

grounded
in Christ



lent 2016
christ united methodist church

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The season of Lent is dense.

Lent begins with the sweep of ash across our brows on Ash Wednesday. Lent ends with the indrawn breath of Holy Saturday. In the forty days between the ash sweep and the indrawn breath we commit ourselves to walk with Jesus to the cross of Calvary.

Somehow the human wrangle of lived discipleship is magnified during Lent. The stakes are not small. We are called to attentiveness. God is so very present in this world and God is so very tired of crucifixions and what have we to say about what it means to follow Jesus?

Within the gift of this Lenten Devotional you will hear the hearts of your brothers and sisters in Christ. Those who contributed to this devotional know the power of shared story. We each have life-changing and mysterious encounters with the Holy. Finding a way to share those encounters blesses creation and so we are blessed.

We are blessed.

We are blessed to gather in small groups to read and discuss the book Grounded by Diana Butler Bass.

We are blessed to gather for worship on Ash Wednesday and every Sunday in order to hear the story of how it is God is so very present in creation.

We are blessed to share and hear the stories of our faith: Prodigals return home, hope springs anew, broken hearts find healing.

We are blessed by the into-our-lives reaching God who believes we have the courage to live love, wonder, hope and grace.

We are the people of Jesus the Christ.

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Pastor Elizabeth

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2 Corinthians 5: 20b-6:13

We're Christ's representatives. God uses us to persuade men and women to drop their differences and enter into God's work of making things right between them. We're speaking for Christ himself now: Become friends with God; he's already a friend with you.

How? you ask. In Christ. God put the wrong on him who never did anything wrong, so we could be put right with God.

Companions as we are in this work with you, we beg you, please don't squander one bit of this marvelous life God has given us. God reminds us,

I heard your call in the nick of time;
The day you needed me, I was there to help

Well, now is the right time to listen, the day to be helped. Don't put it off; don't frustrate God's work by showing up late, throwing a question mark over everything we're doing. Our work as God's servants gets validated—or not—in the details. People are watching us as we stay at our post, alertly, unswervingly . . . in hard times, tough times, bad times; when we're beaten up, jailed, and mobbed; working hard, working late, working without eating; with pure heart, clear head, steady hand; in gentleness, holiness, and honest love; when we're telling the truth, and when God's showing his power; when we're doing our best setting things right; when we're praised, and when we're blamed; slandered, and honored; true to our word, though distrusted; ignored by the world, but recognized by God; terrifically alive, though rumored to be dead; beaten within an inch of our lives, but refusing to die; immersed in tears, yet always filled with deep joy; living on handouts, yet enriching many; having nothing, having it all.

Dear, dear Corinthians, I can't tell you how much I long for you to enter this wide-open, spacious life. We didn't fence you in. The smallness you feel comes from within you. Your lives aren't small, but you're living them in a small way. I'm speaking as plainly as I can and with great affection. Open up your lives. Live openly and expansively!

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Genesis 2:5-7

At the time GOD made Earth and Heaven, before any grasses or shrubs had sprouted from the ground—GOD hadn't yet sent rain on Earth, nor was there anyone around to work the ground (the whole Earth was watered by underground springs)—GOD formed Man out of dirt from the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life. The Man came alive—a living soul!

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Where is God?



Where is God?

Thursday, February 11

As I enjoy the wonders of nature while working in my flower beds, the sounds of birds, the humming birds, the butterflies, and the beauty of flowers touch my soul. In that presence I find magical moments of peacefulness and loving thoughts of the beauty of nature . I fondly recall images of my mother working in flower beds and I sense her spirit beside me. A walk through the woods brings serenity and peacefulness surrounded by the beauty of creation. I hear the many sounds of birds, small animal rushing by and hear the sounds of gurgling streams. The splendor of a sunset fills me with awe and wonder that sends a shiver though me. I find it helpful to tend myself the way I tend a garden taking a few moments every day to allow my innermost being to relax, listen to music, exercise, and communicate with people. When I hear music every moment is delightful and reaches into my soul.

My connection to people is an important part of being grounded in faith. When I hear stories and listen intently to people I feel a presence of kindness and acceptance of others which warms my soul and gives me hope. I find God in stories of compassion for all people. I am grateful for time spent with friends, family, and grandchildren; I regard them as a gift from God that keeps me grounded in my faith.

Meditation is a continuing practice that helps me find contentment and peace. Faith speaks to me most when I meditate and feel the presence of peace and love. When I feel doubtful and tired, I know it is time for me to meditate and also to talk to someone to help work through my weariness to find rest. The church encourages me to work for peace and justice through sermons and discussions in small groups.

Each season displays its fall colors, winter snow, beauty of springtime blossoms, and summer activities that bring me closer to the heart of God. When I think of my life experiences, I feel grounded like roots planted firmly in the ground nourished by the many blessing I have received.

The Bible verse from Micah 6:8 speaks to me and gives me a sense of grounding. For what does the Lord require of you, but to do justice, to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God?

Rose Kliewer

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WHAT'S THE CALL OF GOD IN YOU LIFE? The Call of God in my life now (and it is always now) is this:

EAT AND SLEEP: Then persons think I am doing well after Gretta died. I am doing even better because we intend to get married again, that is Dr. Diana Nelson and I. Do you know what that means at 82? Shared love is redeeming and I know that blessing in God's call.

DO MINISTRY, no matter who asks: I shared a prayer service at my new home, because one of the persons for whom I had been pastor died here at my new home. I was blessed by the family witness to the love with which they hold each other, and the way in which the Eternal One blesses them with love, grace and mercy every day. They had stories to tell to demonstrate this—and pictures to go with the stories. I am blessed in God's call.

DO HOUSEWORK: I live at the Homestead, and this is a new place. The previous house is sold and the pension for which the churches and Conference paid, pays my new rent. Breakfast is included in my rent so I have wonderful persons who say good morning every day. But the boxes of pictures are still to be sorted and I need to dispose of thousands slides. The memories are good, and when I get to dust and vacuum I will find that reward.: well done. I cook for myself and what a joy that is—just to make it, eat it, and do dishes. So I am blessed and I say thanks again and again.

WRITE (and I get asked to do this): I try to write every day. I send what I write to others. I write my thoughts, feelings, gur wrenching moments, and joys that are part of God's blessings for me. I write about all the little things that come in community which are part of God's call in my life also—the goodness never ends—neither does God's love.

NOW, WRITE AS YOU PRAY: The spirit is always at work. Learn to live in the resurrection. This is also the last time I will write this until I am asked to do it again. I hope you are blessed now also.

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Psalm 42

As the hart longs for flowing streams
So longs my soul for You O God
My soul does thirst for the living God
When shall I come to see Your face?

My tears have fed me day and night
while men have said "Where is your God?"
But I recall as my soul pours dry
The days of praise within Your house

Why do I mourn and toil within
When it is mine to hope in God?
I shall again sing praise to Him
He is my help, He is my God

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John 4:7-15

A woman, a Samaritan, came to draw water. Jesus said, "Would you give me a drink of water?" (His disciples had gone to the village to buy food for lunch.)

The Samaritan woman, taken aback, asked, "How come you, a Jew, are asking me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink?" (Jews in those days wouldn't be caught dead talking to Samaritans.)

Jesus answered, "If you knew the generosity of God and who I am, you would be asking *me* for a drink, and I would give you fresh, living water."

The woman said, "Sir, you don't even have a bucket to draw with, and this well is deep. So how are you going to get this 'living water'? Are you a better man than our ancestor Jacob, who dug this well and drank from it, he and his sons and livestock, and passed it down to us?"

Jesus said, "Everyone who drinks this water will get thirsty again and again. Anyone who drinks the water I give will never thirst—not ever. The water I give will be an artesian spring within, gushing fountains of endless life."

