



# Turning the World Upside Down

## Lenten Devotional Booklet

CHURCH OF THE  
**FOOTHILLS**  
[churchofthefoothills.org](http://churchofthefoothills.org)

Lenten Book 2025 Created by Church of the Foothills, Santa Ana, CA (ALL Ages of Members/Friends) **"Turning the World Upside Down"**

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# Adjust Turning the World Upside Down

Welcome to Church of the Foothill's Lenten Devotional book for 2025.

Our theme this year comes from the early Christian community from Acts 17 when followers of Jesus were dragged before Roman authorities and criticized for "turning the world upside down".

We also draw from the amazing parables that Jesus taught throughout Galilee that continue to perplex, trouble, delight, and inspire people of faith through a subversive imagination.

This theme comes at a moment when our world is deeply unsettled, beset by war and division, divided by deep partisanship, facing enormous problems like climate change and resurgent religious nationalism. While we share many concerns about those realities, as individuals part of one body of faith in one part of God's creation, we can feel overwhelmed and inadequate. How do we live in such a time? How do we embrace God's inclusivity and love as an alternative to fear and hatred? How can we choose justice?

Perhaps the reminder is that Jesus and his disciples began their movement for wholeness and justice in a similar fragmented and chaotic time, when violence and oppression seemed the final word. If the early Christian movement with their limited voices and influence could offer an alternative vision or unsettle the status quo, perhaps we can too. Perhaps we can offer a different word by listening to each other, sharing our own stories, praying together, and looking for the ways God's vision is breaking in even now. Remember that the movement was a community, not just one or two people facing down an empire, but groups of people holding each other with prayer and courage in hard times.

During this Lent season, 40 days of prayer and preparation for Easter, use these reflections, words, prayers, and artwork as gifts to center you. You can take them one day at a time. You can open them randomly. You can return to the ones that connect with you or trouble you, writing notes in the margins. Receive this as a gift of community to give us encouragement and strength in troubled times. Special thanks to Louella Komuves, Kathy Hilberg, Susan Richardson, and Cristina Flores for their hard work putting this resource together.

May God bless you on this journey!

— Rev. Nathan

## **MARCH 5<sup>TH</sup>**

I work as a career counselor at Cal State Long Beach, where I support students in picking their major, exploring career options, and navigating other aspects of career planning. I sit with students as they tell me that they're rethinking the career path they've been certain of their whole life. I listen as students share about being denied from the major, they've been counting on and not knowing where to go next. In my office, the phrase "I feel lost" is repeated time and time again. They present the idea as though being lost is an illness to be cured of or a problem in immediate need of fixing. And my job is to help them understand that being lost is simply part of the process. It's what forces us to stop and sit with ourselves for a while...to reflect on who we are and what we really want.

I think Lent provides the same opportunity to be still and look inward. Though many of us might prefer a more simplistic version of Lent where we give up chocolate or soda for 40 days and carry on with our busy lives, darkness and discomfort are what ultimately lead to growth. Lent presents a designated time for quiet self-reflection, to sit in the uncertainty and uneasiness that come from questioning ourselves and our place in the world. May we all take advantage of this opportunity to sit in the darkness and reconnect with ourselves.

Michelle Linton

## **MARCH 6<sup>TH</sup>**

### **How Do You Know When Easter Will Be?**

When I was growing up in West Texas, my dad would ask me, "How do you know when Easter will be?" I had no idea. I listened for when we would have a four-day school holiday, or I watched the newspaper for advertisements of Spring dresses, hats, or shoes. Or I looked at my grandmother's calendar. I figured somebody would tell me, which my dad always did, "It's the first Sunday after the first full moon after the 21st of March." Hummm....

When I started school, I noticed some of my schoolmates coming to school with black smudges on their foreheads, ashes for the beginning of Lent. Lent? I never heard of it.

In my 20's I began hearing about Shrove Tuesday, Maundy Thursday, and Good Friday. That's when I began to understand the rhythm of the church year -- the preparation for Easter. However, I mainly only heard of people "giving up" candy, swearing, or drinking! I never understood why anyone would "give up" something just to start again after Easter.

Then in my 30's I began thinking seriously about how I prepared myself for Easter. That's when I began adding activities to the 40 days before Easter that I felt made a difference to ME.

At first, I wrote notes of appreciation to persons who had blessed me during the past year or over my life. I wrote teachers, neighbors, friends, and family members. I found myself experiencing once again how very grateful I was for them. To my surprise, many of them wrote me back, thanking me for my notes and recalling times we shared together, too. What a gift of memories!

One year I decided to call persons on the phone to hear their voices and to reconnect across the miles and years. What a joy that was! We laughed, shared, or just visited. Each call ended with our committing to staying in touch and talking again soon -- or coming to see each other in person!

Now that I am 81, I look forward to Lent and continue to call and write persons I value and am grateful for. Plus, I read additional devotional materials that stretch me and help me be more grateful, generous, kind, and compassionate. Lent is now an important "season" of the church to me! It grounds me in my faith.

The world is chaotic, but Lent shapes my world as I strive to live out my commitment to God.

By Donna Martin

## **MARCH 7<sup>TH</sup>**

One of my favorite movie scenes is from *The Matrix*. In this moment, our hero, Neo, receives an offer from the mysterious Morpheus:

“This is your last chance. After this, there is no turning back. You take the blue pill—the story ends, you wake up in your bed and believe whatever you want to believe. You take the red pill—you stay in Wonderland... Remember: all I’m offering is the truth. Nothing more.”

During Lent, we face a similar choice. Do we take the blue pill and continue living in the comfortable illusion we create for ourselves—where we are at the center and define our own version of “truth”? Or do we take the red pill, allowing God to open our eyes to a truth only an ironic God, who reigns over an upside-down Creation, can offer? A truth where:

- The weak are strong.
- The rich are poor.
- And—wonder of all wonders—when we courageously confront our own darkness, we emerge more loving and compassionate toward others.
- 

Somehow, the light of Christ reveals truth. Only in an upside-down world can faith in a Risen Lord illuminate the darkness. Only through the mystery of Lent can we begin to grasp the irony of God—a God so profoundly paradoxical that the world we perceive as right-side up is, in fact, upside down. Too often, we are blind to the truth of God. Lent is our invitation to see clearly. Which path will we choose?

