect. In this story, we see Jesus respond to fear by trusting in God alone. When has this kind of trust served you? When has it eluded you? When we say put your trust in God, do you have the receipts to remind you when God showed you the way?

Photo-A-Day Challenge: Move

Daily Readings: [Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16; Exodus 5:10-23; Acts 7:30-34](#)

Friday, March 4, 2022
“When I’m in Life’s Winter” by Rev. Arianne Braithwaite Lehn

Enveloping God

You gather me in when
the wind of anxiety and fear whips,
when I feel my face, my heart,
tighten against the cold’s force.

With wide, warm arms,
you bring me into your heart
where my angst melts by
the fire of your love.

And, it is there, as I rest and thaw,
that you remind me...

Remind me of the
unbelievable power in perseverance,
the choice to open my eyes
each morning and say,

*Yes, I will keep going.
I will find grace here.
I will live from courage
instead of fear.
I will dwell in the One
Who dwells in me.*

As my fears melt, dripping to my feet,
you let my real self come through...

A self you love so much...

My path toward reclamation
comes through acceptance,
through affirming I will be
Gentle and forgiving toward myself
because that’s how you are with me.

I will lean with all my weight into your warmth...

My solace and strength
in life’s winter.

Amen.

From *Ash & Starlight: Prayers for the Chaos & Grace of Daily Life* by Rev. Arianne Braithwaite Lehn. © 2019 Chalice Press, Nashville, TN. 66-67. Used with permission.

Photo-A-Day Challenge: Face

Daily Readings: [Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16; Exodus 6:1-13; Acts 7:35-42](#)

Saturday, March 5, 2022
“A Prayer Not Made” by Rev. Wayne Albertson

For some things we are pleased to pray,
Those common desires that we say:
May no danger e'er come my way;
May pleasures and ease come to stay,
With good nights' rests and length of days.
But there are prayers I would avoid.
Those ways with God that we have toyed;
God-words and our desires alloyed.
This done to keep our interests buoyed.
When heard too much, God is annoyed.
So, here's one prayer that I do make:
Give me no blessings that are fake,
That lead me to temptation's ache,
But only those that for Thy sake
Help me gracious purposes take.

Photo-A-Day Challenge: Mile

Daily Readings: [Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16; Ecclesiastes 3:1-8; John 12:27-36](#)

Sunday, March 6, 2022
First Sunday in Lent
“Jesus Faces Temptation” by Bread for the World

Prayer: O God, grant us faith to trust that, in Christ’s death and resurrection, all the forces of evil have been overcome. During these days of Lent, may we be strengthened by your Spirit, so that we might serve you by helping those who suffer from the evil of hunger. Amen.

Reflection: This Lent, in the Gospel readings from Luke, we are invited to follow Jesus in his journey to Jerusalem, where his death and resurrection usher in God’s new era of mercy and forgiveness. By “sticking close to Jesus,” we receive the gift of faith in the new life offered to us—a life of service and advocacy on behalf of all those in need.

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Photo-A-Day Challenge: Peace

Daily Readings: [Deuteronomy 26:1-11](#), [Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16](#), [Romans 10:8b-13](#),
[Luke 4:1-13](#)

Monday, March 7, 2022
“Do Not Be Afraid” by Barb Rogers

Years ago, a friend brought my attention to the fact that “Do not be afraid,” or variations of that phrase, are the most often repeated commandment in the Bible. A quick Google search reveals different counts, occurring from in the two hundreds to 365 times. Words such as “Fear not,” “Do not be afraid,” “Be anxious for nothing,” “Do not fear,” are recorded throughout the Bible.

Why is that so? Maybe it’s because God influenced the writings in this living book for us knowing that fear is one of our strongest, most common, human emotions and would be something we all struggle with on a regular basis. I know that I personally find this comforting and reassuring. It means I’m in good company with all humankind throughout time. It means that God knew we’d need constant reminders that we are not to fear and cares enough to repeat it. It means God is with us. It means God knows the human condition, understands us, and loves us.

I’d like to share one of these many verses that has given me encouragement, comfort and peace on many a sleepless night:

[Jesus said,] “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” John 14:27

May you use this one, or turn to any of the others in the Bible, when you need assurance and comfort in times of uncertainty.

Photo-A-Day Challenge: Meaning

Daily Readings: [Psalm 17](#); [1 Chronicles 21:1-17](#); [1 John 2:1-6](#)

Tuesday, March 8, 2022 - "Remedy #1" by John Roedel

my brain and
heart divorced
a decade ago
over who was
to blame about
how big of a mess
I have become
eventually,
they couldn't be
in the same room
with each other
now my head and heart
share custody of me
I stay with my brain
during the week
and my heart
gets me on weekends
they never speak to one
another
- instead, they give me
the same note to pass
to each other every week
and their notes they
send to one another always
says the same thing:
"This is all your fault"
on Sundays
my heart complains
about how my
head has let me down
in the past
and on Wednesday
my head lists all
of the times my
heart has screwed
things up for me
in the future
they blame each
other for the
state of my life
there's been a lot

of yelling - and crying
so,
lately, I've been
spending a lot of
time with my gut
who serves as my
unofficial therapist
most nights, I sneak out of the
window in my ribcage
and slide down my spine
and collapse on my
gut's plush leather chair
that's always open for me
- and I just sit sit sit sit
until the sun comes up
last evening,
my gut asked me
if I was having a hard
time being caught
between my heart
and my head
I nodded
I said I didn't know
if I could live with
either of them anymore
"my heart is always sad about
something that happened
yesterday
while my head is always worried
about something that may
happen tomorrow,"
I lamented
my gut squeezed my hand
"I just can't live with
my mistakes of the past
or my anxiety about the future,"
I sighed
my gut smiled and said:
"in that case,
you should
go stay with your

lungs for a while,"
I was confused
- the look on my face gave
it away
"if you are exhausted about
your heart's obsession with
the fixed past and your
mind's focus
on the uncertain future
your lungs are the perfect
place for you
there is no yesterday in your
lungs
there is no tomorrow there
either
there is only now
there is only inhale
there is only exhale
there is only this moment
there is only breath
and in that breath
you can rest while your
heart and head work
their relationship out."
this morning,
while my brain
was busy reading
tea leaves
and while my
heart was staring
at old photographs
I packed a little
bag and walked
to the door of
my lungs
before I could even knock
she opened the door
with a smile and as
a gust of air embraced me
she said
"what took you so long?"