John 4:7-15

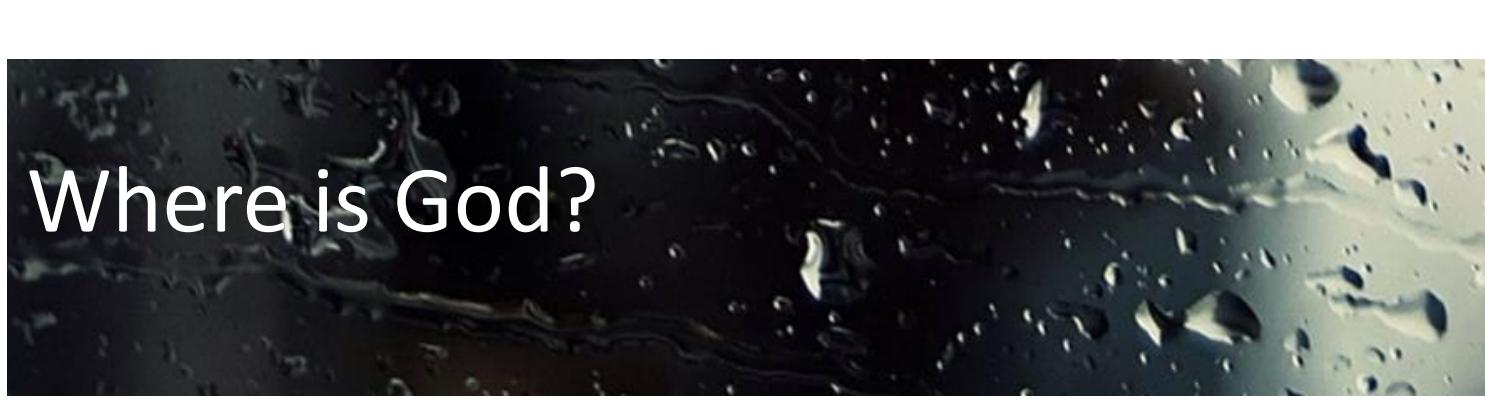
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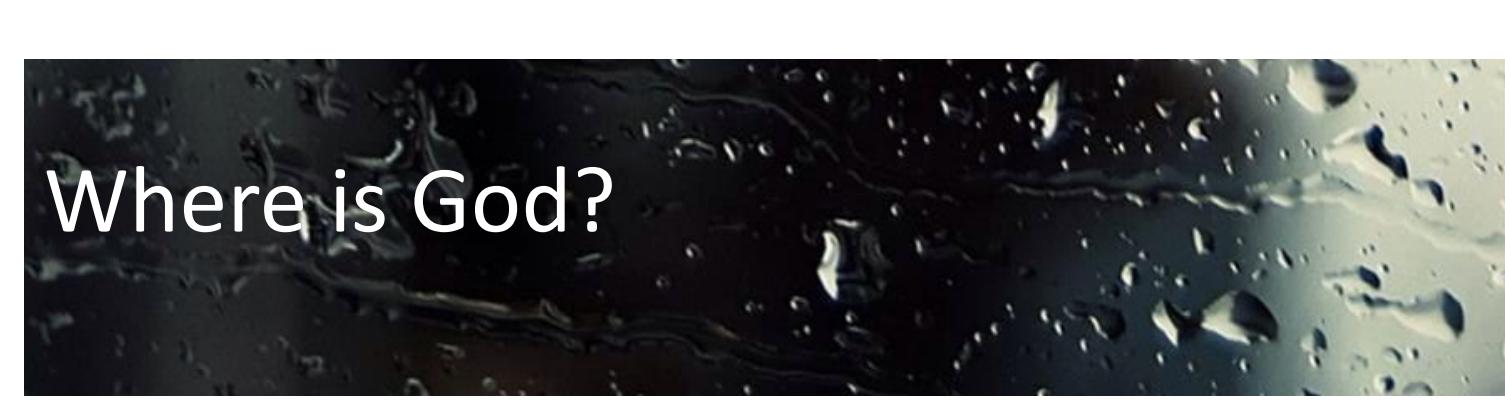
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Where is God?



Where is God?

I am a worrier and a fretter.

In these days of war, over a million refugees, natural disasters and personal loss and disappointment I need to sit with Holy Scripture and pray with the Psalmist, asking God to forgive our inhumanity to one another, to overcome our fear, and to teach us how to love one another.

As the Psalmist says:

“God is our refuge and our strength.
an ever present help in trouble.
Therefore, we will not fear,
though the earth give way
and the mountains plunge into the depths of the sea...”

I find that God’s word, spoken in Scripture is the best way to ground me, to make sure that my joy is not lost in all the bad news of the day, to remember to see God in his mighty works all around me, from the beauty of the snowfall to the gentle touch of my spouse or the smile of a friend.

Be Still
AND KNOW
THAT *I am*
GOD.

Marita Heller

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Tuesday, February 16

“Wilderness”

There are many waiting times in our lives. Lent is one of them. Anticipation can be a good thing, as it strengthens our joy in the event we await when it arrives. But waiting isn't enjoyable most of the time, especially when what we wait for isn't good, or we don't know exactly what to expect. Jesus did plenty of waiting during his life on earth. He waited until well into adulthood to begin his ministry. He waited to die for the cause of all humanity. And, before he began his ministry, he waited for forty days for temptation to come.

When Jesus was faint with hunger, the devil offered him food. Jesus was waiting for death, and was tempted to fly with the angels. He was told that he could have the world at his feet, right now, if he was willing to give up before his time in the wilderness was over.

Temptation comes when we're waiting, when we're looking for the next thing. It sounds like a great idea, the easy way out. But what we forget is that there is value in the wilderness. Only during the silent, fasting, waiting times are we able to truly prepare for what's ahead.

Jesus knew that his waiting was not in vain. Neither is ours. The Bible illustrates that Jesus was, overall, a patient man; perhaps all that waiting made him that way. And one can only imagine the things God may have told him while he was in that quiet, desert place. When Jesus finally began his ministry, he knew what was coming; he knew God's plan, and why he was doing what he was doing. Because he was willing to wait, to learn endurance in the wilderness, he was able to resist temptation and persevere.

Lent teaches us patience. It teaches us to deny our desires to give up or give in, with the knowledge that perseverance will bring greater benefits in the end. We do not know just how great those benefits will be, but we do know that the God who suffered temptation in his own waiting times will help and encourage us along

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"Endings and Beginnings"

Just as the grayness of the winter sky begins to change and open to the sunshine of the coming spring, so does our spiritual life change. As one "season" ends on our journey, another begins. There is never an ending, only a beginning and a beginning and a beginning. The seeds falls to the ground in the fall and "hunkers" down for the long winter wait until the warmth of the spring sun can begin to warm it and it can begin to grow. That's like our faith, a seed, waiting to be nourished by the warmth of God who loves us and understands us. God is there, waiting for the seed in us to germinate, to begin to grow, to begin to seek that deep relationship to which God calls us. We celebrate Easter, celebrating the life of Jesus Christ, the life that was in God and through God. Christ's life illustrates so clearly whose we must be in our lives. Christ's life, a life that was filled with loving God and loving all of God's creation, shows us how to live. A flower blooms, and God is there. A bird sings, and God is there. A child laughs, and God is there. Listen for the birds, smell the flowers, hear the laughter, and savor the smell of the new earth beginning to warm the seeds in the spring sun. What marvelous gifts God has given us. Jesus Christ shows us the way to a new beginning. Where is your beginning?

This article appeared in "Reflections on Spirituality" in the April 2004 *Spirit* publication.

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Christ as a Gardener

Andrew Hudgins

The boxwoods planted in the park spell LIVE.
I never noticed it until they died.
Before, the entwined green had smudged the word
unreadable. And when they take their own advice
again — come spring, come Easter — no one will know
a word is buried in the leaves. I love the way
that Mary thought her resurrected Lord
a gardener. It wasn't just the broad-brimmed hat
and muddy robe that fooled her: he was that changed.
He looks across the unturned field, the riot
Of unscythed grass, the smattering of wildflowers.
Before he can stop himself, he's on his knees.
He roots up stubborn weeds, pinches the suckers,
deciding order here — what lives, what dies,
and how. But it goes deeper even than that.
His hands burn and his bare feet smolder. He longs
To lie down inside the long, dew-moist furrows
and press his pierced side and his broken forehead
into the dirt. But he's already done it —
passed through one death and out the other side.
He laughs. He kicks his bright spade in the earth
and turns it over. Spring flashes by, then harvest.
Beneath his feet, seeds dance into the air.
They rise, and he, not noticing, ascends
on midair steppingstones of dandelion,
of milkweed, thistle, cattail, and goldenrod.

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Reflections on Psalm 97

Lord God Almighty and All-Loving

You create by word on deed; and

Uphold all by your gracious Spirit.

The Lord is King! Let the earth rejoice!

God of strength and weakness,

The water can easily be diverted

Yet over time it will run its course again.

Your will can be temporarily thwarted

But your will will be done

The Lord is King! Let the earth rejoice.

Just and Holy Lord God in your presence

All is revealed and for what it is;

All people's and nation's true intention and will ad gods

Are exposed and refined

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Light of the world
You see the one shunted off to the side;
You care for those who stumble in darkness,
You reach out to those in the middle and those on the fringe
And to everyone in between
Please light up the way
In which you want me to go
The Lord is King! Let the earth rejoice!

The beginning was not ,
And you were
The ending is not,
And you are
The present is full and complete in you;
O Lord God, praise, thanksgiving and laughter
Are due you by all of your creation.
The Lord is King! Let the earth rejoice!

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The ending is not,
And you are
The present is full and complete in you;
O Lord God, praise, thanksgiving and laughter
Are due you by all of your creation.
The Lord is King! Let the earth rejoice!

Psalm 8

GOD, brilliant Lord,
yours is a household name.

Nursing infants gurgle choruses about you;
toddlers shout the songs
That drown out enemy talk,
and silence atheist babble.

I look up at your macro-skies, dark and enormous,
your handmade sky-jewelry,
Moon and stars mounted in their settings.
Then I look at my micro-self and wonder,
Why do you bother with us?
Why take a second look our way?

Yet we've so narrowly missed being gods,
bright with Eden's dawn light.

You put us in charge of your handcrafted world,
repeated to us your Genesis-charge,
Made us lords of sheep and cattle,
even animals out in the wild,
Birds flying and fish swimming,
whales singing in the ocean deeps.

GOD, brilliant Lord,
your name echoes around the world.

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Sunday, February 21

John 3:16

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

John 14:15-31

"If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

"I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you.¹⁹ In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them." Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, "Lord, how is it that you will reveal yourself to us, and not to the world?" Jesus answered him, "Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; and the word that you hear is not mine, but is from the Father who sent me.

"I have said these things to you while I am still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.²⁸ You heard me say to you, 'I am going away, and I am coming to you.' If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I. And now I have told you this before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you may believe.³⁰ I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no power over me; but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. Rise, let us be on our way.



Where is God?