Deacon Mike Mitchell  
Holy Angels Church

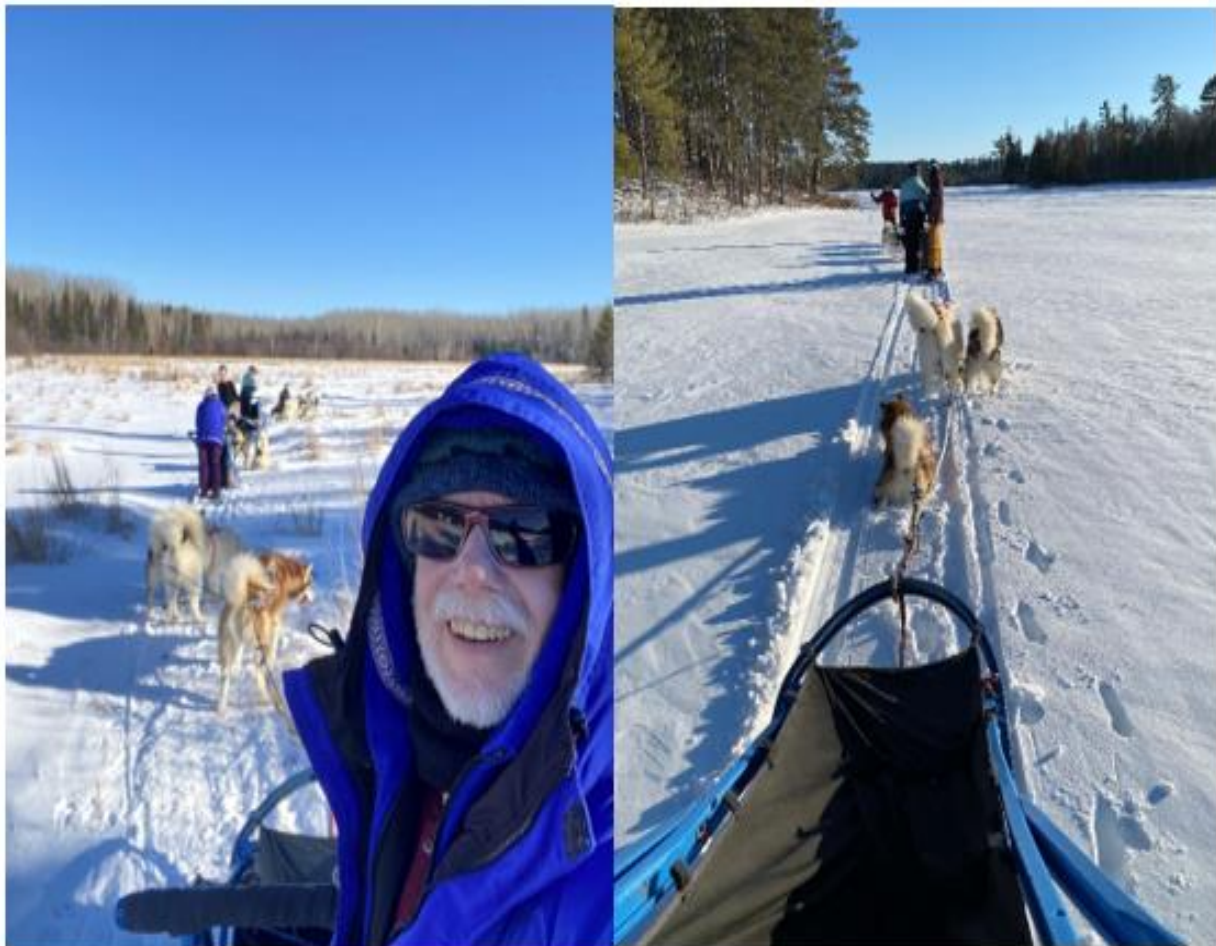


## **MARCH 8<sup>TH</sup>**

### **Turning the World Upside Down**

My memories of attending church to celebrate Easter are limited to hunting for Easter eggs and eating chocolate Easter bunnies. The celebration of Lent and exploration of parables from gospels are not in my wheelhouse. My spiritual journey allows me to explore many paths and stories, in which I am continuously discovering new wonders. Most recently, I traveled to the Boundary Waters in upper Minnesota near the Canadian border where I discovered the wonder of a magnificent wilderness while mushing a team of arctic Inuit dogs across frozen lakes and through Boreal forests. The excitement of the dogs was contagious as they wanted to be loved and harnessed my sled. Then, with pure joy they launched forward, reaching a tail-wagging stride through unrivaled beauty. Oneness with the dogs in the snowy wilderness was spiritual on many levels. All you had to do was be present and enjoy. Joy is everywhere; it just has to be discovered. I turned my world right-side up and discovered wholeness during four amazing days connecting with boundless nature, beloved dogs and new friends.

Steve Geer





## **MARCH 9TH**

Luke 10:25-42

### **The Parable of the Good Samaritan**

<sup>25</sup> An expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he said, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” <sup>26</sup> He said to him, “What is written in the law? What do you read there?”

<sup>27</sup> 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.”

<sup>28</sup> And he said to him, “You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.”

<sup>29</sup> But wanting to vindicate himself, he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” <sup>30</sup> Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and took off, leaving him half dead. <sup>31</sup> Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. <sup>32</sup> So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. <sup>33</sup> But a Samaritan while traveling came upon him, and when he saw him he was moved with compassion. <sup>34</sup> He went to him and bandaged his wounds, treating them with oil and wine. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. <sup>35</sup> 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.’ <sup>36</sup> Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?” <sup>37</sup> He said, “The one who showed him mercy.” Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”

### **Jesus Visits Martha and Mary**

<sup>38</sup> Now as they went on their way, he entered a certain village where a woman named Martha welcomed him. <sup>39</sup> She had a sister named Mary, who sat at Jesus’s feet and listened to what he was saying. <sup>40</sup> But Martha was distracted by her many tasks, so she came to him and asked, “Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her, then, to help me.” <sup>41</sup> But the Lord answered her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things, <sup>42</sup> but few things are needed—indeed only one.<sup>[d]</sup> Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her.”

# MARCH 10<sup>TH</sup>

For God so loved, God sent us Jesus, to share his great love for us. It is a love that we, as Jesus disciples, are called to share in the world through our actions and words during the season of Lent and throughout our lives. My Lenten Journey is a reflection for you in these times of renewing. Use this journal sheet for your lent reflection. Blessings, Cristina Flores

## My Lenten Journey

What will you give up during Lent this year?

During Lent I will give up...



Write your own prayer for Lent below:

my Prayer

What Easter means to me?

I will show Kindness by:

KINDNESS  
IS  
Contagious

## **MARCH 11<sup>TH</sup>**

### **WHY IS IT?**

Why is it, Lord, you chose so small a way  
To reach the hearts of all, o'ercome cruel hate?  
The smile of babe, a guide star's far-flung spark  
How can these halt brute force?  
How light the dark?

***"But as the seed must grow into a tree,  
So life is love, and love the end must be."***

Why is it, Lord, you chose so slow a way  
Thy reign on earth to build, our fears abate?  
Disciples' spoken word, a reed most frail?  
Apostle's copied writ, of what avail?

***"Only by endless rain the soil is given,  
And endless patience is the way of heaven."***

Why is it Lord, you trusted to a cross  
To tell Thy way of love, while ages wait?  
Then Mary's tears beside a borrowed grave,  
How these to preach good news?  
Humankind save?

***"Know this: though love seems weak and hate is strong,  
Yet hate is short, and love is very long."***

Quotes are from "The Naylor Sonnets"  
by Kenneth Boulding. Used with permission.

Rev. Dan Genung (Long time Disciples Pastor & father of Carol Wilson)  
Edited & Submitted by Carol Wilson

## **MARCH 12<sup>TH</sup>**

### **HOW I CAME TO UNDERSTAND LENT**

When I came to understand the concept of Lent, I was a late bloomer. Having grown up in a very conservative acapella Church of Christ, the word "Lent," or for that matter any of the other seasons of the church year were never mentioned, much less practiced.

My family and I dutifully attended a small congregation in North Texas. The worship space was plain and unadorned. The only artistic touch was a mural over the baptistry showing Jesus after His baptism and a dove alighting on His shoulder. Formal worship was simple: three hymns, a prayer, observance of the Lord's Supper, followed by a lengthy sermon usually emphasizing correct doctrine. After being baptized at age 10, I led the congregational singing with the considerable help of Mrs. Myers, who sat on the front row and immediately picked up the tune and sang loudly.

The style of worship was ingrained in my psyche until the early 1960 when I decided to go into the ministry. I was fortunate to serve a Church of Christ Congregation in Wilmington, Delaware, with Cozier Theological Seminary nearby. It was affiliated with the American Baptist Denomination, much more liberal than the Church of Christ. Its most notable alum was Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (Our own Dr. Duane Day once taught there)!

It was there that I first learned about Lent, as well as the other seasons of the church year. By the time I completed my education at Cozier, I was fortunate to be married to Donna, and we became affiliated with the Disciples of Christ. After ordination I began a 32-year journey, that led me to three congregations.

Leading public worship in Disciple Congregations that followed the rhythms of the church seasons allowed me to appreciate the rich tradition of Lent and its opportunity to engage in spiritual practices as it follows Jesus's Journey to Jerusalem, culminating in His Crucifixion.

Each year in the lectionary cycle, there are opportunities for new ways to think about what Lent means in relation to what is happening in our world. Often there are many resources produced that challenge our thinking of Lent in new ways. For example, a new book entitled **TURNING OVER TABLES: A LENTEN CALL FOR DISRUPTING POWER** by Kathy Escobar, describes Lent as "intentionally opening ourselves up to what's underneath the surface, what is hidden in the dark, what tectonic plates need to shift for something new to be born."

Today we are seeing many unfair systems emerge in our world. As Jesus never shied from injustice, as seen when He overturned the tables that had corrupted temple worship, let us not hesitate to speak out, even in small ways, to let our voices be heard, and to stir up what the late Civil Rights activist and congressman, John Lewis, called "good trouble"

Rev. Dr. Jerry Martin

## **MARCH 13<sup>TH</sup>**

I have always grown up in a faith setting. Ever since I was little, I attended church events, services, and conferences my parents were involved in. This shaped me to become a faithful person as I am today. But, in my opinion, faith is not what shapes my morals. Nope, it is the people I met along the way. My faith community in the Pacific Island Asian American Disciples of Christ (NAPAAD), has made me become someone who values my identity, my love, my strength, my culture and my relationships with others. Attending conferences and reconnecting with my friends from around the nation. Attending children's events as a 4-year-old. Attending service as a 16-year-old. Attending dinner with my 10-year long friendship friends met through NAPAD.