From *Remedy* by John Roedel. © 2021, used by permission.

Photo-A-Day Challenge: Understand

Daily Readings: [Psalm 17](#); [Zechariah 3:1-10](#); [2 Peter 2:4-21](#)

Wednesday, March 9, 2022
“140 Verses in Living” by Rev. Kent Johnson

Reflect on this photo of the day and this description by the photographer: Our Lenten study suggests that 140 scripture verses tell us not to be afraid. Have you purposely faced a fear to overcome it? The classic example of exposure therapy is skydiving. Have you pushed yourself to do something despite your fears?



Photo-A-Day Challenge: Reflection

Daily Readings: [Psalm 17](#); [Job 1:1-22](#); [Luke 21:34-22:6](#)

Thursday, March 10, 2022
“Facing Today’s Challenges” by Rev. Nate Melcher

This moment of Jesus lamenting over the city of Jerusalem in the Gospel of Luke 13:31-35 is part of a longer section of Luke, the travel narrative (9:51-19:27). He travels, teaches, and heals his way across the countryside on his journey to the city and the cross. Along the way, he has faced rejection, a prospect made clear in his lament. Everywhere he goes, the world is turned upside-down by his teaching. That’s an interesting prospect, given how upside-down the world already was for the people he encountered. Sadly, Jesus cannot bypass Jerusalem, and we see him reflect on this journey.

We, too, live in a world that often feels upside-down, progressively filled with bigger - and worse - problems than before. Sadly, we cannot bypass these problems but are called to face them. That can lead to lament, even fear. Jesus names his desire for a greater peace and understanding. What about you? How would you articulate what you want the world to be like? How do you feel about the state of things? What is out of your control to change? What would it feel like to make that one change?

Photo-A-Day Challenge: Cope

Daily Readings: [Psalm 27](#); [Genesis 13:1-7, 14-18](#); [Philippians 3:2-12](#)

Friday, March 11, 2022
“User Error: Translator” by Jenny Yang Cropp

When I tell my father about the restaurant where my mother was
refused service, he tells me it didn’t happen.

But it did.

Napkins folded into bishops’ hats.

Lemon floating in heavy-stemmed glasses.

They would have sweat in our hands had we been allowed to hold them.

So he takes me there the next night, same restaurant, same table.

Says, See. You belong here. You are mine. I sip water cautiously.

I am a secret he does not reveal. We eat steak.

My mouth is full when a letter from my mother arrives. It is the only letter she will ever
write to me. It’s in a language I was never taught. I call to ask her what it means, but
the steak spills from my lips, and she tells me I will need a translator.

Her English is good enough, my father says. When she fought for custody, she brought
a translator to court. For sympathy. For show.

Love, she said in Korean. Which sounded to the judge like, I do not belong here.

Please, she said. Which translated to, These children should not be mine.

I see her now, alone at her table, sending messages I will read as years of absence, as
white space waiting to be filled.

From *Not a Bird or a Flower: Poems* by Jenny Yang Cropp. Ryga Chapbooks, Okanagan
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Photo-A-Day Challenge: Narrow

Daily Readings: [Psalm 27](#); [Genesis 14:17-24](#); [Philippians 3:17-20](#)

Saturday, March 12, 2022
"Depression" by Jim Vetsch

Come with me, said the angel...
I will instruct you in the moods
of the spirit.
Instantly we entered a cave, deep,
smelling of dampness, illuminated only
by my guide's face.
Where are we? I asked.
This is depression, said the spirit.
Why? I asked.
The light within has guttered and died.
The spirit is shutting off any outside
light.
The light is painful.

Why doesn't it try, the spirit?
Because it believes it can't.
It lies in spiritual destitution.
Like some long dead mummy,
unable to help itself.

But there is light to be had!
Help me angel, I cry.
The spirit has closed all the senses,
Said the angel.
Its heart is dust.
Its brain is dust.
Its dreams are dust.

But surely you would not show
This to me if there were no hope...
Just a dead and withered spirit.

Do you wish this sadness on me
out of sport?
No, said the angel.
I wish this sadness to make you grieve.
And so with the dead darkness
Obscuring my vision and the cloying
Scent of a dying heart and spirit
filling my senses, I wept.

The angel watched and smiled.
Do you laugh at my grief, angel?
Nay. I smile with relief.
You are the remedy,
come to end the sadness
with compassion.

And the angel touched the tears on my
face
And the darkness was devoured by light!

And I learned...
The withered heart can be reborn
with tears of compassion.
The blinded eyes can be opened
by the light of faith.
And the destitute spirit can be made rich
again by love.

The magic of the vision lies in the
sharing of the dream.

Photo-A-Day Challenge: Climb

Daily Readings: [Psalm 27](#); [Psalm 118:26-29](#); [Matthew 23:37-39](#)

Sunday, March 13, 2022
Second Sunday in Lent
“Jesus is on His Way to Jerusalem” by Bread for the World

Prayer: O Christ, you willingly set your course to Jerusalem, and you faced death on the cross that we might live. May our new life in you give us strength and courage to advocate for those who suffer from hunger and disease. Amen.

Action: For one week during Lent, try getting by on just two dollars a day. That’s the amount that nearly one in 10 people on Earth struggled to live on *every day* in 2020. An alternative action might be to get a group of members in your church to set aside two dollars each of the 40 days in Lent—a total of \$80 per person—and contribute those funds to your denomination’s hunger program.

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Photo-A-Day Challenge: Assemble

Daily Readings: [Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18](#), [Psalm 27](#), [Philippians 3:17-4:1](#), [Luke 13:31-35](#)

Monday, March 14, 2022
“God Is With Us” by Lynne Alexander

*Do not be afraid I am with you,
Do not be dismayed I am your God.
I will strengthen you and help you;
I will uphold you with my right hand.*
Isaiah 41:10 NRSV

When I thought about the meditations for Lent, this scripture (one of my favorites) and the hymn based on the scripture kept going through my mind. Un ... afraid!
How do I move forward without fear?