Sunday, February 21

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"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

John 14:15-31

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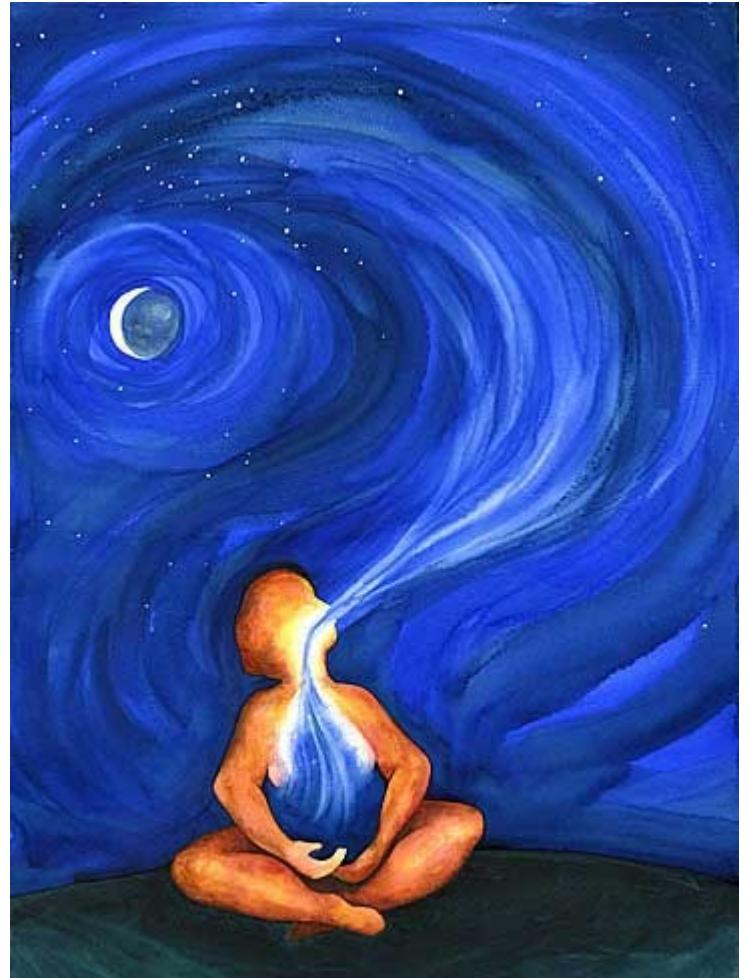
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Where is God?

Monday, February 22



*Holy Spirit, living breath of God,
Breathe new life into my willing soul.
Bring the presence of the Risen Lord
To renew my heart and make me whole.
Cause Your Word to come alive in me;
Give me faith for what I cannot see.
Give me passion for Your Purity;
Holy Spirit, breathe new life in me.*

-Keith and Kristyn Getty.

This verse of the song has become a meditative, repetitive prayer to help with refocus during busy days.

Sandy Naylor

Monday, February 22



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Tuesday, February 23

We weren't spared the pain of grief, at her unexpected early death, our wonderful 64 year old mother. Despite surrounding her with our love and prayers, and the expertise of her surgeon, it was obvious death was to be. We were encompassed by that gut wrenching pain and sorrow of watching someone who has loved and cared for us all our life moving closer to death.

In the midst of this exhaustion and immense sadness, I became aware of unexplained "happenings". The compassionate, caring prayer which offered me a comfort seldom experienced (and still remembered) on a visit from a retired pastor and family friend; the Catholic Sister/Chaplain, who asked to join my younger brother and me at dinner in the hospital cafeteria. She was able to acknowledge my brother's immense grief in anticipation of our Mother's death. She validated his pain and shared her need to have her deceased mother's picture at her bedside as a way to ease her own grief. Her tender listening and unexpected company was a divine gift.

A family whom we met in the hospital waiting room brought in a box of nutritious food, knowing we didn't have any appetites. They were able to connect with Dad, a private stoic man in ways he couldn't accept from his adult children. Their friendship and understanding provided the space for Dad to share his grief. The list continued on past Mom's death and funeral.

While her loss was one which left our hearts broken, I felt God was grieving with us too and had sent "earth angels" during the times when we most needed this comfort. These memories remind me of one of my favorite scriptures Romans 8:38-39 "For I am convinced that neither death nor life.....nor anything else in all creation can ever separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

God is always with us, loving us and sending others to be a presence on life's journey, an "earth angel". May peace and assurance be with you.

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And proper work

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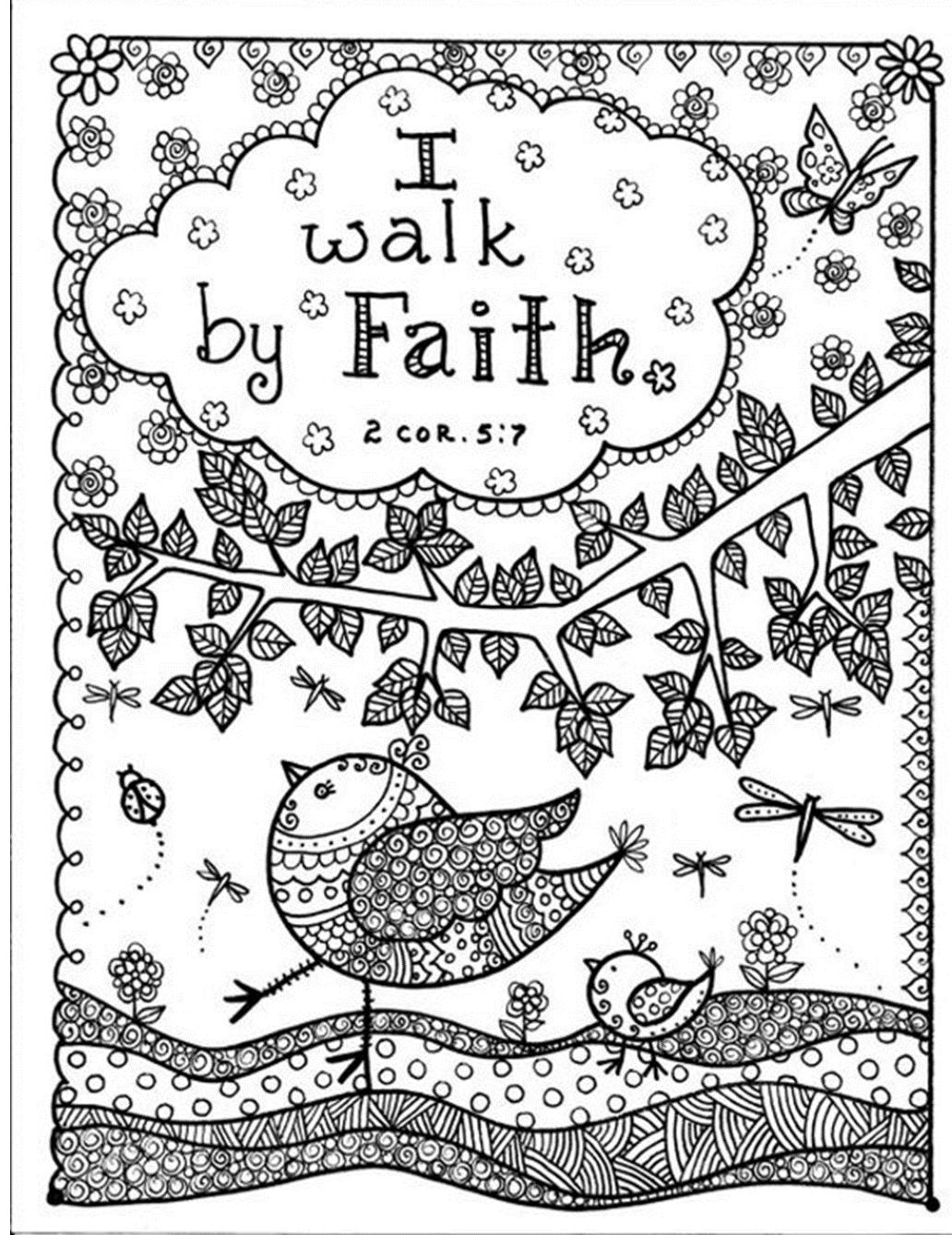
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“The time has come to be discerning. Follow inner spirit from God. Be open to gifts and lessons that provide guidance and reassurance; our path is well designed.

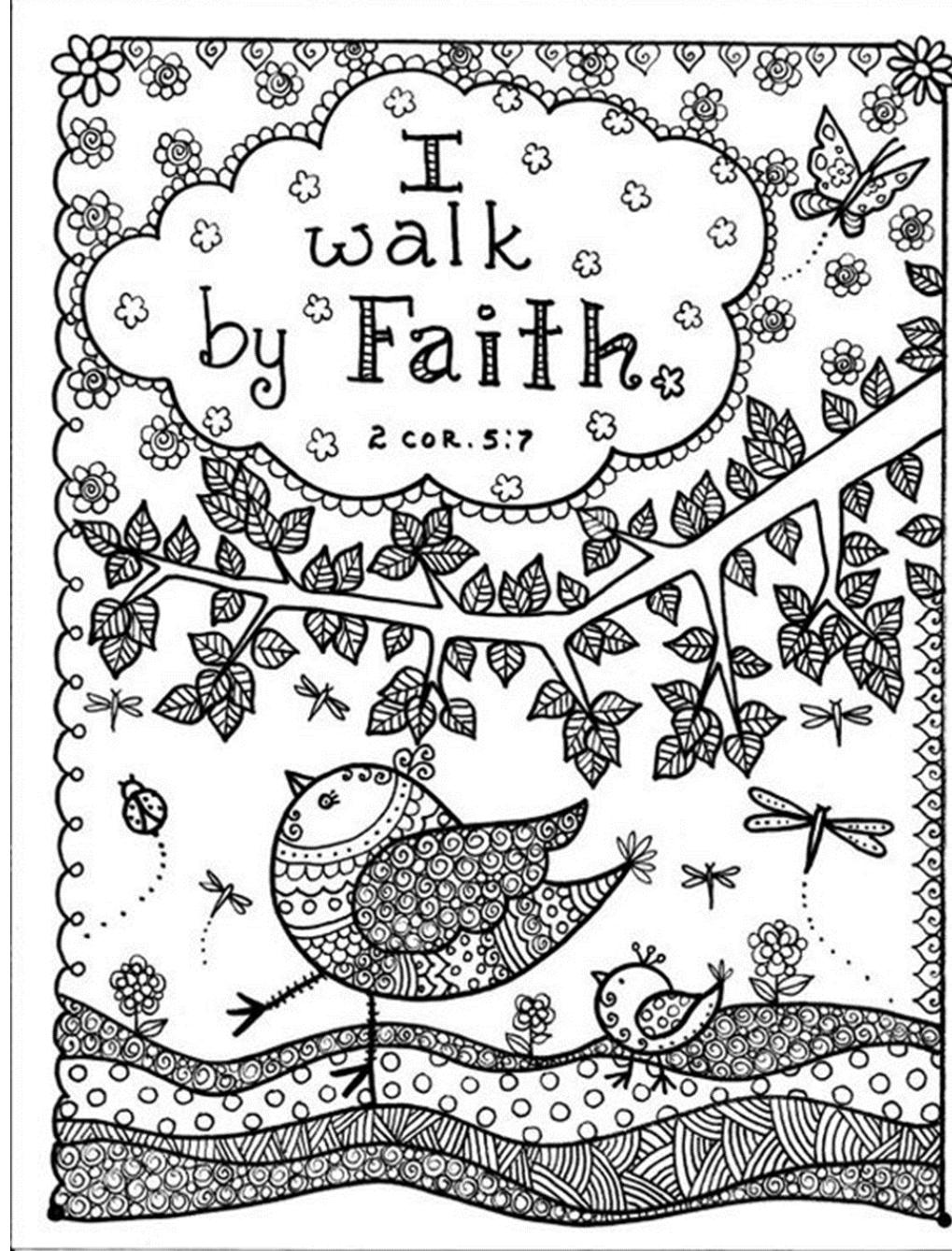
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Grown-up coloring books are growing in popularity: it promotes peace and relaxation, it can be a form of meditation. You can print this page and color, dwelling for a while on what it means for you to walk in faith, not in worldly-certainty. Or just take some time today to doodle, or walk slowly around the house or the block for no other reason than to just notice what is around you and rejoice in the power of faith.