This is what shapes my faith.

There are more things important than attending a simple service and calling it a day after communion, prayer, worship, and listening to a sermon. Nope. That was never church to me. Church is the people I find along the way. The 10-year-old relationships I made along the way. These people shape my church. These people shape my faith. No matter a world small, big, grand, petite, liberal, conservative, black, white- there are people. People who base their thoughts and relationships on actions. People who value my presence. People that I value. People that I love. People who are my church.

- Emily Hill

## **MARCH 14<sup>TH</sup>**

My maiden name was Bonnell. I love that my last name was then Christy for 38 years. Aha.... Christ with a “y” --- seems like that could help me serve as a positive role model as I seek to be a Christian. What does it mean to me to be a follower of Christ?

I have been blessed to have been going to church “forever.” My parents, older sister, and one-year younger brother and I were active in congregations whether we lived in Baltimore, MD, where I was born, or where I grew up in the middle of Nebraska – age four through high school. Out-on-my-own I was active going to a Disciples of Christ University in Oklahoma and then when married for 29 years living in the SF Bay Area. Having three grown sons and after divorcing I needed to become grounded again so I moved to Lincoln, Nebraska. I feel very blessed to have had a mainline Protestant faith. It works for me! Later in Indiana for 18 years I was part of a UCC congregation six blocks from a large retirement community where my second husband and I lived until his death from cancer in 2002.

I especially appreciate that both DOC and UCC helped me feel affirmed in being able to question things... including my faith. Both denominations are known for education and being especially active with social justice. I would be especially supportive of LGBTQ+ persons even if my first husband had not come out of the closet after 28 years of marriage. He was a wonderful elementary teacher for 36 years and a very loving partner as well as a father to our three sons. The last year of our marriage, we were just “roommates.” Very odd, yet we made it work as I prayed to God for very needed guidance. **I think if we can know each other as persons and not as “labels,” we all greatly benefit in learning how to better live together in the world God is still creating for each of us in 2025.**

Though I’ve not had the Christy name for 22 years, I hope and pray I can be a follower of Christ in such a way that others might want to come to know Him better, too. How about you? Let’s talk!

Louella Bonnell Christy Komuves



## **MARCH 15<sup>TH</sup>**

Each Friday of Lent, I would walk through the door of my parents' house, returning from a day at school, to find one of my parents preparing a yummy meal for dinner. If it was my dad, he would immediately turn on the spot, before I could even put my backpack down, and say, "What did you eat today?!"

I would have a moment of complete panic trying to recall everything I had consumed that day and feeling overwhelmed with guilt, knowing that I wanted to do right by God, but knowing I probably had forgotten that today was a Friday. It was silly really.

My family were 'Chreasters." They seriously only recognized Easter and Christmas and never attended church. Still for some reason, my parents had plenty of guilt to hand out when it came to Lent. What did you give up? YOU should give up soda. YOU should give up sugar. And don't forget to not eat meat on Fridays. I think back now how THEY should have given up hypocrisy.

Let me be clear. When I say I was coming home from school, I mean I was coming home from classes at the University. I was a full-grown adult. I followed the rules and respect of my parents' home because I lived under their roof as I attended college, but I didn't always see things the way they did - naturally. Religion is something I would have liked more in my life, but I didn't know where to find it. My family stopped attending church as a family when my brother came out. Basically, our Catholic Church said he was disgusting and he wasn't welcome. So, we were all done. I was only 9. How does a 9-year-old find a new church all by herself? Furthermore, were there any progressive and welcoming churches in 1984?

I spent a lot of years trying to fill that hole in my soul. I belonged to a youth group that required a belief in a God, and I held tight to my beliefs. I attended church now and again with different friends. I read my Bible, and I learned the lessons.

Today, I am ever grateful to my husband for finding me a new church home where my heart and soul feel full again. I love that my church allows me to take what I need and leave what I don't need. And you know what? I never need to feel that guilt again. Well, to be honest, I never needed to feel it then. After a moment of panic, I would eventually remember that I was a vegetarian, so I wouldn't have eaten any meat any day, not just Fridays!

By Denise Womack

## **MARCH 16<sup>TH</sup>**

Luke 13:1-9 & 31-35

### **Repent or Perish**

<sup>13</sup> At that very time there were some present who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. <sup>2</sup> He asked them, “Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans? <sup>3</sup> No, I tell you, but unless you repent you will all perish as they did. <sup>4</sup> Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them—do you think that they were worse offenders than all the other people living in Jerusalem? <sup>5</sup> No, I tell you, but unless you repent you will all perish just as they did.”

### **The Parable of the Barren Fig Tree**

<sup>6</sup> Then he told this parable: “A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. <sup>7</sup> So he said to the man working the vineyard, ‘See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?’ <sup>8</sup> He replied, ‘Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it. <sup>9</sup> If it bears fruit next year, well and good, but if not, you can cut it down.’”

### **The Lament over Jerusalem**

<sup>31</sup> At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, “Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you.” <sup>32</sup> He said to them, “Go and tell that fox for me, ‘Listen, I am casting out demons and performing cures today and tomorrow, and on the third day I finish my work. <sup>33</sup> Yet today, tomorrow, and the next day I must be on my way, because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed outside of Jerusalem.’ <sup>34</sup> Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! <sup>35</sup> See, your house is left to you. And I tell you, you will not see me until the time comes when you say, ‘Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.’”



by Lola Finkelstein

**The Parable of the Sower**

“A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path; it was trampled on, and the birds ate it up. Some fell on rocky ground, and when it came up, the plants withered because they had no moisture. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up with it and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up and yielded a crop, a hundred times more than was sown.”



Plants grow when scattered on good soil, but land can be transformed over time to provide more good soil. It takes time, patience, and hard work. Help us to put in the time and hard work, and help us especially to be patient.

Maureen Rosenquist

**MARCH 19<sup>TH</sup>**

**Let Us Be Like Yeast**

*And again, he said, "To what shall I compare the kingdom of God? It is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in three measures of flour, until it was all leavened."*

*– Luke 13:20-21*

I love a slice of freshly baked bread or homemade dinner roll. During the COVID lockdown, like so many others, I got very into home bread making. What's amazing is that a single-celled microorganism can turn such common ingredients like flour, water, and salt, into delectable offerings at our dining table.

In this parable, Jesus is telling us that the kingdom of God begins with something as tiny and simple as yeast. This Lenten season, let us remember that we can turn the world upside down not only with great acts, but with small simple acts as well.

Maybe it's checking in on a neighbor or calling a friend who has recently lost a loved one. It could be cleaning out our closets and donating to a local shelter or organization in need. Whatever you do in these forty days of Lent, remember that your acts need not be grand in show, but profound in your heart.

*Dear Lord, this Lent let me be more like yeast. When I feel there is too much to do, help me remember that any small act can bring about change. Grant me the strength to continue your kingdom here on earth through simple acts of kindness. Amen*

Harrison Zierer



## **MARCH 20<sup>TH</sup>**

I begin my day reading a short devotional from three small books. Before bed, I reread the same.

Lately it seems each of those writings are boldly suggesting that I need to “be thankful for troubled/difficult times.” Thankful????

I know at some point everyone’s life has down days/truly troubled times. I am so blessed to have **FAMILY** (bio or chosen), **FRIENDS** (next door or across the ocean), plus a strong/grounded **FAITH** to help me handle troubling experiences. How does “being thankful” help? What do I expect as answers to prayers uttered in frustration or even anger, or if possible, wanting them answered “right away?”

I reflect on times where unexpected heavy things have worked out ALL for the BETTER – and I’d not yet even prayed. For all the good I experience, I utter many thank you words shouted to God. But I usually limit my prayers to only God and do not also pray to Jesus and/or the Holy Spirit. Wow.... I still have so much needed growth in my spirituality. Where do I begin?

When I am open/honest/and share my heartaches with someone, I realize I am not alone. That helps me immensely.

In the troubled times of God’s World in 2025, I pray I do not overlook ALL my blessings for they are abundant. I do ask God what I can learn from troubles, but praying to THANK God for TROUBLE?

Am not there yet.