I turned to God and through scripture and with God’s support I made a difficult decision to move to a new place. I had a neighborhood in my old place, where I had many friends. Moving puts me in a place where I do not know anyone. But I do have God! So, I can move forward without fear because...

God is with me!

I had heart surgery during 2021 and my mitral and tricuspid valves were replaced. I decided to move ahead because...

God is with me!

How can we all move ahead? The pandemic is a struggle for all ages. We need to place our fears in God’s hands and God will walk with us and talk with us so that we can and will move forward because...

God is with us!

Photo-A-Day Challenge: Write

Daily Readings: [Psalm 105:1-42](#); [Exodus 33:1-6](#); [Romans 4:1-12](#)

Tuesday, March 15, 2022
"Remedy #13" by John Roedel

be so very
careful

when trying to fit
in

with everybody
else

- because accidentally
someday

you just
might -

stay fully wild,
star child

ride your watermelon
bike

wear your purple polka dot
pants

dream your dripping honeycomb
dreams -

remain always untamed,
free spirit,

don't give up what makes you
different

be the red
umbrella

be the horseshoe
nebula

be the dancing
fool

be the mismatched
socks

be the walking piece of rainbow shag
carpet -

because

you weren't plucked from
nothingness

to simply fit
in

you were created to make us
gasp -

seduce us with your
strangeness

wear your authenticity like
lingerie

quit pretending to be so
khaki

while you are dripping in
watercolors -

continue being weird my
beautiful weirdo

- and remember remember remember

fitting in is for
sardines

From *Remedy* by John Roedel. © 2021, used by permission.

Photo-A-Day Challenge: Still

Daily Readings: [Psalm 105:1-42; Numbers 14:10b-24; 1 Corinthians 10:1-13](#)

Wednesday, March 16, 2022
“Midlife” by Rev. Kent Johnson

Reflect on this photo of the day and this description by the photographer: Some time as we settle into midlife we might look around and say, “is this all there is?” Is this my purpose? Will I leave my mark on the world? Often the best answers are found in something greater than ourselves: love, service, loyalty, friendship, joy, creativity, faith, family, a calling... What feels like it is giving you purpose today?



Photo-A-Day Challenge: Small

Daily Readings: [Psalm 105:1-42; 2 Chronicles 20:1-22; Luke 13:22-31](#)

Thursday, March 17, 2022

“Failure, Disappointing Others, and Insignificance” by Rev. Nate Melcher

Jesus really has it in for fig trees. The gospels of Mark and Matthew have a parallel story of Jesus cursing a fig tree for not bearing fruit. On the other hand, Mark, Matthew, and Luke share a parable about a budding fig tree blessed for bearing fruit. Here in Luke 13:1-9, we see a parable of a *barren* fig tree, a tale that meets somewhere in the middle. It is not bearing fruit and the vineyard owner says cut it down, but the gardener says give it time, let me work with it.

It’s probably best not to use these three instances to panic persons into getting fruitful, but Jesus is saying something about the gift of patience, the effectiveness of cultivation, and the value of fruitfulness. If anything, perhaps this is a story about second chances told from the One who is from the God of second chances.

We all fail. We have all disappointed other people. We may have even all felt our contributions, our fruitfulness, don’t add up to much. Is that license to give up? Is that a sign that we are no better than our worst mistake? God defines us in healthier terms than that. What have been your most impactful second chances? When did you grant someone a second chance and what happened? Can you give others the second chance you’d hope they (or God) would give you in your failures?

Photo-A-Day Challenge: Voice

Daily Readings: [Psalm 63:1-8](#); [Daniel 3:19-30](#); [Revelation 2:8-11](#)

Friday, March 18, 2022

“When I’m in the Messy Middle of Something” by Rev. Arianne Braithwaite Lehn

Slow and Steady God,

Things have changed,
and I know they’re not done changing.

I’m here on your potter’s wheel
where you’re shaping my essence into
something new with
guiding, loving hands.

But this messy middle time...
it’s painful, and scary, and hard.
The wheel spins and my world swirls
and all I want is to see the end result.

Becoming the broken-down
lump of clay was a
hard stage too, I might add.

Help me, God,
commit to the process,
not the outcome.

Help me embrace this messy middle
time
when I must make space

for shifts and questions.

Change my mantras from
clarity to exciting ambiguity,
definition to open-endedness,
certainty to awe-filled surprises,
timeline to *trust*.

Help me believe, Lord,
that even what seems to be
negative change
makes room in me and around me
for something fresh (and good).

You hum a tune of possibility
and potential as you work.
With each move of your hand,
you mutter,
“Beautiful.”
“Beautiful.”
“Beautiful.”

And, you smile.

Amen.

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Photo-A-Day Challenge: Melt

Daily Readings: [Psalm 63:1-8](#); [Daniel 12:1-4](#); [Revelation 3:1-6](#)

Saturday, March 19, 2022
“Hope and Optimism” by Rev. Hope Hutchison

What is the difference between hope and optimism? It’s a question I have found myself reflecting upon time and time again, as someone named Hope and who is not a naturally optimistic person.

I used to joke pretty frequently that the irony of my life is that I am not a hopeful person. But one day someone challenged me that I wasn’t thinking deeply enough about what hope is. Hope in the Christian faith is not blind optimism that things will always be sunny, but is instead a deeper belief that God’s plans and God’s work in the world has the power to do something beyond and in spite of what human imagination can come up with.

We have lived through some uncertain times together over the past two years, and I am not sure when we will emerge from those times. But continuing to live together and dream of a future together is the epitome of Christian hope, especially in a time when communities around the world have been so broken.

In spite of the fear of what the future holds in the world, and in the United Methodist Church, I believe that Richfield United Methodist Church has a bright future. I believe that because of the ways that I have seen God at work in this church: in your generosity to your neighbors, how we have embraced community safety in pandemic, and in so many other ways.