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My friends in seminary used to make fun of me with one, short, strange little phrase: FOMO.

This stands for “Fear of Missing Out.” When there was one gathering of people together, I wondered if there was another gathering I should be at instead. Weekends were stressful, because I wanted to choose the perfect ways to spend my time. I could never decide if I should go to chapel or not that day (we had chapel every day): would I miss a life changing sermon, or would it be better to hang out with my friends on the lawn on a sunny day?

I had a friend in college who had a scripture about foxes carved into driftwood over her door. She said it reminded her to never get comfortable. It came from the book of Luke:

“As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, ‘I will follow you wherever you go.’ Jesus replied, ‘Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.’ He said to another man, ‘Follow me.’ But he replied, ‘Lord, first let me go and bury my father.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God.’ Still another said, ‘I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say goodbye to my family.’ Jesus replied, ‘No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.’”

The son of God didn’t weigh out all of his options every day, figuring out the coolest people to hang out with, picking places to live with the best restaurants. He didn’t stay in the kind of cities they filmed movies in. His message was something like, life is about more than being comfortable. This year the thought that has been grounding me the most is that sharing Christ’s light is not about being in the best place or with the “right” people all the time. It’s about being present and being loving, wherever you are, whoever you are with, right now.

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There was a week this summer that was particularly wild and windy, and despite the wind my friend and I decided to drive around and find a 100-ft ancient fire tower we had heard was fun to climb. The tower is stationed on top of a 600-foot cliff a few dozen miles into the farmland. Our shaking legs got through the 500 steps to get to the base of the tower, but when I saw the severe swaying and heard the creaking of the poles and skinny short guard rails of the stairs I decided it was a horrible idea. Still, I was persuaded, and scurried up each set of stairs quickly.

I cursed under my breath the whole time about that hateful wind, but by the time I got to the top I had to admit it was worth the hike. At the top we feasted our eyes on 360 degrees of late summer beauty. Right from this park we could watch the farmland become the rolling hills of the Mississippi River valley.

This part of Minnesota has some of the best bald eagle watching in the country, with rich soil and rivers and prairie plants. Did you know prairie plants get fall colors too? I didn't until I drove through the countryside every day.

So often I spend more time fearing that I'm missing out on something than learning from what I have right now. I like to think that I am willing to follow Jesus anywhere, then I spend most of my time worrying about how to live my life, where to go, what to do. He didn't promise me a perfectly safe place to lay my head. He did not say I will look like everyone else and get what everyone else gets. He did say that I get to tell anyone who will listen that they are known and loved. He said I get to carry the relationships and hospitality of the places I will go with me always. I am working to shake off my worries and accept the creation around me which is easy to love, and love the amazing people that always surround me. Right here, right now.

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Saturday February 27

The Summer Day

Who made the world?

Who made the swan, and the black bear?

Who made the grasshopper?

This grasshopper, I mean-

the one who has flung herself out of the grass,

the one who is eating sugar out of my hand,

who is moving her jaws back and forth instead of up and down-

who is gazing around with her enormous and complicated eyes.

Now she lifts her pale forearms and thoroughly washes her face.

Now she snaps her wings open, and floats away.

I don't know exactly what a prayer is.

I do know how to pay attention, how to fall down

into the grass, how to kneel down in the grass,

how to be idle and blessed, how to stroll through the fields,

which is what I have been doing all day.

Tell me, what else should I have done?

Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon?

Tell me, what is it you plan to do

with your one wild and precious life?

—Mary Oliver

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Deuteronomy 26:10-14

Sunday, February 28

Then place it in the Presence of GOD, your God. Prostrate yourselves in the Presence of GOD, your God. And rejoice! Celebrate all the good things that GOD, your God, has given you and your family; you and the Levite and the foreigner who lives with you.

Every third year, the year of the tithe, give a tenth of your produce to the Levite, the foreigner, the orphan, and the widow so that they may eat their fill in your cities. And then, in the Presence of GOD, your God, say this:

I have brought the sacred share,
I've given it to the Levite, foreigner, orphan, and widow.
What you commanded, I've done.
I haven't detoured around your commands,
I haven't forgotten a single one.
I haven't eaten from the sacred share while mourning,
I haven't removed any of it while ritually unclean,
I haven't used it in funeral feasts.

John 21:15-19

After breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?"
"Yes, Master, you know I love you."

Jesus said, "Feed my lambs."

He then asked a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?"

"Yes, Master, you know I love you."

Jesus said, "Shepherd my sheep."

Then he said it a third time: "Simon, son of John, do you love me?"

Peter was upset that he asked for the third time, "Do you love me?" so he answered, "Master, you know everything there is to know. You've got to know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Feed my sheep. I'm telling you the very truth now: When you were young you dressed yourself and went wherever you wished, but when you get old you'll have to stretch out your hands while someone else dresses you and takes you where you don't want to go." He said this to hint at the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. And then he commanded, "Follow me."



Where is God?

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Where is God?

Monday, February 29

It was beautiful, the morning after the snowfall. I was enjoying a steaming cup of coffee and looking out at the blanketed hill and bluffs behind our house when our ancient dog, Boka wandered into view. Nearly deaf, she travels the property regularly for hours at a time, doing whatever it is that dogs do. The morning was so bright and clear; the snow so soft and pristine, that I decided I would follow Boka's trail to see if I could find out what it is that dogs do on a snow laden day.

By the time I had set my coffee cup down and stepped outside, the dog had disappeared into the woods but her trail in the snow was easy to follow. She began by descending straight down the slope. (Gravity, I supposed.) But then she took a sharp turn to the north through the raspberry thicket. (Oh, perhaps she is going to visit the neighbors.) The trail stopped with an impression of her face in the snow, then cut southeast under a coil of grapevine. After passing through a briar patch and another raspberry tangle, she met up with a deer trial, crossed the meadow, zigged east again, turned back and headed west, backtracked, hooked up with a fox path... and by this time I was totally confused and had no idea where she had gone.

I concluded that she had no destination in mind when set out on her journey; she was only following her nose. Her course was set by caprice and whatever spoor the wind carried.

Every day, when we roll out of bed, we face a pristine landscape. One way or another we are going to break a trail through a new day. It is easy to assume that the path before us is set and controlled by work, school and family obligations, but those things are simply formations, a meadow or a brier patch which we will encounter as we make our way through the day. But what is it that leads us on our journey, moment by moment? Put another way, as we step out each day, what is the destination we desire to achieve after we have weathered the ups and downs of that day?

Boka had no destination in mind; she simply followed her nose. I believe more is required of us. What sets the course for our lives? What destination do we truly wish to achieve at the end of each day? Who or what do we follow as we break trail to tomorrow? It's worth thinking about, isn't it?

John 14:6a

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John 14:6a

Tuesday, March 1

Faith

Is being sure of what we hope for
And certain of what we do not see.
-Hebrews 11:1

Peace. It does not mean to be in a place where there is no noise, trouble or hard work. It means to be in the midst of those things and still be calm in your heart

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Ann Roering

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Wednesday, March 2

Let Your God Love You
-Edwina Gateley

Be silent.
Be still.
Alone.
Empty
Before your God.
Say nothing.
Ask nothing.
Be silent.
Be still.
Let your God look upon you.
That is all.
God knows.
God understands.
God loves you
With an enormous love,
And only wants
To look upon you
With that love.
Quiet.
Still.
Be.

Let your God—
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Let your God look upon you.
That is all.
God knows.
God understands.
God loves you
With an enormous love,
And only wants
To look upon you
With that love.
Quiet.
Still.
Be.

Let your God—
Love you.