Louella Christy Komuves



## **MARCH 21ST**

### **Responding in a Different Way**

Growing up in Santa Ana so close to the ocean, I spent a lot of time on beaches on the Balboa Peninsula facing Balboa Island or on ocean beaches each summer. Almost every Saturday my dad would take me to “the beach” with my aunt and cousins. Sometimes my mom would go with us, too, when she wasn’t painting (she was an artist). My cousins and I learned to swim in the bay and became confident swimmers, sometimes even swimming across to Balboa Island (something you probably wouldn’t want to do today- too many boats and unsafe conditions). We also learned to body surf in the ocean.

One afternoon, when I was a teenager, I went to the ocean with my dad and one of his college friends. They were raptly engaged in reminiscing about their earlier days, not paying attention to me, so I went into the ocean for a swim. I wouldn’t have expected my dad to be concerned about me, because I was a good swimmer, but that day there were dangerous undertows in the ocean, and I got caught in one. At first, I panicked and got pulled down. The more I fought against the current, the more I seemed to lose control and to be unable to get out of it. A thought came to me that I had to stop fighting and to just let go and relax. By doing that I was swept out of the current.

Of course, I will always remember such a life-threatening, traumatic event, but I also will always remember that sometimes if I am trying to control a situation with all my might and not making headway, it is really better to let go and to try something different. It is at these times that we are apt to sense a gentle nudging and to be more open to changing our behavior for the better.

Lent is a perfect time for self-reflection and to think about how we do not need to find answers to all of life’s problems by ourselves. We also can take this time to be aware of “gentle nudging.”

Kathy Dunlap

**MARCH 22<sup>ND</sup>**

## **THOUGHTS ON LENT AND WATERING THE GRASS**

Having been raised in the Catholic church, including attending Catholic school and college, I can't help but to recall the pressure of trying to figure out what to "give up" for Lent, AND for 40 days!! One of my least favorite memories around lent was being asked "what are you giving up for lent", and not having an answer ready to go.

Now as an older adult nearing retirement, I think of lent very differently. It's now about being more reflective and celebrating my faith, whatever that may look like. Surprisingly, what comes to mind is the grass in my yard. Sometimes I see beautiful green, other times brownish and yellow, with small patches of green coming up. I recognize this is due in large part to my attempts and/or lack of attempts at being diligent in watering the grass consistently. Clearly it takes work to get to that beautiful green grass. When I don't water it regularly, I see the color fading and, in a sense, slowly dying. When that happens, I own that I haven't been watering it enough and need to step up my efforts.

In my own faith journey, there is **A LOT** of watering that needs to be done!! I can share that my world was turned upside down in 2017 and continues to be upside down to this day. In large part this is due to multiple losses and complex traumas as well as unexpected life events which have shaken me to my core and challenged me in my faith journey. As I seek to discover who I really am and what is it that I really believe, I've come to the conclusion that it really doesn't matter so much what religion I may/may not call myself, **I'm a beloved child of God, blessed beyond measure.**

In this journey of discovery, one practice that has drawn me closer to God is relying heavily on my **faith, family and friends**. This is absolutely, positively my greatest source of strength, and the best medicine to combat stress, anxiety and depression. I have explored other churches and faith communities and have clearly found the "labels" if you will, don't matter either. Whatever our religious beliefs, gender, culture, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, what really matters is that **we are ALL children of God.**

Another practice has been mindfulness **meditation** in prayer and thanksgiving for the many blessings God has showered me with, EVEN through the darkest of times. Spending time in prayer and reflection helps me to feel closer to God and more peaceful. So, while our world has been turned upside down for each of us in one way or another, I'd like to think of this Lenten season as an opportunity for new growth, like watering the grass, not just for the 40 days but every day. Each day can be a new beginning for us and we get to choose how we will face the days ahead. Thanks to the blessings of recent rain, I'm seeing the beauty of the greener grass in my backyard again. In order for me to maintain that beautiful, rich green color, it's time for me to start watering it on a more consistent basis. Similarly, I recognize the need to "water" my spiritual growth by experiencing lent not just as a 40 day challenge, but as a time for transformation that can be experienced throughout the year.

Gratefully,  
Terri Rogers

## **MARCH 23<sup>RD</sup>**

Luke 15:1-32

### **The Parable of the Lost Sheep**

15 Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. 2 And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, “This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.” 3 So he told them this parable: 4 “Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? 5 And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. 6 And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my lost sheep.’ 7 Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

### **The Parable of the Lost Coin**

8 “Or what woman having ten silver coins, if she loses one of them, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? 9 And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.’ 10 Just so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

### **The Parable of the Prodigal and His Brother**

11 Then Jesus<sup>[a]</sup> said, “There was a man who had two sons. 12 The younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of the wealth that will belong to me.’ So he divided his assets between them. 13 A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant region, and there he squandered his wealth in dissolute living. 14 When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that region, and he began to be in need. 15 So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that region, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. 16 He would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, and no one gave him anything. 17 But when he came to his senses he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! 18 I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.” ’ 20 So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far

off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. 21 Then the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ 22 But the father said to his slaves, ‘Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. 23 And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate, 24 for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!’ And they began to celebrate.

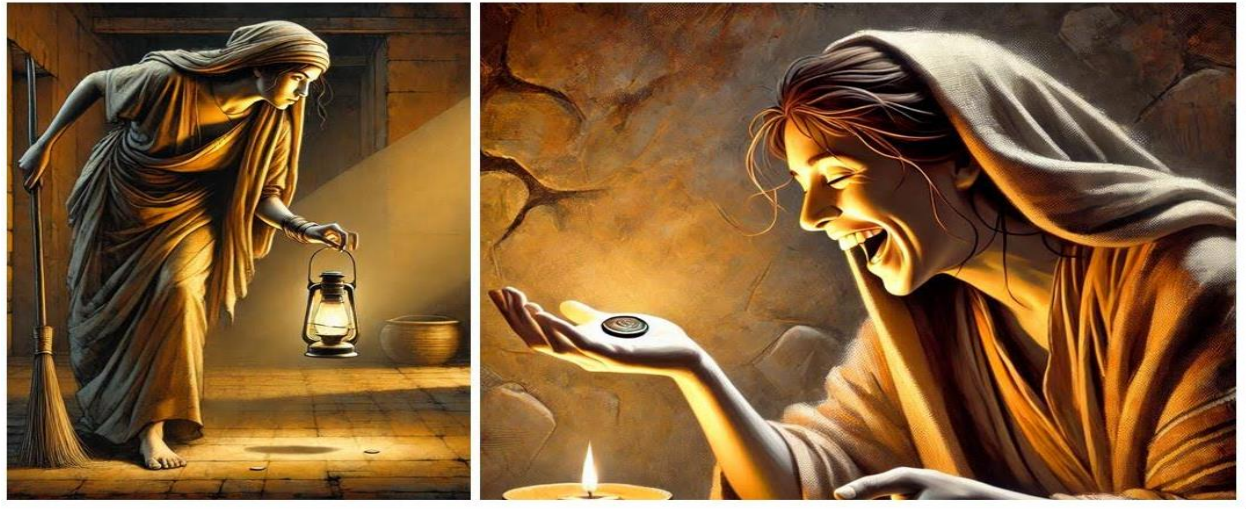
25 “Now his elder son was in the field, and as he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. 27 He replied, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf because he has got him back safe and sound.’ 28 Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. 29 But he answered his father, ‘Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command, yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. 30 But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your assets with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!’ 31 Then the father said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. 32 But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.’”



Artwork by Suvan Geer

Lord, this Lent instead of giving up donuts or some other small pleasure I want to offer you the lead weight of my moral righteousness. Bless me please with the strength and determination I'll need to see that those I disagree with are loveable human beings (even though at times it feels like we are from different gene pools). Help me reach in unexpectedly fresh, kind, and compassionate ways for my neighbors and family whose recent choices have astonished and disappointed me. Help us begin a worthwhile conversation that will spark mutual compassion for others and ourselves amid the divisions we are laboring under. Let us find a small healing connection to build into unity. Thanks. Amen.

Suvan Geer



The Parable of the Lost Coin has always been one of my favorite stories from Scripture. Found in Luke 15:8–10, it carries a powerful message about God’s love for us and the return of one of His lost souls.

A woman loses one of her ten silver coins. Why is this coin so important to her? Because it was likely part of her dowry. It may have been a coin from a headdress or piece of jewelry worn at her wedding. This signifies its importance far beyond just its monetary worth, making it deeply personal and irreplaceable. Rather than accepting the loss, she searches carefully until she finds it. When she does, she rejoices with her friends and neighbors in it being found.