Photo-A-Day Challenge: Band

Daily Readings: [Psalm 63:1-8; Isaiah 5:1-7; Luke 6:43-45](#)

Sunday, March 20, 2022
Third Sunday in Lent
“Jesus Offers Mercy and Forgiveness” by Bread for the World

Prayer: O God, you don’t give up on us and you offer mercy and forgiveness to all who repent and trust in Christ Jesus. May this gracious gift nourish us to bear the fruit of sharing the abundance of your creation with all those in need. Amen.

Action: Your financial support of Bread for the World makes it possible for hundreds of churches and tens of thousands of individuals to work together to persuade Congress to pass legislation that leads to an end to hunger. Take a moment today to make a gift—or perhaps sign up for monthly giving. Visit bread.org/LentOffering.

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Photo-A-Day Challenge: Whisper

Daily Readings: [Isaiah 55:1-9](#), [Psalm 63:1-8](#), [1 Corinthians 10:1-13](#), [Luke 13:1-9](#)

Monday, March 21, 2022
“Of What Am I Afraid?” by Ann Johnson

One of my biggest fears is that my life will end like my mother’s. Alzheimer’s disease runs in her family. Mom came to live with us when my dad passed. (We didn’t realize that she had been diagnosed with Alzheimer’s years before. My dad had just told the doctor that he would take her home and care for her.) We lived in an apartment at the time; she had her own room but would wander into our room in the middle of the night and want to “go upstairs.” (We were on the 4th floor of a 4-story building.)

Mom lived with us for three years. She had a great time with Cole who was 18 months old when she joined us. They really had fun together. She would read him stories and go for walks with us. She’d hold his “Dora” doll. Eventually she moved to Georgia because she needed more care than we could give her (“Dora” went with her). One of my brothers lives there and his wife is a nurse and wanted to supervise her facility care. On one visit, an aide asked her who we were. After a minute, Mom replied, “These are my parents - my mom and dad.”

After she broke a hip, she was in a wheelchair full-time. She would tool around the facility propelling herself with her feet. You never knew where you’d find her.

Then, she lost the ability to communicate. She would speak but it came out as gibberish. When we visited, I would play her favorite hymns on the piano. She could still sing those words. Eventually, that too was lost.

Finally, she lost the ability to swallow water or food. And lived without both for a couple of weeks. She knew she was loved. She loved God and knew she was going on to a better place.

Deuteronomy 31:6 says, “The Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.” In writing about this, I realized I do NOT need to fear. Thank you God for your love and constant presence!

Photo-A-Day Challenge: Bold

Daily Readings: [Psalm 39](#); [Jeremiah 11:1-17](#); [Romans 2:1-11](#)

Tuesday, March 22, 2022
“Hey God, Hey John: Risk” by John Roedel

Me: Hey God.

God: Hello, My love.

Me: Taking a huge risk today.

God: What makes it such a huge risk?

Me: I’m nervous about what people will think of me. I’m afraid of criticism.

God: Does the wind worry about what people will think when it roars loudly through the needles of a swaying pine tree?

Me: Probably not.

God: Do birds concern themselves with criticism whenever they sing their love songs?

Me: No...

God: Then why should you put any emotional energy into how other people will react to you?

Me: But what if somebody stops liking me?

God: You can’t control if somebody likes you or not. There is only one thing you can control.

Me: What’s that?

God: Being authentic to the person you were created to be.

oh Divine Love,
with your help
someday I’ll be
as brave as the
wind
someday I’ll have
the courage of a
songbird
someday I’ll remove
this weight of expectation
around my neck and quit
worrying about who other
people want me to be
and to become the person
I was created to be
someday I’ll be as fearless
as the howling wind
someday I’ll be as free
as a songbird
someday
someday
someday soon

From *Hey God. Hey John: What Happens When God Writes Back.*
by John Roedel. © 2018, used by permission.

Photo-A-Day Challenge: Look

Daily Readings: [Psalm 39](#); [Ezekiel 17:1-10](#); [Romans 2:12-16](#)

Wednesday, March 23, 2022
“On Criticism” by Rev. Kent Johnson

Reflect on this photo of the day and this description by the photographer: There is a lot of criticism out there. Intellectually I can say that not everyone is going to agree with me or like me, but it is still hard when people are critical of me. One tactic to overcome this fear is to study the criticism and ask yourself, “What can I learn from this criticism?” How have you coped with criticism?



Photo-A-Day Challenge: Contain

Daily Readings: [Psalm 39](#); [Numbers 13:17-27](#); [Luke 13:18-21](#)

Thursday, March 24, 2022
“Endings, Changes, and Missing Out” by Rev. Nate Melcher

The Gospel of Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32 is known by many titles. It’s a reminder of how much power we give our Bible translators as they craft headers between sections to help readers find their place and frame sections.

On one hand, one could call it “The Prodigal Son” and consider his desire to return home. It could be called “The Two Brothers” to focus on the juxtaposition of the one who left and the one who stayed home (this title is even different than “The Two Sons” as it focuses their relationships on their father more than one another). Maybe “The Loving Father” could be apt, given his relationship with both brothers.

If you’ve heard one title the most, think about how that influences how you read this story. What title would give you something new to think about? Jesus’s parable about how families give, receive, and live out inheritance speaks wonderfully to what it means to deal with change. When something ends, what begins? When we miss out on one thing, what new thing is born? What was lost by one person leaving home and what is found when that same person returns home? No one is the same after that - can that be a good thing?

Photo-A-Day Challenge: Crisp

Daily Readings: [Psalm 32](#); [Joshua 4:1-13](#); [2 Corinthians 4:16-5:5](#)

Friday, March 25, 2022
“Oriental” by Jenny Yang Cropp

The Wal-Mart cashier stares at my license, my face,
my license again, doesn't believe that's me
in the picture, eyes slanted because I smiled
too much, showed my teeth to the DMV. *You look
white in real life*, she says and inspects the photo
a few more times at different angles, intervals,
degrees of light. *Oriental*, she says, tapping
one long fake nail on her proof. She names me
the way we all must name the things we fear,
like she's picked me from a line-up, found me
hiding in plain sight. At first, I want to apologize,
offer an explanation, blame it on my mother
or my father, tell her about dominant and recessive
traits, my brother's coarse hair, my sister's eyes,
my round face. We can't help what we inherit—
the drunk at a party who thought it was safe
to pull his eyelids back and mock a Chinese taxi driver,
an ex who laughed when I wanted a bicycle
and asked if I'd be making deliveries, the Japanese
boss who frowned and shook her head
when I tried to commiserate. Our ability
to hold both sides in our skin makes no sense
to them, to this woman who repeats *oriental*
for emphasis after I've said I'm half-Korean,
as if I'm mistaken about which way the sun rises
or which direction I face, as if she's sure
when she takes my check, I'll go out to the parking lot,
untie my dragon, and fly away, due east.