"I'm Not Alone"

Thursday, March 3

It was one of the most frustrating and hurtful days of my life. I was so full of anger I felt lost. I knew I couldn't sit still and just wait it out. I needed to move! I loaded my antique, unconditioned, three-speed bike into my old, wood-sided station wagon and headed for the beginning of the Douglas Bike Trail. As soon as I started peddling on my round-trip trek between Rochester and Pine Island, 26-miles, I thought "What am I doing? I haven't ridden bike in too many years." But I knew this is what I needed to do to work off these unfamiliar feelings that screamed to be released. I rode one, two, three miles, tiring quickly. I looked above and saw dark, threatening clouds starting to cover the sky. I thought, "No wonder no one else was on the trail this hot August afternoon. Do you realize you're likely going to get caught in a storm? Do you realize if one of these old tires goes flat, you're walking back to the car?" But I knew I had to keep going to wear off this negative energy that wasn't beginning to recede.

The clouds were getting heavier and there was a cooling in the air. "I think you're being foolish..." I heard myself say. I continued to peddle and to tire. I decided to sing.....no one was there to hear me. It might help keep me going and pass the time. I knew I had to complete this ride. Something had to give me relief.

A few more miles down the trail I was running out of songs. Something seemed to look different not far down the trail. As I neared, the most beautiful section of the path opened up to me. The enormous trees spread their branches, arching over the trail creating a beautiful, peaceful canopy of leaves with a few dim rays of sunlight breaking through. They seemed to hug me and sooth my raw nerves. A gentle breeze seemed to whisper my name. I started to sing the Lord's Prayer. As I sang, I started to cry, then cry some more with tears washing over my cheeks. It felt so cleansing. It was then I realized there really was a Jesus. Jesus was riding a bike right next to mine. No, He wasn't. Jesus and I were riding a tandem. I envisioned Him, could almost feel Him, right behind me, smiling. It was in that moment I realized, as I traveled through this most difficult and life changing time of my life, it was time for me to put Jesus in the front seat of OUR tandem.

As the minutes passed and I started absorbing this new understanding, this new acceptance of my Lord, no longer doubting but believing as a child, I felt a ton of weight lift from my being, never to return. Life wouldn't suddenly be without its troubles and challenges. But I knew from the bottom of my being, I would never again have to face them alone. I felt a sense of peace. I felt loved and cherished. I felt when I got back to my car I'd need to head to Silver Lake and walk two laps ~ and I did, but not alone.

~The Beginning~

Terry Anderson

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~The Beginning~

Terry Anderson

If

Rudyard Kipling

If you can keep your head when all about you
 Are losing theirs and blaming it on you;
 If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
 But make allowance for their doubting too:
 If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
 Or, being lied about, don't deal in lies,
 Or being hated don't give way to hating,
 And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise;

If you can dream---and not make dreams your master;
 If you can think---and not make thoughts your aim,
 If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
 And treat those two impostors just the same:
 If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken
 Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
 Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,
 And stoop and build'em up with worn-out tools;

If you can make one heap of all your winnings
 And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,
 And lose, and start again at your beginnings,
 And never breathe a word about your loss:
 If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
 To serve your turn long after they are gone,
 And so hold on when there is nothing in you
 Except the Will which says to them: "Hold on!"

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
 Or walk with Kings---nor lose the common touch,
 If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,
 If all men count with you, but none too much:
 If you can fill the unforgiving minute
 With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
 Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
 And---which is more---you'll be a Man, my son!

If

Rudyard Kipling

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 Are losing theirs and blaming it on you;
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Life is not easy, and it's probably never going to be. There will be misfortune. There will be a time when I am already down and then someone kicks me, when I risk it all and lose big time, when I am supposed to hold on but have no energy left. The important thing, though, is finding strength in the struggle. The will to survive and thrive. Staying grounded and standing back up and even... forgiving. The earth is yours. The earth is mine. And at the end of it all, we will look back together, and it will have been an adventure.

Wishing peace, grounded-ness and adventure to all,

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Saturday March 5



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courage reminds me of kids and crayons:
the continuous lines,
the ambiguous reasons,
the small hands making marks on big walls.

-Painting and Poem, Taylor Thomas.

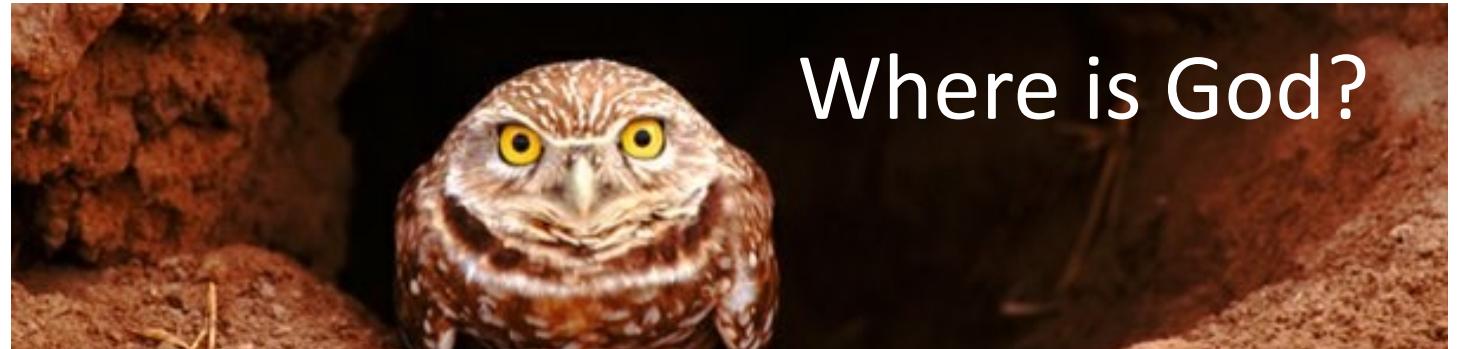
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Sunday, March 6

Luke 15:11-32

Then he said, "There was once a man who had two sons. The younger said to his father, 'Father, I want right now what's coming to me. So the father divided the property between them. It wasn't long before the younger son packed his bags and left for a distant country. There, undisciplined and dissipated, he wasted everything he had. After he had gone through all his money, there was a bad famine all through that country and he began to hurt. He signed on with a citizen there who assigned him to his fields to slop the pigs. He was so hungry he would have eaten the corncobs in the pig slop, but no one would give him any. "That brought him to his senses. He said, 'All those farmhands working for my father sit down to three meals a day, and here I am starving to death. I'm going back to my father. I'll say to him, Father, I've sinned against God, I've sinned before you; I don't deserve to be called your son. Take me on as a hired hand.' He got right up and went home to his father. "When he was still a long way off, his father saw him. His heart pounding, he ran out, embraced him, and kissed him. The son started his speech: 'Father, I've sinned against God, I've sinned before you; I don't deserve to be called your son ever again. "But the father wasn't listening. He was calling to the servants, 'Quick. Bring a clean set of clothes and dress him. Put the family ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Then get a grain-fed heifer and roast it. We're going to feast! We're going to have a wonderful time! My son is here—given up for dead and now alive! Given up for lost and now found!' And they began to have a wonderful time. "All this time his older son was out in the field. When the day's work was done he came in. As he approached the house, he heard the music and dancing. Calling over one of the houseboys, he asked what was going on. He told him, 'Your brother came home. Your father has ordered a feast—barbecued beef!—because he has him home safe and sound.'²⁸⁻³⁰ "The older brother stalked off in an angry sulk and refused to join in. His father came out and tried to talk to him, but he wouldn't listen. The son said, 'Look how many years I've stayed here serving you, never giving you one moment of grief, but have you ever thrown a party for me and my friends? Then this son of yours who has thrown away your money on whores shows up and you go all out with a feast! "His father said, 'Son, you don't understand. You're with me all the time, and everything that is mine is yours—but this is a wonderful time, and we had to celebrate. This brother of yours was dead, and he's alive! He was lost, and he's found!'"



Where is God?

Sunday, March 6

Luke 15:11-32

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Where is God?

Monday, March 7

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Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace!
That where there is hatred, I may bring love.
That where there is wrong, I may bring the spirit of forgiveness.
That where there is discord, I may bring harmony.
That where there is error, I may bring truth.
That where there is doubt, I may bring faith.
That where there is despair, I may bring hope.
That where there are shadows, I may bring light.
That where there is sadness, I may bring joy.
Lord, grant that I may seek rather to comfort, than to be comforted.
To understand, than to be understood.
To love, than to be loved.
For it is by self-forgetting that one finds.
It is by forgiving that one is forgiven.
It is by dying that one awakens to Eternal Life.
—Saint Francis of Assisi—

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To *Pray*
is to let go
and let God take over.
-Philippians 4:6-7

Submitted by
Nancy Currier

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In many cultures there is an ancient custom of giving a tenth of each year's income to some holy use. For Christians, to observe the forty days of Lent is do the same thing with roughly a tenth of each year's days. After being baptized by John in the river Jordan, Jesus went off alone into the wilderness where he spent forty days asking himself the question what it meant to be Jesus. During Lent, Christians are supposed to ask one way or another what it means to be themselves.

If you had to bet everything you have on whether there is a God or whether there isn't, which side would get your money and why?

When you look at your face in the mirror, what do you see in it that you most like and what do you see in it that you most deplore?

If you had only one last message to leave to the handful of people who are most important to you, what would it be in twenty-five words or less?

Of all the things you have done in your life, which is the one you would most like to undo? Which is the one that makes you happiest to remember?

Is there any person in the world, or any cause, that, if circumstances called for it, you would be willing to die for? If this were the last day of your life, what would you do with it?

To hear yourself try to answer questions like these is to begin to hear something not only of who you are but of both what you are becoming and what you are failing to become. It can be a pretty depressing business all in all, but if sack-cloth and ashes are at the start of it, something like Easter may be at the end.