This parable upends conventional wisdom. The woman’s determination emulates God’s unwavering pursuit of us. In a world that measures worth by status or wealth, this story reminds us that each person is cherished beyond measure. It also challenges us: How often do we give up on those who seem lost? How can we embody persistent love and joy in renewal?

Lent is a season of regeneration. This parable calls us to adopt God’s perspective and take part in the divine movement that refuses to let fragmentation have the final word. The joy of the woman finding her lost coin mirrors God’s joy in restoration. May we share in that joy as we turn the world upside down with God’s radical love.

Submitted by Rev. Mo. Tammy Fuqua, ECC  
Holy Angels Associate Pastor



**MARCH 26<sup>TH</sup>**

Turning the world upside down...or at least  
a little sideways.



Emmy Linton

2 Years old

## **MARCH 27<sup>TH</sup>**

Not long ago, my cousin told me that when my grandparents lived in Hwanghae Province, they never had to step on someone else's land. At first, I didn't understand what that meant. Then it hit me—they had owned so much land in their town.

I was shocked. The grandmother I knew had spent her life in hardship, carrying the weight of being a refugee after the Korean War. I never imagined that she and my grandfather had once lived with such stability and abundance. But war changed everything. Instead of a life rooted in their land, they were forced to flee—to run, to hide, to start over in a new place with nothing.

My grandmother passed away in 2012. She was a cornerstone of my childhood and faith. I grew up hearing her stories of escaping from North to South—tales that, as a child, felt almost like an adventurous fairytale. Looking back, I'm grateful she told them so many times. Her story reminds me that my family was once refugees. It took years to rebuild, and along the way, there was pain, loss, and struggle. But through it all, her faith never wavered. It was the foundation that kept her strong, the force that held our family together, and the heart of her spirit.

My grandmother's story reminds me of where I come from. Now, where do I go next?

Yunkyong Lee Hill  
(Dedicated to my grandmother Gong Gye-Taek)

## **MARCH 28<sup>TH</sup>**

### **PRAYER**

By: Paula Pichon

A confirmation class of teenagers, which I had mentored, were given the assignment of defining “prayer.”

Prayer was defined as....

**P** People - All people, in different ways, All languages

Places - Indoors, Outdoors, Land, Water

Patience - Requests and actions do not come quickly

Peace - Creates a feeling of calm

Personal - Belongs to the individual. Recognition of one’s gifts, gritudes

Penance - Recognition of wrong

**R** Reflection - of thoughts, emotions, and actions

Reality based - Expounds our beliefs, our truths, our hopes, our wants, and our appreciation

**A** All - people, all faiths, all languages, all beliefs pray, at any time and any place in any fashion.

**Y** YOU - It is what YOU wish, YOUR hopes, YOUR dreams, YOUR want for YOURSELF, YOUR family, YOUR friends, YOUR mates, and YOUR thankfulness for all.

**E** emotionally, physically, or mentally, written, or spoken, or read, each of us pray. Everlasting love and promises fill one’s heart.

**R** Resurrection - of and within us - resurrection of our good, our ideals, our beliefs, Rejoice - in the resurrection and God’s love.

## **MARCH 29<sup>TH</sup>**

Lenten season is a wonderful time for reflection. We look at our lives, the lives of others, the condition of our world. At some point we focus on ourselves, perhaps some part of our value system, some area we find difficult. For many of us, forgiveness is one of those areas. What do we say to ourselves? How do we choose a willingness to forgive to become part of our being?

Using meaningful quotes from others has become an important part of my reflection process. I use the quotes as a jumping off point. "What is this quote telling me? Where does this quote fit into my life's journey?"

Let's give it a try this Lenten season.

*There is no love without forgiveness and there is no forgiveness without love.*  
Bryant McGill

*Forgiveness is not an act. It is a constant attitude.*  
Martin Luther King

*Forgiveness is the fragrance that the violet sheds on the heel that has crushed it.*  
Mark Twain

*To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover that the prisoner was you.*  
Lewis Smedes

*The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is an attribute of the strong.*  
Mahatma Gandhi

*Acceptance, Tolerance, Forgiveness...Those are life altering lessons.*  
Jessica Lange

*Without forgiveness, life is an endless cycle of resentment and retaliation.*  
Roberto Assagionourney

May we all be at peace this Lenten season. Much love to all.

By Jim Cox

## MARCH 30<sup>TH</sup>

Luke 16:19-31

### **The Rich Man and Lazarus**

<sup>19</sup>“There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. <sup>20</sup>And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, <sup>21</sup>who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man’s table; even the dogs would come and lick his sores. <sup>22</sup>The poor man died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried. <sup>23</sup>In Hades, where he was being tormented, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side.<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>24</sup>He called out, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in agony in these flames.’ <sup>25</sup>But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that during your lifetime you received your good things and Lazarus in like manner evil things, but now he is comforted here, and you are in agony. <sup>26</sup>Besides all this, between you and us a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who might want to pass from here to you cannot do so, and no one can cross from there to us.’ <sup>27</sup>He said, ‘Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father’s house— <sup>28</sup>for I have five brothers—that he may warn them, so that they will not also come into this place of torment.’ <sup>29</sup>Abraham replied, ‘They have Moses and the prophets; they should listen to them.’ <sup>30</sup>He said, ‘No, father Abraham, but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.’ <sup>31</sup>He said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.’ ”

**MARCH 31<sup>ST</sup>**

### **So Far in 2025 With My Life Upside Down, God Turns it Back Around**

(On Feb 4, 2025, I'm writing with paper & pen in the Lobby of UCI Hospital in Orange because visitors with patients in their ER have been kicked out due to the need for additional chairs. I have used this time to grab a bite in the cafeteria, but I won't volunteer this fact to Bill, since it is Tuesday & he's not eaten since Sunday night! I sit waiting for a call back to ER or whenever I get too anxious here & must return to ER to sit with Bill.)

Today is Bill's second prep & attempt at getting a procedure needed because of the pancreatitis he had in October. In Pre-Op this morning he was found to have Atrial Fibrillation requiring admittance to the Hospital, but he must enter through the ER. On our first hearing, the news was unexpected & scary. But for the Surgeon doing the procedure & his Anesthesiologist, they announced it to "be lucky" for Bill. It might never have been caught, since it can be intermittent & may lead to the possibility of stroke.

(A Code Blue is announced throughout the hospital. I wonder, can AFib lead to a Code Blue?)

Making a positive result from what feels like a negative, coming from the South, I call a "God Thang!" When we learn to look for a miracle even when situations feel dire, stress can sometimes be relieved even for short intervals. When, as in this short '25 for me, relationships run up against a challenge or deaths of family members/friends add up, or a spouse & cousin are hospitalized, stay calm, find ways to relieve your stress, pray for a miracle & turn it all over to God, Jesus the Healer, Sophia of Wisdom. It's not only on us to fix this! There is a spiritual power to call on.

There is a congregation or other community that we can rely on. My problems, they are not only on me!

(I return now to check on Bill in ER, since I am away from there longer than I can stand to be.)

Diagnosing AFib early allowed the Cardiologist to begin a new medicine to control his heart rate while Bill was held overnight at the hospital for observation. This postponed the procedure by only one day & he never left the hospital campus. In fact, we got our first ever Ambulance rides back & forth across the hospital parking lot together. At this time, we await results. We know our congregation is on this journey with us. That is what church is all about.

Submitted Feb 9, 2025 by Susan Richardson

## **APRIL 1ST**

Matthew 25:35-40

New International Version

35 "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, 36 I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me."

37" Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? 38 When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? 34 When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?"

40 "The King will reply, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."

This poem was found written on the wall in Mother Teresa's Home for children in Calcutta.

### **DO IT ANYWAY**

People are often unreasonable, irrational, and self-centered.  
Forgive them anyway.

If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives.  
Be kind anyway.

If you are successful, you will win some unfaithful friends and some genuine enemies. Succeed anyway.

If you are honest and sincere, people may deceive you.  
Be honest and sincere anyway.

What you spend years creating, others could destroy overnight.  
Create anyway.

If you find serenity and happiness, some may be jealous.  
Be happy anyway.

The good you do today, will often be forgotten.  
Do good anyway.

Give the best you have, and it will never be enough.  
Give the best anyway.