From *String Theory: Poems* by Jenny Yang Cropp. Mongrel Empire Press. Norman, OK.
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Photo-A-Day Challenge: Journal

Daily Readings: [Psalm 32](#); [Joshua 4:14-24](#); [2 Corinthians 5:6-15](#)

Saturday, March 26, 2022
“Towels” by Rev. Wayne Albertson

It was a fine, bold, and sensitive suggestion made by someone in our last church. We followed it for several years, enough that persons came to expect it each year. At the end of the Ash Wednesday worship time persons were offered small towels to take with them. They were asked to take them with them to the place where they worked or have them in a conspicuous place at home. Teachers told me of setting the towels on a classroom lectern; others had them visible on desks; some carried them with them. If asked for an explanation, they simply said they were a reminder of being a servant during the season of Lent. Those with the towels then brought them back to the Maundy Thursday service and used them in the time of foot washing, tying their everyday life in Lent to the servanthood of Jesus re-lived in humble ritual.

Photo-A-Day Challenge: Rally

Daily Readings: [Psalm 32](#); [Exodus 32:7-14](#); [Luke 15:1-10](#)

Sunday, March 27, 2022
Fourth Sunday in Lent
“Jesus Welcomes Sinners” by Bread for the World

Prayer: O God, we confess that we are both the prodigal son and the elder brother. Save us from despair and from pride. Through your love and grace in Christ, turn us around so that we may prepare a feast of hope and opportunity for those who live in hunger. Amen.

Action: More than one in seven children in the United States lived in a family that faced the threat of hunger in 2019, before the pandemic began. In 2022, Bread for the World urges Congress to make permanent the temporary improvements set in place in response to the pandemic— including school breakfasts and summer meals for children. Call 1-800-826-3688 or visit bread.org/write to make your voice heard.

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Photo-A-Day Challenge: Archive

Daily Readings: [Joshua 5:9-12](#), [Psalm 32](#), [2 Corinthians 5:16-21](#), [Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32](#)

Monday, March 28, 2022
“Crossing Over” by Marilyn Dodge

“My golden years are becoming tarnished,” as my Mom would say. Due to a health problem I have become more anxious, and fearful, of getting out and doing things now. I am feeling OLD! This is a difficult pill to swallow.

To me the term “crossing over” always meant a person died and crossed over into the heavenly kingdom of God. But, “crossing over” can mean that a person can change and do other things with the help of Jesus. There is more in store for us if we keep our faith and look to Jesus for guidance. God is always with us. It is our job to be like the tree beside the stream. Our roots will seek out God’s nourishing water to feed and sustain us in whatever situation we are experiencing (Jeremiah 17: 5-10).

Put in this perspective, then, I have nothing to fear as I grow older and my body changes. God, is with me. I need to keep my roots growing towards the Holy One’s nourishing waters. I will be fed and new beginnings, new opportunities will be offered to me. It is up to me to listen and work with God to identify, clarify and accept these new beginnings that I am feeling. Most of all, trust that God is within me and will grow with me in each situation. The God of New Beginnings has never left me yet!

Photo-A-Day Challenge: Steer

Daily Readings: [Psalm 53](#); [Leviticus 23:26-41](#); [Revelation 19:1-8](#)

Tuesday, March 29, 2022
"Remedy #24" by John Roedel

different isn't another word for broken
different is beautiful

when tempted to try and "fix" someone
who does not live their life as you do

let them be
please let them be

we aren't here to domesticate wildflowers
we are here to learn to become one ourselves

different isn't another word for broken
different is beautiful

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Photo-A-Day Challenge: Self-Care

Daily Readings: [Psalm 53](#); [Leviticus 25:1-19](#); [Revelation 19:9-10](#)

Wednesday, March 30, 2022
"Legacy" by Rev. Kent Johnson

Reflect on this photo of the day and this description by the photographer: When I saw the Fig Newmans it reminded me that some parts of me will live on beyond my time. I imagine my influence will continue in my children, the people I have influenced through the church, my photography and friendship. What of you would you like to live on?



Photo-A-Day Challenge: Book

Daily Readings: [Psalm 53](#); [2 Kings 4:1-7](#); [Luke 9:10-17](#)

Thursday, March 31, 2022
“Aging, Illness, and Death” by Rev. Nate Melcher

Being in the room when something out of the ordinary happens can be awkward enough already. When you add in someone who calls out what’s going on, it gets even more awkward. What are the disciples thinking in John 12:1-8 as the young Mary anoints the feet of her friend, Jesus, with perfume? Do they turn away as Judas chides her for wasting it? Do they slink out of the house when Jesus rebukes him? All of that is possible if they don’t understand what is happening.

When we are faced with mystery, sometimes we shut down. Other times, we may try to ignore it or throw ourselves into it completely at the expense of everything else. The greatest mystery, death, brings out a myriad of emotional responses we are not always prepared for, no matter how familiar death may be to us.

Can one be fully prepared for death? How does one reach peace with something so final and potentially sudden? We will all face it some day, can we be brave enough to talk about it while we are alive? Knowing your final wishes - and sharing them - is not only healthy, it is responsible and courageous.

Photo-A-Day Challenge: Rock

Daily Readings: [Psalm 126](#); [Isaiah 43:1-7](#); [Philippians 2:19-24](#)

Friday, April 1, 2022

“When I Need to Trust Where I Am Is Right” by Rev. Arianne Braithwaite Lehn

Reassuring One,

Today, with your help,
I will release my ruminating...

Today, with your help,
I will welcome what is—
not in resignation, but in trust.
Life won't always be this way.
and, maybe, just maybe, I need this
in order to get where I'm going.