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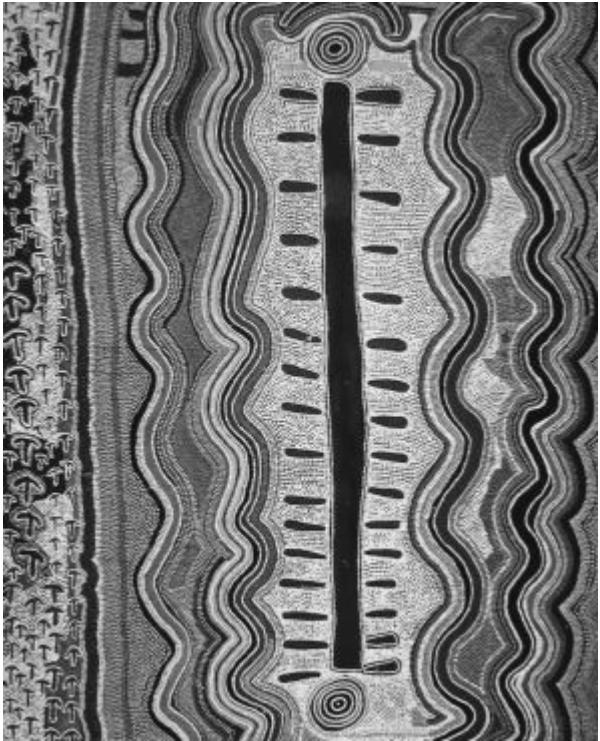
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Wednesday, March 9



Darby Ross Tjampitjinpa, Ngapa Manu Yankirri
Jukurrpa (Water and Emu Dreaming), 1989

Rendition of Psalm 23

My big fella boss up in the sky is like the father emu.
He will always look after me and take me to green grass,
And lead me to where the water holes are full and fresh all the time.

He leads me away from the thick scrub
and helps me keep safe from the hunters, dingoes and eagles.
At night time when I'm very lonely and sad,
I will not be afraid, for my Father covers me with His feathers like a father emu.
His spear and shield will always protect me.

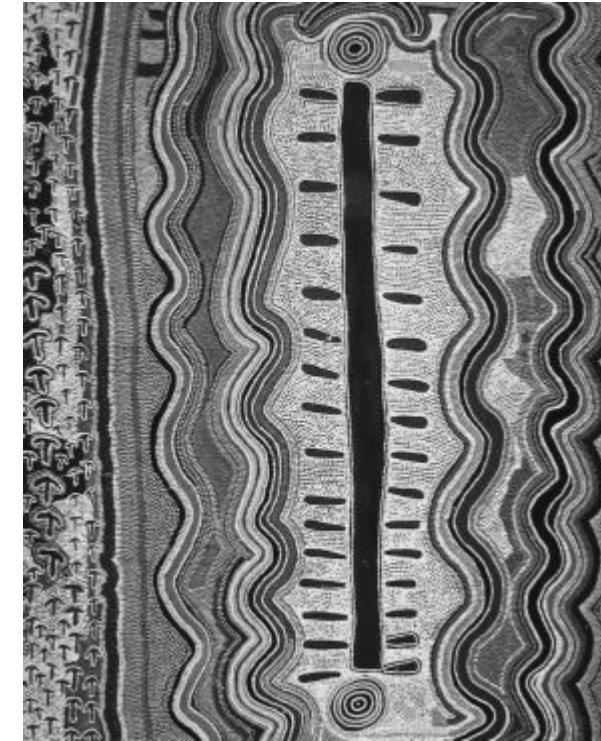
My big fella boss always gives me a good feed in the middle of my enemies.
In hot times he makes me sit down in a cool shade and rest.

He gives me plenty of love and care all of my life through.
Then I will live with my big fella boss like a father emu,
that cares for his chickens in good country full of peace and safety,

Forevermore and evermore.

Rev Ron Williams

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Thursday, March 10

At Easter and Lenten time the hymn that becomes my focus and support in my meditations is the Hymn of Promise. Both my parents died during Holy Week. (My dad died on Maundy Thursday with his funeral the Saturday before Easter AND my mother died on Good Friday 20 years later)

Easter time always brings back my feelings of their loss and the memory of the wonderful Christian role models they were. I was raised surrounded by the community of Methodists in Zumbro Falls. They all provided amazing Christian guidance. The hymn, Hymn of Promise, speaks to me of the hope and the promise for everything Jesus will provide. Think of the power and consolation in these words:

Hymn of Promise

In the bulb there is a flower; in the seed, an apple tree;
In cocoons, a hidden promise: butterflies will soon be free!
In the cold and snow of winter there's a spring that waits to be,
Unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.

There's a song in every silence, seeking word and melody;
There's a dawn in every darkness, bringing hope to you and me.
From the past will come the future; what it holds, a mystery,
Unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.

In our end is our beginning; in our time, infinity;
In our doubt there is believing; in our life, eternity,
In our death, a resurrection; at the last, a victory,
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Marjie Blaisdell

Marjie Blaisdell

Friday, March 11

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Sometimes we get a stain on our hearts. An injury, an insult. A sadness, an anger. A frustration, a resentment. We could wash it away right then and there, with some kindness.

But we wait.

We postpone the washing, the cleansing, the forgiving. We move on to some other task, a new guest, a new emotion. The “stain” of that negative emotion sets in our hearts.

If something as simple as coffee can set in a shirt, how much more can anger and resentment set in our luminous hearts? Our hearts are the seat of the spirit, meant to hold God and naught but God.

Instead we stain our heart. We stain the hearts of others. We fail to remove the stain. We wait too long to remove the stain.

My Beloved...
Let's make a vow
 you and I.
If ever a stain of resentment
 Should set in
 either of our hearts
 We'll wash it
 Right away
 With kindness.

We will rush to forgiveness
 To kindness
 to the heartwashing.

Let's live
You and I

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Let's live
You and I

As Rumi says:

*"We've got nothing to do,
except for love.*

*Let's make a vow
you and I:*

*Let's plant no seeds
in this pure soil
except for love
and more love."*

My Beloved, let us plant seeds of love you and I
Let us wash every heart stain
with love glances
with kindness
Till our heart shines again
You and I.



Omid Safi

As Rumi says:

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Omid Safi

Saturday, March 12

**DO TO
OTHERS
AS YOU
WOULD
HAVE
THEM DO
TO YOU.**

LUKE 6:31

Saturday, March 12

**DO TO
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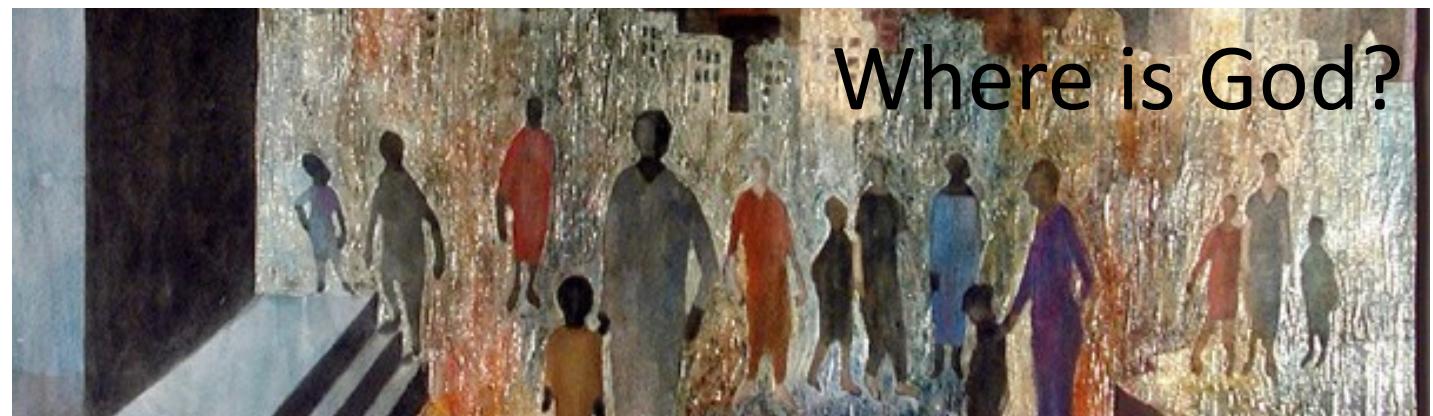
LUKE 6:31

Sunday, March 13

Luke 10:25-37

Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he said, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" He said to him, "What is written in the law? What do you read there?" He answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." And he said to him, "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live."

But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.' Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" He said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."



Sunday, March 13

Luke 10:25-37

Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he said, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" He said to him, "What is written in the law? What do you read there?" He answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." And he said to him, "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live."

But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.' Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" He said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."



Monday, March 14

John 15:4 Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me.

Some of you know that we have a yellow Labrador retriever. Her name is Penny. She will be ten years old in April. Most every morning we go for a walk. Today was no exception. The thermometer said it was 10 degrees. I put on her coat to keep her warm. Then I put on the gentle leader head collar. It goes around her head and attaches to the six-foot leash which I hold. Off we went for our walk.

At the corner she tried to turn us around. Apparently she wanted to nap instead of get some exercise. The head collar enabled me to steer us both forward. We continued on to the stop sign about four blocks from our house. Along the way, Penny stopped to sniff. However, we were soon on our way again as the gentle leader did its work.

This type of head collar works by exerting some gentle pressure at the back of the head which turns the dog's head to face you. It is designed to mimic the action of an adult dog picking up a pup at the back of the head. Turning the dog's head to face you enables you to get their attention.

As I walk along with Penny in the out of doors I engage in a type of walking meditation. It never fails to clear my head and calm my busy mind.

Today I knew it was time for me to write this devotional. As we walked these thoughts came to me.

Lent reminds us of our need to deepen our connection with the Holy One. It is a time to devote ourselves to prayer, scripture and other spiritual disciplines. How we deepen that connection is up to us.