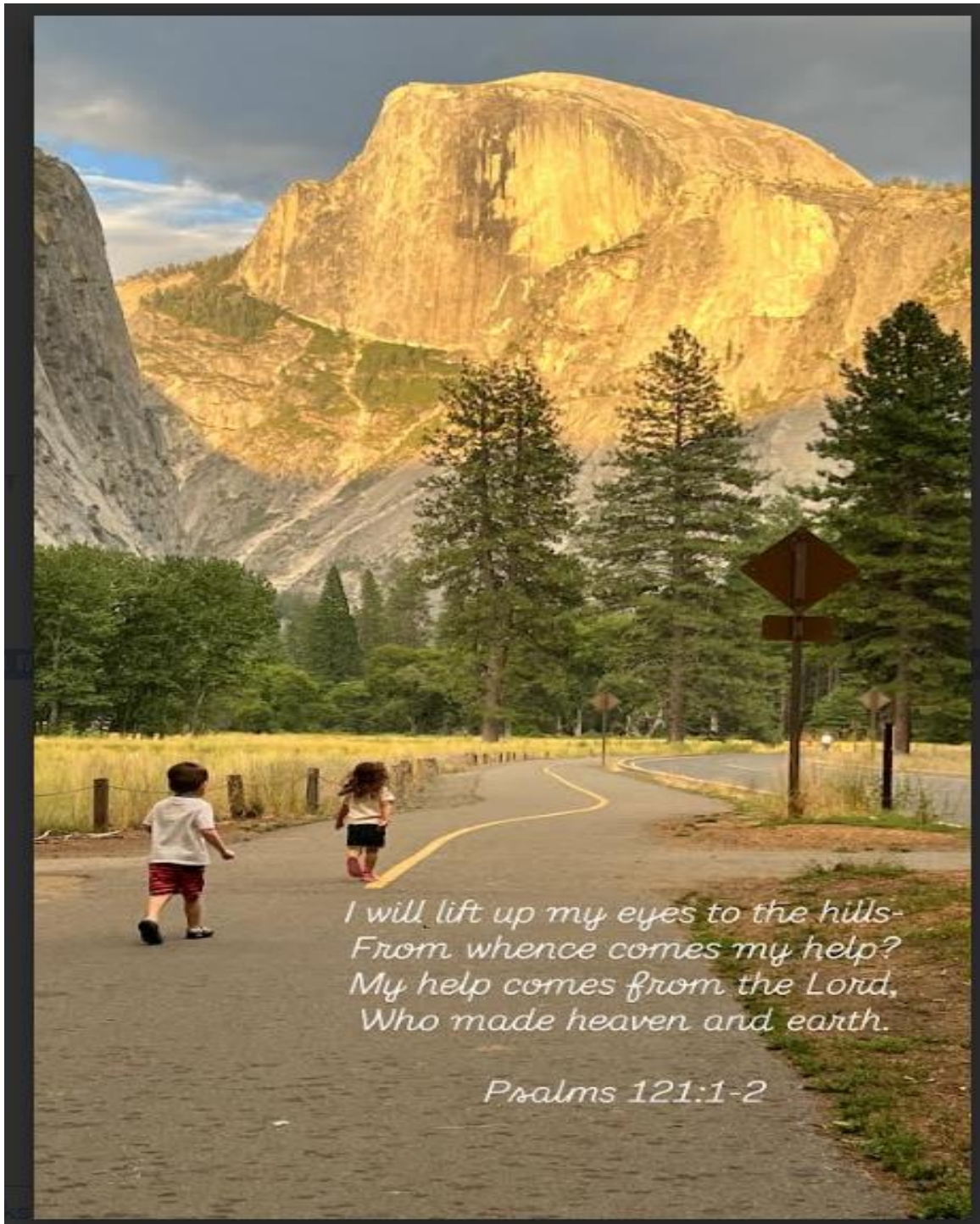
In the final analysis, it is between you and God.  
It is never between you and them anyway.

From Bobbie Taylor



**APRIL 2<sup>ND</sup>**

**I find peace in God's creation especially when the world seems to be crazy.  
Cindy Guziak**





## **APRIL 3RD**

One practice that draws me closer to God in inclusive, loving community is the weekday ecumenical morning prayer Zoom I attend. It is a liturgy adapted from *The Ancient Hours of Prayer: An Inclusive Breviary for the Ecumenical Church* (to be published soon) by Rev. Andrew Lang, at that time Director of the Open and Affirming Coalition of the United Church of Christ. He developed daily services of Taizé Morning Prayer with inclusive language to sustain clergy and lay leaders through the pandemic. These services continue weekday mornings at 6 am and 8 am Arizona time, hosted on Facebook and Zoom by May All Be One, an ecumenical ministry of Shepherd of the Hills UCC in Phoenix, Arizona.

I attend the later service sponsored by UCC Order of Corpus Christi led by Rev. Rock Fremont who is also the Abbot of the Order.

I get a morning dose of responsive reading, two psalms, a Taize chant, the bible reading of the day, a responsive intercessory prayer and a reading from Zechariah, the Lord's Prayer and a blessing. This is very calming and centering (although a little High Church.)

Then afterwards is fellowship with usually less than 15 people around the country and around the globe, about half who are clergy. We have members in Finland and Germany, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Texas, Oregon, Washington, Arizona, and California. We have had people join us from Uganda.

Fellowship conversation ranges from theological and liturgical questions to science fiction, music and current events. We even went on a Zoom tour of the Spam Factory. For me, it is a church family I can check in with every weekday and let them know I am okay.

I invite you check it out at [zoom.us/j/5556624822](https://zoom.us/j/5556624822), password: prayer.

From Lorinda Kasten-Lowerre

## APRIL 4TH



Watercolor by Sunny Erickson

### **This Native American legend serves as both an inspiration and a warning.**

*A mighty wind shook the mountain upon which the nest was perched, causing the single eagle egg resting there to tumble through the air until – poof – it landed on the canyon floor below, miraculously intact. Shortly after, a pack of prairie chickens wandered through the canyon, doing what prairie chickens are wont to do: pecking at the dirt, clacking all-a-frenzy, flying only a couple of feet off the ground. Not the brightest of birds, one of the prairie hens confused it as her own and nudged it onto her nest where it eventually hatched. The eaglet was the ugliest thing that chicken pack had ever seen. It couldn't spread its wings; it couldn't get all the food it needed for its large body; it was gangly trying to fly just 18-inches off the ground. The eaglet was perfectly miserable.*

*One day, a fantastic shadow spread over the canyon floor, startling the eaglet. “What is that?!” it cried. “Oh, that’s an eagle,” responded one of the prairie chickens. “Wow, how I’d love to be one of those!” said the eaglet.*

*“Well, you’re a prairie chicken,” scoffed a prairie chick, “and you scrounge for food down here on the ground. That is the king of birds, and you ain’t the king!”*

Sometimes though the eaglet felt compelled to throw itself off a rocky ledge to see if it could spread its wings and fly. But it was just too afraid to ever try. Other times, it dreamed of swooping through the air, catching rabbits and squirrels, soaring down and soaring back up, only to awake in a cold sweat. Then one day it looked into a pond and thought, honest to God, it saw an eagle. But it was just too frightened to say anything. And so it went: the young eaglet lived and died believing it was nothing other than a prairie chicken.

**Do not forget who you are! It’s a theme echoed throughout the course of this Lenten season.**

Blessings,  
Sunny Erickson

## **APRIL 5<sup>TH</sup>**

Read Luke 18:1-18

Of all the parables of Jesus, I think this is one of the funniest.

A poor widow, a person with absolutely no social status and no standing in court is unjustly accused. In the same city there is a judge “who neither feared God nor had respect for people”—it sounds like he is a real snake in the grass!

Even though the widow has no standing and no hope, she goes every day to see the judge. “GRANT ME JUSTICE AGAINST MY OPPONENT.”

Day by day, week by week, she keeps showing up. I imagine her baking a cake and writing the message in the frosting, putting flyers on his windshield, organizing demonstrations in front of the court, hiring a skywriter to fly overhead, sending a singing telegram. It just keeps coming.

Finally, the judge has had it. Now here is the funny part. The judge knows how very awful he is—“Though I have no fear of God and no respect for anyone, [OUCH] yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will grant her justice, so that she may not wear me out by continually coming.” The judge grants her justice because she is relentless—and she is driving him up the wall!

Now the Good Book says that this is a teaching about prayer and perhaps it is that.