Today, I will thank you
for the value imbedded
in my work and time.

Today, rather than taking consensus
from everything and
everyone around me
about what I need to do,
I will stop.

I will let myself be in
that uncomfortable quiet.

I will do my deepest listening
for the most important Voice
whose tone is pure silence
and who likes to stay small.

I can choose these things today, God,
because these are your promises—
to handle what I can't,
to use what I'd rather not endure,
to give me the inner wisdom
I need for each choice.

So I say thanks, praise, and okay.

Amen.

From Ash & Starlight: Prayers for the Chaos & Grace of Daily Life

Photo-A-Day Challenge: Fade

Daily Readings: [Psalm 126](#); [Isaiah 43:8-15](#); [Philippians 2:25-3:1](#)

Saturday, April 2, 2022
“Unafraid” by Rev. Lynn Borgeson

It was in sub-Saharan Africa, in a country filled with hunger, poverty, war, and expectations. Twenty-one of us, mostly United Methodist pastors from the US, along with two women from the Board of Global Ministries, were going to visit the Darfur region of Sudan, because the dictator, Omar Al Bashir, had been sending Janjaweed into Darfur to exterminate the people living there and we wanted to see what was happening. Al Bashir, having thrown out all NGOs, including Doctors without Borders, also denied us entry into Sudan. However, our group snuck into Yei, Sudan at the southernmost tip.

We stayed at a small motel across from the Bank in Yei. There were many small stands where people sold things like tea, soap, Rx, oil, goats, meat, and more. The atmosphere in Yei was one of evil, fear, and anger. The people of that region kept having their houses, businesses, towns, and churches burned down by the military.

While there, the veteran soldiers, who had not been paid in over 6 months, needed money. Already angry, they also got very drunk and decided to rob the bank. That day, we saw people start running, little shops slammed their doors, and as the people fled, guns started shooting and soldiers began to take over the streets. Our motel was accessible to streets and alleys, so as the bullets flew through the air, our leaders yelled, “Hit the ground... get down... go into your rooms.” We stayed in our rooms for 2 days as VP Salva Kiir and accompanying active soldiers came to negotiate with the veterans and others.

Maybe because we were pastors, Christians, or witnesses to the catastrophic situation in Sudan, we were not afraid and did not fear because God was with us, and we were there in God’s name. When we minister in God’s name, and try to be the hands, feet, heart, and voice of Christ, nothing will make us cower in fear or let the powerful exterminate God’s people, no matter what. We can go forth, unafraid to carry out the work and message God sends with us!

Photo-A-Day Challenge: Turn

Daily Readings: [Psalm 126](#); [Exodus 12:21-27](#); [John 11:45-57](#)

Sunday, April 3, 2022
Fifth Sunday in Lent
“Jesus Is Anointed for Death” 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.

Action: 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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Photo-A-Day Challenge: Sing

Daily Readings: [Isaiah 43:16-21](#), [Psalm 126](#), [Philippians 3:4b-14](#), [John 12:1-8](#)

Monday, April 4, 2022
“Facing Fears” by Suzanne Johnson

Many years ago, in the summer before I got married, Kent worked at a YMCA camp in northern Minnesota. So, I decided to be a camp counselor at a camp near the St. Croix River. Kent was part of a very active camping family. In my family camping meant the Holiday Inn. I thought being in the woods for a summer would help me with my fears about camping - bugs, storms, strange noises, getting lost. What was I thinking? I prayed that this was the right decision. But I knew camping was going to be part of my new life with Kent.

I learned a lot that summer about me, the woods, and kids. The camp had cabins, showers, a kitchen, cooks, a nurse, and many talented people. Camp started with ten-day sessions for ten children, twelve-years-old, many were scared like me. But some were adventurous. Together we learned to have fun, hiking, swimming in the “cold” spring-fed pond, singing, playing and gathering around a campfire.

As weeks passed campers changed from elementary age to junior high to high schoolers. There were more canoe trips on the river, camping out in the woods, longer hikes in the day and night, including encounters with poison ivy, wolf spiders, and porcupines.

I wouldn't have made it without others encouraging, challenging, and cheering me on. So that I could guide, encourage, and cheer my campers on. Sometimes, the best thing to do with our fears is to face them head on.

Photo-A-Day Challenge: Debate

Daily Readings: [Psalm 20](#); [Exodus 40:1-15](#); [Hebrews 10:19-25](#)

Tuesday, April 5, 2022
"Remedy #31" by John Roedel

when the world
goes mad

be wildly kind
to everyone

everyone
everyone
everyone

- you can't control
much

but you control how
you treat others

in these breaking news
heartbreaking times

when nothing feels
certain

let your raw kindness
be a certainty

allow your compassion
to become a North Star

stamped up in
the sky for

others to follow
back home

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Photo-A-Day Challenge: Breathe

Daily Readings: [Psalm 20](#); [Judges 9:7-15](#); [1 John 2:18-28](#)

Wednesday, April 6, 2022
“Fear of Failure” by Rev. Kent Johnson

Reflect on this photo of the day and this description by the photographer: Fear of failure is known to all of us. Some things like sailboarding are hard and you must fail a lot to learn to do it. What hard things have you done? How did you get motivated to keep trying?



Photo-A-Day Challenge: Shift

Daily Readings: [Psalm 20](#); [Habakkuk 3:2-15](#); [Luke 18:31-34](#)

Thursday, April 7, 2022
“Wholly Our” by Rev. Nate Melcher

You can always tell the most obedient people in the Bible because right after God says “Go here and do this,” the next line is “And they went there and they did that.” To enter Jerusalem, Jesus tells his disciples in Luke 19:28-40 to fetch him a colt. They do it, even if their cover story is weird. Sometimes it is interesting to be a Christian, trying to live in a practical, sensible world while also keeping an ear open for the Spirit to guide you.

The mix of the mundane and the incredible, such as a humble colt carrying the Messiah, can happen in our everyday lives. Are you seeking the incredible? When it happens, are you apt to resist or go with it? As Jesus makes his triumphant journey into Jerusalem, ask yourself this: what does Jesus making his triumphant journey into your heart look like? Where do his teachings reside in you and how do they bear fruit in God’s world? Do you like your answer?