In addition, I was reminded this morning that I am often like my dog. I am connected to God (the head collar and leash image) through grace. I too might prefer to nap than to walk in the cold. I too get distracted in my walk with God. Like my dog, I may prefer to run free for a time. When I run free, a friend may need to help bring me home to God. Sometimes I am connected to God, but want to call the shots. God leads me forward anyway.

My prayer for this season of Lent that we would all grow in our connection with Jesus the Christ. May we remember that God walks with us to guide us and to help us be all we were created to be.

Prayer: Dear God, thank you for abiding with us. Thank you for walking beside us today and every day. Help us to be the glorious women, men and children you created us to be. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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Tuesday, March 15

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What We Need Is Here -

Geese appear high over us,
pass, and the sky closes. Abandon,
as in love or sleep, holds
them to their way, clear
in the ancient faith: what we need
is here. And we pray, not
for new earth or heaven, but to be
quiet in heart, and in eye,
clear. What we need is here.

Wendell Berry



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Wednesday, March 16

The eternal God is your refuge and underneath are the everlasting arms.

Deuteronomy 33:27

Together with my son, Mark, his wife, Stephanie, Christopher, four and Emily, two, we followed the descending path that led to one of the many caves in the area. Little Emily approached the last two slippery steps. I saw her Dad literally encircle her with his arms. She was completely unaware of it for he never touched her. She slipped, slid a bit, and finally, all by herself, reached safety. She had taken the treacherous steps alone. She had needed no help, yet I will always remember the watchful eyes and ever-ready arms of her Father, alert to support, to steady, to save her should she fall. His first concern was that she do it herself, if she could, but he was there to help.

How like the many arms that throughout our lives give strength and support, yet allow us to be ourselves, to learn and grow! God's arms continually surround us though we may not always be aware of God's presence. The encircling, ever-watchful care is as real in my life as Mark's arms were to little Emily. Underneath are the everlasting arms.

Prayer

Help me, Lord, to reach out beyond my immediate ability and strength, secure in the faith that, when I work with You, Your arms encircle me.



Betty Leggett Lieder

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Thursday, March 17

Lent is a walk of preparation. A journey toward death, and resurrection. We witness and wonder each year the triumphant march of Jesus into Jerusalem, we die with Jesus on the cross, we rise again on Easter Sunday, full of the promise of salvation, and eternal love.

It's a good time for reflection. A good time to purge those things that keep you from where you want to be on your path. Is the past weighing you down? Is the clutter and messy muddiness of life in the way of your gleaming? Are you ready, each moment for what is next? Do you believe it will come? When you start the digging, it can feel overwhelming. That happens to me in my own closet.

There is this wonderful book called *The Life Changing Magic of Cleaning Up* and in it, the suggestion is to keep only those things that speak to your heart. Then take the plunge and discard all the rest. By doing this, you can reset your life and embark on a new lifestyle. I believe it is true in our hearts as well. We carry so much. We burden ourselves with unnecessary, and we wait.

For me, the walk of Lent reminds me not only to be thankful, but to be light. Not just for the ending, but for this process that is life. Remind yourself of joy. Work each moment to weed out those things that stand in the way and be ready for your springtime.

It's no surprise that Lent comes at the end of this winter season, the quiet whispers of a frozen earth asking "What is next?"

What is next? Are you ready?

May you find lightness of being, love of God, and joy in resurrection.

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Parker Palmer: WINTER

The little deaths of autumn are mild precursors to the rigor mortis of winter. The southern humorist Roy Blount has opined that in the Upper Midwest, where I live, what we get in winter is not weather but divine retribution. He believes that someone here once did something very, very bad, and we are still paying the price for his or her transgression! Winter here is a demanding season – and not everyone appreciates the discipline. It is a season when death's victory can seem supreme: few creatures stir, plants do not visibly grow, and nature feels like our enemy. And yet the rigors of winter, like the diminishments of autumn, are accompanied by amazing gifts. One gift is beauty, different from that of autumn but perhaps more beautiful still. I am not sure that any sight or sound on earth is as exquisite as the hushed descent of a sky full of snow. Another gift is the reminder that times of dormancy and deep rest are essential to all living things. Despite all appearances, of course, nature is not dead in winter – it has gone underground to renew itself and prepare for spring. Winter is a time when we are admonished, and even inclined, to do the same for ourselves.

But, for me, winter has an even greater gift to give. It comes when the sky is clear, the sun brilliant, the trees bare, and the first snow yet to come. It is the gift of utter clarity. In winter, one can walk into woods that had been opaque with summer growth only a few months earlier and see the trees clearly, singly and together, and see the ground that they are rooted in. A few months ago, my father died. He was more than a good man, and these months have been a long, hard winter for me. But in the midst of the ice and loss, I have found a certain clarity that I lacked when he was alive. I see now what was concealed when the greenness of his love surrounded me – how I counted on him to help me cushion life's harsher blows. He cannot do that for me now, and at first I thought, "I must do it for myself." But as time has gone on, I have seen something deeper still: it never was my father absorbing those blows but a larger and deeper grace that he taught me to rely on. When my father was alive, I confused the teaching with the teacher. Now my teacher is gone, but the grace is still there, and my clarity about that fact has allowed his teaching to take deeper root in me. Winter clears the landscape, however brutally, giving us a chance to see ourselves and each other more clearly, to see the very ground of our being.

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In the Upper Midwest, newcomers often receive a classic piece of wintertime advice: “The winters will drive you crazy until you learn to get out into them.” Here, people spend good money on warm clothing so they can get outdoors and avoid the “cabin fever” that comes from huddling fearfully by the fire during the long frozen months. If you live here long, you learn that a daily walk into the winter world will fortify the spirit by taking you boldly to the very heart of the season you fear. Our inward winters take many forms – failure, betrayal, depression, death. But every one of them, in my experience, yields to the same advice: “The winters will drive you crazy until you learn to get out into them.” Until we enter boldly into the fears we most want to avoid, those fears will dominate our lives. But when we walk directly into them – protected from frostbite by the warm garb of friendship or inner discipline or spiritual guidance – we can learn what they have to teach us. Then, we discover once again that the cycle of the seasons is trustworthy and life-giving, even in the most dismaying season of all.



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Saturday, March 19

God, give me grace to accept with serenity
The things that cannot be changed,
Courage to change the things
Which should be changed
And the wisdom to distinguish
The one from the other
Living one day at a time
Enjoying one moment at a time
Accepting hardship as a pathway to peace
Taking, as Jesus did
This sinful world as it is
Not as I would have it
Trusting that you will make all things right,
If I surrender to Your will
So that I may be reasonably happy in this life
And supremely happy with You
Forever in the next
Amen

Reinhold Niebuhr

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Palm Sunday

Luke 19:28-40

After saying these things, Jesus headed straight up to Jerusalem. When he got near Bethphage and Bethany at the mountain called Olives, he sent off two of the disciples with instructions: "Go to the village across from you. As soon as you enter, you'll find a colt tethered, one that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it. If anyone says anything, asks, 'What are you doing?' say, 'His Master needs him.'"

The two left and found it just as he said. As they were untying the colt, its owners said, "What are you doing untying the colt?"

They said, "His Master needs him."

They brought the colt to Jesus. Then, throwing their coats on its back, they helped Jesus get on. As he rode, the people gave him a grand welcome, throwing their coats on the street.

Right at the crest, where Mount Olives begins its descent, the whole crowd of disciples burst into enthusiastic praise over all the mighty works they had witnessed

Blessed is he who comes,
the king in God's name!
All's well in heaven!

Some Pharisees from the crowd told him, "Teacher, get your disciples under control!"

But he said, "If they kept quiet, the stones would do it for them, shouting praise."



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Resurrection

Long, long, long ago;
 Way before this winter's snow
 First fell upon these weathered fields;
 I used to sit and watch and feel
 And dream of how the spring would be,
 When through the winter's stormy sea
 She'd raise her green and growing head,
 Her warmth would resurrect the dead.

Long before this winter's snow
 I dreamt of this day's sunny glow
 And thought somehow my pain would pass
 With winter's pain, and peace like grass
 Would simply grow. (But) The pain's not gone.
 It's still as cold and hard and long
 As lonely pain has ever been,
 It cuts so deep and fear within.

Long before this winter's snow
 I ran from pain, looked high and low
 For some fast way to get around
 Its hurt and cold. I'd have found,
 If I had looked at what was there,
 That things don't follow fast or fair.
 That life goes on, and times do change,
 And grass does grow despite life's pains.

Long before this winter's snow
 I thought that this day's sunny glow,
 The smiling children and growing things
 And flowers bright were brought by spring.
 Now, I know the sun does shine,
 That children smile, and from the dark, cold, grime
 A flower comes. It groans, yet sings,
 And through its pain, its peace begins

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Tuesday, March 22

I've lately found myself running wildly around, flailing my arms toward anyone who might see, in the attempt to seek out love. The pure and eternal love that will warm me through the loneliness that is the metropolitan winter. I find myself disappointed much of the time, my greatest discovery being that for every person I meet, there are myriad more seeking the same (and with nary a recommendation on where to actually find it). Together, we become entirely enveloped in this journey to whisper and coax love out of the rest of the world.

In this process, we forget to look in the one place we can be certain it exists: within our own spirits. We have been provided a guaranteed, everlasting love to warm our toes through the blizzard, but forget to nurture and care for the place it resides.

The love is already here.

Our task, then, is to look inside of ourselves and discover what it is that inhibits the flames of love from bursting out of us. And once we do, not only will we benefit from the love within us, but all of those around us will feel it as well.

This season of Lent, may we discover ourselves to be fabulous beings, hearts shining like a beacon, powered by the great eternal love.