But today I am taking this little Jesus’ story at face value. I think she is exemplifying a lifestyle that we need to adopt as we stand with those needing justice. She doesn’t let society’s determination that she has no social power or status define her. She stands up anyway.

Let’s take notes from this first century warrior of “good trouble.”

By Rev. Nancy Brink

## **APRIL 6<sup>TH</sup>**

Luke 13:1-9, 31-35

### **Repent or Perish**

13 At that very time there were some present who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. 2 He asked them, “Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans? 3 No, I tell you, but unless you repent you will all perish as they did. 4 Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them—do you think that they were worse offenders than all the other people living in Jerusalem? 5 No, I tell you, but unless you repent you will all perish just as they did.”

### **The Parable of the Barren Fig Tree**

6 Then he told this parable: “A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. 7 So he said to the man working the vineyard, ‘See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?’ 8 He replied, ‘Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it. 9 If it bears fruit next year, well and good, but if not, you can cut it down.’”

### **The Lament over Jerusalem**

31 At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, “Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you.” 32 He said to them, “Go and tell that fox for me,[a] ‘Listen, I am casting out demons and performing cures today and tomorrow, and on the third day I finish my work. 33 Yet today, tomorrow, and the next day I must be on my way, because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed outside of Jerusalem.’ 34 Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! 35 See, your house is left to you. And I tell you, you will not see me until the time comes when[c] you say, ‘Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.’”

**APRIL 7<sup>TH</sup>**

## **Confession and Redemption of a Former Bigot**

By Bill Richardson – old straight guy

Hatched in 1946 and raised in Louisville by unapologetically prejudiced parents, I learned every possible hateful term from the cradle onward. It was in the air you breathed. Example: **Martin Luther King** was “that Ethiopian son of a bitch”. (And yet, they could enjoy and love Mahalia Jackson, Louis Armstrong and Jackie Robinson at the same time – how confusing.) I said hurtful things and repeated bigoted jokes without a second thought. The racist jokes in particular were a continuous flow of demeaning micro-aggressions.

Somehow, as time passed, I came to recognize the wrongness of these behaviors and worked to eliminate them. The sad thing is, thoughts nurtured in childhood and youth cannot be erased, they can only be layered over. They live in the back of your brain forever. I came to appreciate and celebrate black people, women, Mexican, Asian, Russian, Arabic and other people as individuals, not categories. Each could be good, bad, wise, stupid, loving or hateful on their own accord. The last prejudice to be challenged was LGBTQ+ people (in all their variants).

We joined a DOC (Disciples of Christ) church in Lafayette, California, because we liked the pastor, members, programs and genuine warmth. Only after about 6 months did I come to understand what “Open and Affirming” meant. Homosexuality had always been framed as un-Christian and morally wrong. Here was a CHURCH! that openly welcomed and accepted these people! How can this be right? I literally stood in front of my bathroom mirror one Sunday morning with my hands held out like the scales of justice and weighed the pros and cons of what I saw and considered leaving LCC on that account but decided instead to stick around and learn.

After serving on committees, even as an Elder with my new gay friends, I came to appreciate them as completely equal people. After learning the true meaning of the so-called “Clobber Passages” in Leviticus and elsewhere, I came to understand how willfully misguided and un-Christian was homophobia. How grateful I was for this complete change of heart years later when our daughter, at Chapman came out as lesbian. Still thanking the universe for this critical conversion of thought and feeling.

Bill Richardson



Here are two pictures of art pieces at Unity Church in Orange. The one speaks of unlimited love as the two characters are androgynous. The other is coexistence and inclusiveness personified.



## **APRIL 8<sup>TH</sup>**

On March 18, 2012 my wife of 48 years, Marjorie, passed away in her sleep at home. She had battled a rare disease called Cushing's Illness nearly all of our married life and that night it won. I had counted her daily doses of 49 pills and gone into the room only to find her body lying in our Lazy Boy Chair.

As teenagers from small families, we had relied heavily on our parents but an immediate problem developed as how to worship God. The bottom line was that we didn't. I had been brought up in a standard Episcopalian manner in Anaheim, while my in-laws were victims of Roman Catholic abuses in Massachusetts. It was a stalemate.

Sometimes the smallest voices both inside and out are the most important. Certainly, in my case, the thought of not attending a Sunday church service had never set too well with me. I refused the belief that a day at the start of a week would direct positive energy to the rest of the days that would follow. But not completely... and times were about to change.

Between the Thursday that Marge passed and the following Sunday, I knew I was going to be better off in church. I picked a wonderful Lutheran Church in Anaheim Hills called Trinity Lutheran. I actually thought that the church was so big and no one would see me. Sunday morning came and though the feelings were mostly strange, I clearly felt/heard, "Welcome Home," once inside the church.

How does my story "Stand the world on it's head?" For me, it has to do with the wasted years – sad years. Two sons who were never brought up in church due to lack of communication with a simple father who has found contentment my son's chase happiness without a scale as to where the smallest, truest voice inside will raise them. That Disneyland is an American sideshow, and a darn expensive one compared to what you can see from the pew of your church.

By Bob Goodrich



### **My Reflection on Lent by Sean Womack**

My parents were raised as Christians, but they had free-spirited personalities and enjoyed trying new things. For the first fifteen years of my life, my family followed the Bahá'í Faith. Because of this, we didn't celebrate Lent. When my parents divorced, I chose to live with my mom, and her spiritual path led her back to Christianity. We began attending a Protestant church, but this church also didn't celebrate Lent.

Lent isn't as well-known as Christmas. Every Christian celebrates Christmas, and even people who aren't religious—like atheists and agnostics—celebrate it. However, many non-Christians and certain Christian denominations don't celebrate Lent. I used to think Lent was something only Catholics did. I thought it was funny when the local Catholic Church advertised their Friday Fish Fry during Lent. I guess fish isn't considered "meat", so it's okay to eat during Lent, even though Catholics are supposed to avoid eating meat on Fridays during that time.

When Church of the Foothills asked me to write about Lent, I wasn't sure what to say. So, I decided to research it. Everything I found said that Lent is a time for fasting, repentance, and prayer. Some Christians see it as a time to improve themselves, while others believe that's missing the point, since Lent should be focused on self-deprivation. However, they all agree that Lent's purpose is to strengthen one's relationship with God and to remember the events leading up to the death of Jesus Christ.

I won't be observing Lent by fasting or giving up certain foods because I know it will make me extremely hungry and moody. Eventually, I would likely overeat, which would be worse for me than not restricting my diet. Plus, I'd feel guilty for overeating, which would make it harder to keep up with fasting. Instead, I plan to focus on eating healthier during Lent. Even if I have an occasional cheat day, as long as I eat better overall during Lent, I will have succeeded. If I want to strengthen my relationship with God during Lent, then starving myself will only distract me and make it harder to focus on that goal.

I'm looking forward to reading what others in our congregation have to say about Lent. I'll use what I've learned from their reflections to guide my own Lenten journey this year.

## **APRIL 10<sup>TH</sup>**

As we approach the season of Lent it's a time for us to prepare for the Easter Season and look at what this means in our lives. This period of 40 days is a time for prayer, fasting, and almsgiving that Christians observe before Easter. A time of reflection and preparation for the resurrection. It is a time to practice self-control and self-discipline, a time to share our time, talents, and money. When I think about what this time of year means to me, I am reminded by the poem *The Dash* by Linda Ellis. It always gives me pause to consider what's important and how I can live a more compassionate life. Here are her words:

THE DASH by Linda Ellis

I read of a man who stood to speak at the funeral of a friend, he referred to the dates on her tombstone from the beginning to the end.

He noted that first came the date of her birth and spoke of the following date with tears, but he said what mattered most of all was the dash between these years.

For that dash represents all the time that she spent alive on earth, and now only those who loved her know what that little line is worth.

For it matters not how much we own, the cars..the house...the cash. What matters is how we live and love and how we spend our dash.

So think about this long and hard; are there things you'd like to change? For you never know how much time is left that can still be rearranged.

If we could just slow down enough to consider what's true and real and always try to understand the way other people feel.

And be less quick to anger and show appreciation more and love people in our lives like we've never loved before.

If we treat each other with respect and more often wear a smile – remembering that this special dash may only last a little while.

So when your eulogy of being read with your life's actions to rehash, would you be proud of the things they say about how you spent your dash?

Submitted by Linda Mueller

My friends are angry  
They call for justice  
but there is no justice.  
They yell for justice  
But no one hears.