And if not, what are you willing to do about it?

Photo-A-Day Challenge: Urgency

Daily Readings: [Psalm 31:9-16](#); [Isaiah 53:10-12](#); [Hebrews 2:1-9](#)

Friday, April 8, 2022
“At the Native American Film Festival” by Jenny Yang Cropp

Marked at birth by a Mongolian blue spot,
mass of dark veins under thin skin, bruise-like
and only appearing on the backs of children
descended from Africa or Asia.
Next to my mother I am white, and
next to my father I am yellow.

But next to this Comanche woman
I am the spitting image of her daughter.
So when she asks about scholarships and schools,
when she wants to know if I'll attend
a college for native students, I think of the blue
born on her daughter's back. I let her look me
fully in my found face, let her think
I am part of something whole.

From *String Theory: Poems* by Jenny Yang Cropp. Mongrel Empire Press. Norman, OK.
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Photo-A-Day Challenge: Depth

Daily Readings: [Psalm 31:9-16; Isaiah 54:9-10; Hebrews 2:10-18](#)

Saturday, April 9, 2022
"Wonder" by Jim Vetsch

In this time of wonder,
I wonder...
What do we really understand?
I wonder how we deserved the
Precious gifts we've received.
I wonder why and how we've pulled through the tragedies, the illnesses, the pain.
I wonder...did we do this all on our own?
...or did we have help?

I wonder about this season of dismay.
I wonder why.
I wonder for how long.
I wonder how much damage this long, dark storm has inflicted.
I wonder how much mutual pain we've felt.
And I wonder if we've been conscious of one another's hurting.

I wonder when it's all over if we'll breathe a sigh of relief and return to normal.
I wonder if we'll remember to look out for one another.
I wonder if the spirit of NOW will be a spirit of renewal.
I wonder if we remembered to breathe during the long dark nightmare.

In the spirit of holiness that we can sense around us, I wonder. ...
Can we remember what is essential?
Can we find our North Star?
Can we forgive?
Can we do what is right again?
Can we remember love?

We choose to have faith that There is a fresh, cool breeze coming to blow away the
sickness, the doubt, and the unhappiness.
We wonder if you'll join us.

Photo-A-Day Challenge: Weigh

Daily Readings: [Psalm 31:9-16](#); [Leviticus 23:1-8](#); [Luke 22:1-13](#)

Sunday, April 10, 2022
Sixth Sunday in Lent - Palm Sunday
“Jesus Suffers Death” by Bread for the World

Prayer: O God, trusting in your steadfast love, your Son Jesus gave up his life for us. Now, the tomb of death has become the birthplace of new life that sustains us as we work together to save the lives of mothers and children threatened by hunger and disease. Amen.

Action: The weeks following Easter are an ideal time to participate in Bread for the World’s 2022 Offering of Letters. Each year, individuals, congregations, and campus groups conduct letter-writing events. Plan now to organize your own Offering of Letters to Congress. For tips about organizing an Offering of Letters—as well as sample letters and background information— visit bread.org/ol or call 800-822-7323, ext. 1072.

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Photo-A-Day Challenge: Separate

Daily Readings: [Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29](#), [Luke 19:28-40](#)

Monday, April 11, 2022
“Be Not Afraid, for I Am with You” by Rev. Lynn Borgeson

Years ago, I was working for a local law firm and took some vacation time on Oahu. I flew in on a quiet Saturday, picked up my car, and drove up the coast. I put on my swimsuit, went out into the water, and was suddenly stung on my left arm. There was a creature with its tentacles wrapped around my forearm. I grabbed it, pulled it off, and threw it. The long tentacles remained on my arm and I noticed that I was going numb from head to toe. I was trying to swim for shore, but couldn't move anything but my feet.

As I floated, my feet slowly propelled me to the beach. Once on shore, I somehow got into my car and drove to find a hospital. A lady in a red Mumu, asked me to fill out a form in the lobby and then came back, stirring something in a paper cup. She said, “Why didn't you bring your kit?” She was stirring a paste of meat tenderizer and water and she plastered it all over my left arm. I told her that in Minnesota, we don't have creatures with tentacles that inject poison.

After a cortisone shot, I headed back to my condo, fell on the couch, and slept for two days. I knew throughout, that God was with me and I was never afraid. I believe that God equips us to undertake the situations we encounter, and to do the work God gives us to do. God has never failed me and is with me always!

Photo-A-Day Challenge: Lock

Daily Readings: [Isaiah 42:1-9](#), [Psalm 36:5-11](#), [Hebrews 9:11-15](#), [John 12:1-11](#)

Tuesday, April 12, 2022
"Remedy #34" by John Roedel

Is it your turn to forgive me
or
is it my turn to forgive you?

I can't remember either.

To be safe we better just forgive
each other at the exact same time.

Here's how:

We will hold hands
so that your wrist
presses right up
against mine.

And now we wait
until our pulses
match each other.

And now we close our
eyes and pretend
that our veins are
rivers of empathy

and now the seasons are changing

and now the mountains are melting
and now the water is rising
and now the rivers are growing together

and now the barren
space we let grow
between us is being
flooded with stretching

vineyards of clemency
and now exotic wildflowers
are growing everywhere

everywhere
everywhere
everywhere

and now all we know is an ocean

and now we are swimming
in the same tides of understanding

and now the two of us are endless again

and now we are the
newborn children of forgiveness

open your eyes
look down at our wrists
wrapped around each other

and now I forgive you
and now you forgive me

and now I see you
and now you see me

and now can't you feel it?

- this rising river
- this rolling ocean
- this endless us

this rushing mercy

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Photo-A-Day Challenge: Foothold

Daily Readings: [Isaiah 49:1-7](#), [Psalm 71:1-14](#), [1 Corinthians 1:18-31](#), [John 12:20-36](#)

Wednesday, April 13, 2022
“The Call” by Rev. Kent Johnson

One great fear is loneliness. In some bird species the male builds a beautiful nest and then calls out to attract a partner. Will anyone come? The strategy is to call and call all day. Many of us join a group, work on friendships and find places to serve others as strategies. What is your strategy to build your relationships?