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Madeline Van Ert

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Good Friday



Good Friday



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Am I a stone, and not a sheep,
That I can stand, O Christ, beneath Thy cross,
To number drop by drop Thy blood's slow loss,
And yet not weep?

Not so those women loved
Who with exceeding grief lamented Thee;
Not so fallen Peter weeping bitterly;
Not so the thief was moved;

Not so the Sun and Moon
Which hid their faces in a starless sky,
A horror of great darkness at broad noon –
I, only I.

Yet give not o'er,
But seek Thy sheep, true Shepherd of the flock;
Greater than Moses, turn and look once more
And smite a rock.

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Marked by Ashes

Ruler of the Night, Guarantor of the day . . .

This day — a gift from you.

This day — like none other you have ever given, or we have ever received.

This Wednesday dazzles us with gift and newness and possibility.

This Wednesday burdens us with the tasks of the day, for we are already halfway home
 halfway back to committees and memos,
 halfway back to calls and appointments,
 halfway on to next Sunday,
 halfway back, half frazzled, half expectant,
 half turned toward you, half rather not.

This Wednesday is a long way from Ash Wednesday,

but all our Wednesdays are marked by ashes —

we begin this day with that taste of ash in our mouth:

of failed hope and broken promises,

of forgotten children and frightened women,

we ourselves are ashes to ashes, dust to dust;

we can taste our mortality as we roll the ash around on our tongues.

We are able to ponder our ashness with
 some confidence, only because our every Wednesday of ashes
 anticipates your Easter victory over that dry, flaky taste of death.

On this Wednesday, we submit our ashen way to you —
 you Easter parade of newness.

Before the sun sets, take our Wednesday and Easter us,
 Easter us to joy and energy and courage and freedom;
 Easter us that we may be fearless for your truth.

Come here and Easter our Wednesday with
 mercy and justice and peace and generosity.

We pray as we wait for the Risen One who comes soon.

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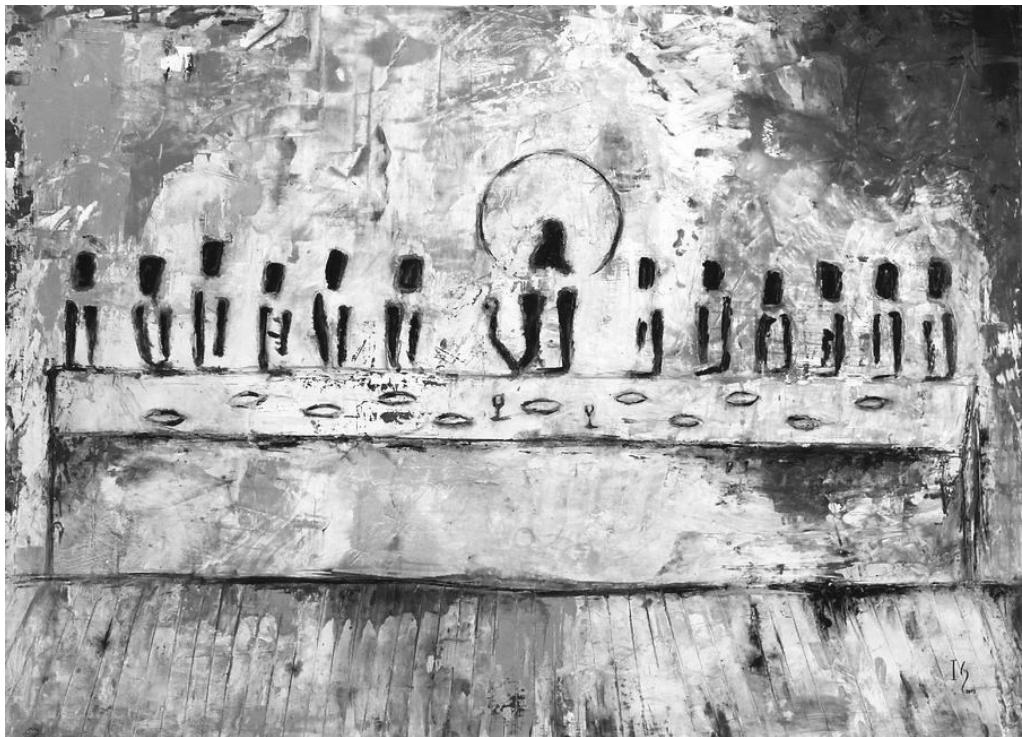
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We pray as we wait for the Risen One who comes soon.

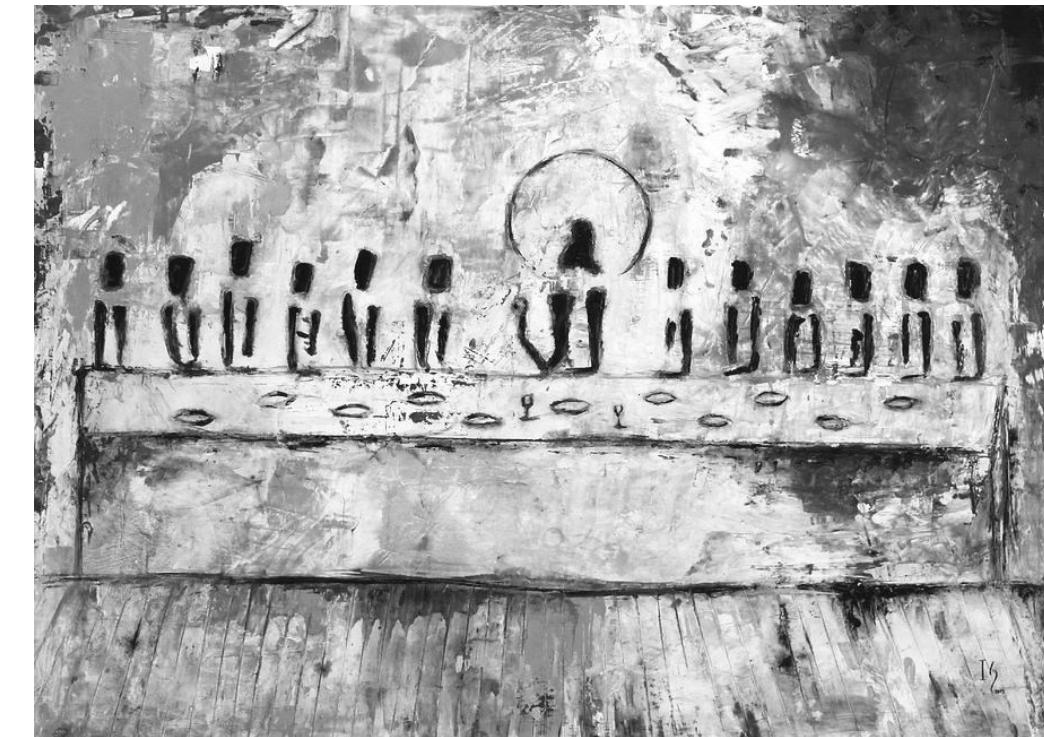


The Bread I Break

This bread I break was once the oat,
This wine upon a foreign tree
Plunged in its fruit;
Man in the day or wind at night
Laid the crops low, broke the grape's joy.

Once in this wine the summer blood
Knocked in the flesh that decked the vine,
Once in this bread
The oat was merry in the wind;
Man broke the sun, pulled the wind down.

This flesh you break, this blood you let
Make desolation in the vein,
Were oat and grape
Born of the sensual root and sap;
My wine you drink, my bread you snap.



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Holy Saturday

Christ Has No Body

Christ has no body but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes with which he looks
 Compassion on this world,
Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good,
Yours are the hands, with which he blesses all the world.
 Yours are the hands, yours are the feet,
 Yours are the eyes, you are his body.
 Christ has no body now but yours,
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 compassion on this world.
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John 20:1-18

Early in the morning on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone was moved away from the entrance. She ran at once to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, breathlessly panting, "They took the Master from the tomb. We don't know where they've put him."

Peter and the other disciple left immediately for the tomb. They ran, neck and neck. The other disciple got to the tomb first, outrunning Peter. Stooping to look in, he saw the pieces of linen cloth lying there, but he didn't go in. Simon Peter arrived after him, entered the tomb, observed the linen cloths lying there, and the kerchief used to cover his head not lying with the linen cloths but separate, neatly folded by itself. Then the other disciple, the one who had gotten there first, went into the tomb, took one look at the evidence, and believed. No one yet knew from the Scripture that he had to rise from the dead. The disciples then went back home.

But Mary stood outside the tomb weeping. As she wept, she knelt to look into the tomb and saw two angels sitting there, dressed in white, one at the head, the other at the foot of where Jesus' body had been laid. They said to her, "Woman, why do you weep?"

"They took my Master," she said, "and I don't know where they put him." After she said this, she turned away and saw Jesus standing there. But she didn't recognize him.

Jesus spoke to her, "Woman, why do you weep? Who are you looking for?"

She, thinking that he was the gardener, said, "Mister, if you took him, tell me where you put him so I can care for him."

Jesus said, "Mary."

Turning to face him, she said in Hebrew, "*Rabboni!*" meaning "Teacher!"

Jesus said, "Don't cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go to my brothers and tell them, 'I ascend to my Father and your Father, my God and your God.'"

Mary Magdalene went, telling the news to the disciples: "I saw the Master!" And she told them everything he said to her.

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Easter Sunday



Easter Sunday



HE is RISEN

celebrate the savior!

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life lent love

LET'S TALK ABOUT IT!

- 2/17 Pastor Elizabeth talks about the meaning of Lent
- 2/24 Andrew Galuska talks about the power of music
- 3/02 Lael Van Ert talks about love
- 3/09 Pastor Katy talks about silence/fasting
- 3/16 Pastor Nancy talks about happiness

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