They cry, but  
get no comfort.  
so they pick up stones,  
will I join them?

By Jim Rosenquist

## **APRIL 12<sup>TH</sup>**

For my submission to our Lenten Booklet, I would like to suggest a piece of music that might help you get into the Lenten season and perhaps inspire you to think of hands in a different way.

In 1680, Dieterich Buxtehude composed his Magnum Opus, *Membra Jesu Nostri*, which is split into seven different parts, each one representing a different part of Christ's body on the cross. In 2016, a professional choir called *The Crossing*, commissioned seven living composers to write new pieces inspired by Buxtehude's original work, each one taking a different part of Christ's body. This culminated in an album called *Seven Responses*.

*To The Hands* was the response written by Caroline Shaw, and when I was in college, I got to perform the work at a regional conference for the American Choral Directors Association. It is one of my favorite pieces that I've been lucky enough to perform and I hope you will take 19 minutes to watch my performance of it. Caroline takes some of Buxtehude's original material and transforms it into a modern version for the first two movements. The third movement takes the famous text "The New Colossus" by Emma Lazarus from the base of the Statue of Liberty, instead of focusing on Christ's hands, she moves the focus to America's hands welcoming in refugees and immigrants. The fourth movement has original poetry from Caroline where she talks about a grandmother and her hands. The fifth movement is spoken numbers from the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, these numbers were recorded in 2015 and have grown much larger by this point. The final movement tells the audience "I would hold you; I will love you" and ends with music from the original Buxtehude.

To view our performance of this, go to YouTube and search "To the Hands CSU Fullerton". The first video that pops up should be our performance! If you need help finding it, please reach out. I hope you enjoy it.

By Sammy Salvador

## **APRIL 13<sup>TH</sup>**

Luke 19:29-44

<sup>29</sup> As he approached Bethphage and Bethany at the hill called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, <sup>30</sup> “Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. <sup>31</sup> If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you untying it?’ say, ‘The Lord needs it.’”

<sup>32</sup> Those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them. <sup>33</sup> As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, “Why are you untying the colt?”

<sup>34</sup> They replied, “The Lord needs it.”

<sup>35</sup> They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it. <sup>36</sup> As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road.

<sup>37</sup> When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen:

<sup>38</sup> “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!”

“Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”

<sup>39</sup> Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples!”

<sup>40</sup> “I tell you,” he replied, “if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.”

<sup>41</sup> As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it <sup>42</sup> and said, “If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes. <sup>43</sup> The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. <sup>44</sup> They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God’s coming to you.”

## **APRIL 14<sup>TH</sup>**

1 Corinthians 13:13... “Now abides faith, hope and love, but the greatest of these is love.”

Episcopal Bishop, Michael Curry, states, “Love is the only thing that will make the world a better place.... In our modern world, we have lost the sense of love for our fellow humans. While faith and hope are necessary for a full life, they are not a guide to life. That’s love’s job.”

Lent is a time of reflection. Individually, we ask, “how do we express love in a world of turmoil? How do we embrace joy?”

In community, we look at the world and wonder. We look at ourselves, and question whether anything we do could make a difference. The world is large. We are small.

Mother Teresa answered beautifully.

“We ourselves may feel that what we are contributing is just a drop in the ocean. But the ocean would be less because of that missing drop.”

With love as our beacon and our purpose, we are called to care for others and one another, for the earth and for ourselves. May we respond to that call with joy....

“Now abides, faith, hope, love but the greatest of these is love...” May we never forget

In closing...

This Easter we have heard our call to come together one and all  
Serving others, far and near  
With LOVE our guide, we have no fear.

Jim Guziak

## **APRIL 15<sup>TH</sup>**

In January 2013 I signed up for a UCC/DOC mission trip to Israel/Palestine to gain understanding of the challenges to a just peace in the Holy Land. At that time, I knew nothing about either country. That was all to change. There is so much history that goes so much deeper than 1948 for each country. Rather than tell you everything, I have made a list of a few books for you. The main thing is the majority in both countries want PEACE.

Lemon Tree- Sandy Tolin

Blood Brothers- Elias Chocur

I Shall Not Hate- Izzeldin Abulaish

Bethlehem Besieged- Mitri Raheb

These books just touch on the journey, but hopefully you will become as passionate as I am. PEACE, SHALOM, SALAM

Original watercolor by Sallie Coltrin





## **APRIL 16<sup>TH</sup>**

As I have been pondering the meaning of Lent, I realize that my lens on Lent is probably very different from many. I grew up in a fairly liberal Disciples of Christ Church in Sacramento, Ca. My family was very active in the church so we didn't miss much. I can't really remember much about Lent as a child, some of my friends gave stuff up, I didn't. We certainly prepared for Palm Sunday, palms and all. We talked about Jesus and what he experienced during Holy Week, we even went downtown and met my Dad for Good Friday Services at a church near his work and the Capitol. Easter was important and we participated in all the events of the season. I do remember that we did not get new clothes for Easter because my Mom was fairly adamant that new clothes were not what the whole thing was about!

So, all this to say that I haven't participated in many traditional Lenten practices but have always known that it is a journey, unique to each person.

This year is a bit different. I am feeling a darkness that is not a feeling I have experienced very often in my life. I am going to use the 40 days of Lent to pull myself away from that darkness and look for the light that continues to be all around me. I will pray for others and myself, I will meditate, finding comfort in peace and stillness. I will look at others and smile, and really mean it. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. once said, "Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."

Oh, Loving God, let me choose LOVE. Amen

Kathy Hilberg.

## **APRIL 17<sup>TH</sup>**

The lent of my childhood smells like rain and grass, incense and ash. It's colored with pastel hues of easter eggs, and vibrant blinding light of stained-glass windows. It's the excitement of getting a new eyelet dress and the feel of starched white cotton.

The children, with the guidance of the nuns and priest would walk through the stations of the cross and were told the story of Jesus' frightening dark days, but it was OK because he died for our sins and of course was resurrected. I listened attentively but my unasked question was "why". So, I just skipped to the resurrection part, because, let's face it, it's a great ending to the story.

Now that I am older and have experienced indescribable happiness and deep sorrows, I think about Jesus' march to the cross. Did he also ask "why?" We all have faced our own dark days and questioned our faith as Jesus had. So now I sit with Lent, take that walk with Jesus, let my heart break and still anticipate the glory and joy to come.

**Do not abandon yourselves to despair.  
We are the Easter people & hallelujah  
is our song.  
Pope John Paul II**

Submitted by Chery Cervantes

## **APRIL 18<sup>TH</sup>**

I experienced Lent as a small town midwestern cradle Catholic. I attended a Catholic grade school and served throughout that time as an altar boy. This meant I participated in religious services like Mass and Stations of the Cross as an assistant to a priest, and I attended classes at a Catholic grade school which were often taught by nuns. During this period, the Catholic church was transitioning from Latin to English during services, and the priest began to face his congregation from the altar instead of officiating the Mass while faced away from his flock. In college, I periodically attended services at a Catholic church run by the Jesuit Order of Catholics. There were other positive changes.

I was married in a Catholic church to a non-Catholic. We attended Catholic programs like Engaged Encounter and Cursillo. Our faith journey evolved over time to where it stands today as active members in this wonderful UCC and DOC congregation. Although I have no regrets about this move, I retain some overall fond feelings about aspects of the Catholic Lenten experience of my youth. In particular, the Stations of the Cross services conducted during Holy week and leading up to Easter induced deep contemplation and reflection, something akin to a meditative state in me that was comforting and left me feeling closer to God. I lack better words to describe it. During Lent, may you also find time to reflect and find such a satisfying, deep, contemplative experience.

By Jim Guziak

**APRIL 19<sup>TH</sup>**

For God so loved, God sent us Jesus, to share his great love for us. It is a love that we, as Jesus disciples, are called to share in the world through our actions and words during the season of Lent and throughout our lives. My Lenten Journey is a reflection for you in these times of renewing. Use this journal sheet for your lent reflection.  
Melody Taylor

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## APRIL 20<sup>TH</sup>

Luke 24:1-12

### Jesus Has Risen

**24** On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. **2** They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, **3** but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. **4** While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. **5** In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? **6** He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: **7** ‘The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.’” **8** Then they remembered his words.

**9** When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. **10** It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. **11** But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. **12** Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened.



Picture from Lindsay Rosenquist Burns

# LOVE, SERVICE, CHURCH



Picture from Lindsay Rosenquist Burns