Photo-A-Day Challenge: Stretch

Daily Readings: [Isaiah 50:4-9a](#), [Psalm 70](#), [Hebrews 12:1-3](#), [John 13:21-32](#)

Thursday, April 14, 2022 - Maundy Thursday
“Wholly Weak” by Rev. Nate Melcher

Many have tried to boil down the days of Holy Week to their essence. For some, Maundy Thursday is about the two most-read stories, the Last Supper and the washing of the disciples' feet. This is the breaking and sharing of the bread of life for all; this is the example to go and do likewise. Others see Good Friday and the tale of the Passion, the betrayal and abandonment of Jesus to the cross. This is the combination of what is foretold as inevitable and what is resisted in our deepest desires. Are these accurate ways to think of these days?

Perhaps, but what's most important is that all Christians are invited to participate in *Holy Week*, to feel the feelings of the days leading into Easter. The meaning of Easter is that much more impactful when the stories before it are given a chance to unfold. Jesus moves into Jerusalem “wholly our” Promised One, and just days later he is “wholly weak,” subjected to the cross. Is it any wonder many Christians skip these days?!

You are invited to dwell, to sit with fear as Jesus did, and wonder.

Photo-A-Day Challenge: Bulb

Daily Readings: [Exodus 12:1-4](#), [Psalm 116:1-2, 12-19](#), [1 Corinthians 11:23-26](#),
[John 13:1-17, 31b-35](#)

Friday, April 15, 2022 - Good Friday
“When I Need to Do Something Scary” by Rev. Arianne Braithwaite Lehn

O God,

I know I need to take
this courageous next step,
but the vulnerability paralyzes me.

The status quo is unsustainable,
yet I grasp for its hollow promises of
safety and stability.

If I don’t do the thing I know I must,
my soul will shrivel.

But if I do?

Thick insecurities cloak me, God,
with questions I’m afraid to answer:

*Who am I to think I can do this?
Who am I to speak up and out?
Who am I to say you’ve directed me
Out of the boat and onto these waves?*

My fear of others thwarts me, God,
with sinister scoffs and prickly
judgment.

*What if they don’t believe me?
What if they judge me?
What if they think I’m ridiculous,
Or arrogant, or selfish?*

What if I fail?

What if I’m a fool?

Fatalism is my forte.

You promise, God, you’re the Great I AM

—
the One who will be with me
as I face this scary step,
and the next one after that.

You’ll patiently prod
as I relentlessly doubt.
You’re simply inviting me
to say yes to this first step.

Dissipate the power of
my “*who am I’s*” as I hear your voice,
my “*what if they’s*” as I see your face,
my “*what if I’s*” as I feel your hand.

Make my feet follow my breath, God—
exhaling what was needed before,
inhaling what’s asked of me now.

Keep me walking forward,
courageous albeit shaky.
give me trust and faithfulness
as my guardrails.

Here we go.

Amen.

From *Ash & Starlight: Prayers for the Chaos & Grace of Daily Life* by Rev. Arianne Braithwaite Lehn. © 2019 Chalice Press, Nashville, TN. 91-92. Used with permission.

Photo-A-Day Challenge: Clean

Daily Readings: [Isaiah 52:13-53:12](#), [Psalm 22](#), [Hebrews 10:16-25](#), [John 18:1-19:42](#)

Saturday, April 16, 2022 - Easter Vigil
“He Set His Face to Jerusalem” by Rev. Wayne Albertson

“He set his face to Jerusalem.” - Luke 9:51

In one church I served, the back of the sanctuary had been remodeled before we arrived. With some leftover plaster from that effort, a worker formed a sizeable cross that was raised out from the wall perhaps two to three inches. That meant I was looking at a cross every Sunday from the pulpit just as congregants look at a cross each Sunday as they face the altar. Normally, a minister looks at a clock from the pulpit (and you can easily name the reason). This reality made me more deeply aware of what I was about as I led worship each week.

Soon after arriving at my next appointment, I told the new congregation that story in a sermon. The following week two woodworkers, anonymous for a while, left newly made crosses three to four feet long in my office and on our front porch. The first one to arrive was hung on the back wall of this sanctuary. The second one found a home in a prayer and meditation space we designated for the life of the congregation. That meant I looked at a cross and not a clock for the last 16 years of my vocational life.

I have associated this experience with Jesus’ setting his face towards Jerusalem. He was looking at a cross in purpose and reality. The gospels do not tell us that Jesus took a look at his schedule. They tell us that he was resolute in his calling of living for others with a self-giving and sacrificial love. The facing of the cross was the calling which shaped the relationships of those he met along his journeys and teachings. We are all shaped by what is around us, by what we see. So it is with me, a bit more deeply attached to this resolute time of Jesus because a construction worker had a bit of extra plaster. Thanks be to God.

Photo-A-Day Challenge: Choose

Daily Readings: [Job 14:1-14](#), [Psalm 31:1-4, 15-16](#), [1 Peter 4:1-8](#), [Matthew 27:57-66](#)

Sunday, April 17, 2022 - Easter Sunday
“Wholly Won” by Rev. Nate Melcher

Easter morning, as dawn breaks, is a new story. It’s a story that changes the world, that shows that as Jesus was “wholly our” Promised One, then was “wholly weak” as he went to the cross, he has now “wholly won” with triumph over death. Nothing can take that away, nothing can be greater truth, nothing is better than this good news.

Resurrection is for you.

It is never too late to believe, to act, to give thanks.

Easter is about never being too late. This Lent, we explored the God in Jesus and through the Spirit who moves with us as fear swirls near. We can leave temptation in the dust. We can find great peace through tough feelings. We can find healthy forgiveness and reconciliation. We can be there for each other in the hardest things. We can see Jesus in our lives.

Why?

Because he lives.

He lives and he is with you.

Happy Easter!

He is risen, indeed!

Photo-A-Day Challenge: Feat

Daily Readings: [Genesis 1:1-2:4a](#) and [Psalm 136:1-9, 23-26](#), [Isaiah 55:1-11](#),
[Romans 6:3-11](#), [Luke 24:1-12](#)