

Mission Bend UMC Family,

The season of Lent provides us with opportunities to reflect upon our *motives and actions* as disciples of Jesus Christ. Perhaps, this season, we will pray more deeply with sincere and passionate hearts, to be more generous to those less fortunate. Let us stretch ourselves to do something we have never done before for the sake of God's kingdom.

There is wisdom in the commonly used 12-step program which says that, "Insanity is defined as doing the same thing over and over again, expecting different results." Let us reflect on this profound statement as we examine the choices we make during this holy Lenten season. Our Lord is calling us to a "change of heart."

So, what needs changing? We can start by asking for help. "Lord, help me know what needs changing in my life so that I may be a witness to your love and grace." We have to listen to what God asks of us and move in His love. Maybe, God is asking you to take more time in your relationship with Him. Maybe you rarely, if ever, hear the cry of the less fortunate and God says, "go, do and give". Maybe you will refuse to engage in any number of self-indulgent habits and focus that time and energy on life changing opportunities. Lent is a time to commit ourselves to being more reflective, more observant or more aware of our "automatic" or "auto-pilot" actions. Will you pay particular attention to your motives and actions? Will you ask, which ones need to be purified or abandoned? Perhaps, the scripture in 2 Chronicles can be your guiding light.

***If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land. 2 Chronicles 7:14 NKJV***

Lent is indeed how God draws us home to him as individuals. But it is also a communal journey as we worship and serve together. We are never journey alone, no matter how lonely we may feel. Let us share with each other, support each other and pray for each other on this journey ... on this pilgrimage to Easter joy. My heart is grateful for your loyalty, dedication and support to the missions and ministries of Mission Bend Church. I am optimistic for a Lenten Season filled with pure motives and actions that will bless you and your families. I look forward to the journey and thank God for our partnership in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

My heart is grateful for your loyalty, dedication and support to the missions and ministries of Mission Bend Church. I am optimistic of the Lenten Season with pure motives and actions that will become a blessing to you and your family. I look forward to the journey and thank God for our partnership in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Let us run with the vision.



Blessings,  
Rev. Dr. Carolyn McCall Livingston-Senior Pastor

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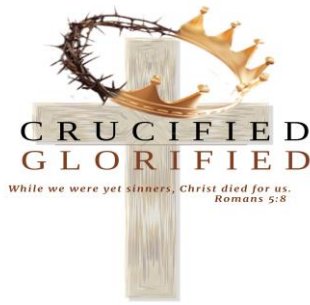
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# Dates to Remember



**Join us!**

**Worship Celebrations**

**Sunday 10:30am**

**CRUCIFIED GLORIFIED**

**The Trial of The People vs. Judas Iscariot**

- |            |  |
|------------|--|
| March 1st  | Act I - Nothing Is Hidden from God                   |
| March 8th  | Act II – All Have Sinned-All Need Forgiveness        |
| March 15th | Act III – When Others Tried to Save Themselves       |
| March 22nd | Act IV – In Bondage to Sin: We Cannot Free Ourselves |
| March 29th | Act V – Who Will Save Us?                            |

**Palm Sunday**

April 5th      *Procession of Palms*

**Easter Sunday**

April 21 *He Is Risen* Worship with Brass Quartet -and - Butterfly Release

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**Family - Fellowship - Fun**

**April 4th**

2:00pm      Eggstravaganza - Easter Egg Hunt

**April 9th**

6:00pm      Fish & Chips Supper - \$10.00

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## What is Lent?

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Lent, the period of 40 days before Easter (excluding Sundays), begins on Ash Wednesday and ends at sundown on Holy Saturday, the evening before Easter.

Lent comes from the Anglo-Saxon word *lencten*, which means "spring." The forty days represents the time Jesus spent in the wilderness, enduring the temptation of Satan and preparing to begin his ministry.

During Lent, we enter into a season of preparation, self-reflection and repentance when we seek to literally "turn around" and realign our lives and focus toward God. It is a time to give up things as well as take on new life-giving practices, helping us rid ourselves of distractions and our own selfish desires. By doing so, we seek to live and love as more faithful disciples of Jesus Christ.

Sundays in Lent are not counted in the forty days because each Sunday represents a "mini-Easter" and the reverent spirit of Lent is tempered with joyful anticipation of the Resurrection. This year may we experience the anticipation of the Resurrection through the life of Simon Peter, a faithful follower of Jesus Christ.

## Ash Wednesday

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The first day of Lent marks the beginning of a period of reflection and penance. In the Bible, sprinkling oneself with ashes was traditionally a sign of one's sorrow for having committed sins. In the Christian tradition, Ash Wednesday also marked the beginning of preparation for the understanding of the death and resurrection of Christ.

The particular symbolism of ashes for this day comes from a practice in the Roman Catholic church in which the ashes from the palms used in the preceding year's Palm Sunday celebration were blessed. On the first day of Lent, the Priest used these ashes to mark a cross on the forehead of each worshiper. This practice has become a part of Ash Wednesday services in many United Methodist churches.

Today, during some Ash Wednesday services, the minister will lightly rub the sign of the cross with ashes onto the foreheads of worshipers. The use of ashes as a sign of mortality and repentance has a long history in Jewish and Christian worship. Historically, ashes signified purification and sorrow for sins.

It is also traditional in our church to save the palm branches from the previous Palm Sunday service and burn them to produce ashes for this service. In some churches, a small card or piece of paper is distributed on which each person may write a sin or hurtful or unjust characteristic. The cards are then brought to the altar to be burned with the palm branches. The ash cross on the forehead is an outward sign of our sorrow and repentance for sins.

Ash Wednesday emphasizes two themes: our sinfulness before God and our human mortality. The service focuses on both themes, helping us to realize that both have been triumphed through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

## Our Stories are a Call to Faith and Redemption

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There are many stories in this devotional. They open us up to each other in ways that only storytelling can. They show us our visions, strengths, weaknesses, struggles and fears. Most importantly, they show us God in each other. As we explore each other's stories this Lenten season, let us reflect and pray for discernment for what these stories are telling us about Christ in us.

Lent is a time of prayer and reflection. A time when we journey with Jesus to his death and resurrection. It is a time for us to understand the true meaning of redemption. This is a daunting, yet exhilarating goal. It means that the spiritual life, not just during Lent, but every day, is hard work. But the reward is immeasurable. It involves starting at the bottom and working our way up. It is working through all of our sins knowing that the blood of Jesus Christ will sustain and redeem us each time we struggle or fall.

When we comprehend the Light of Jesus Christ and what it means for our redemption, we stay at the foot of the cross holding on to the fruit of the spirit individually and collectively, remembering as the Apostle Paul wrote: ***In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. Ephesians 1:7-8***

Linda Richards-Best  
Chairperson, MBUMC Board of Stewards

# March Acts of Kindness Calendar

# 2020

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>1</b>	2 Say a Prayer for a loved one	3 Call a Senior	4 Bring a meal to a Friend	5 Give to Charity	6 Pray for Children	7 Fast from Gossip
<b>8</b>	9 Pray for our Military	10 Read a Psalm	11 Avoid a Temptation	12 Spend some time in Silence	13 Pray for Peace	14 Fast from Technology
<b>15</b>	16 Do a random act of Kindness	17 Read something Inspirational	18 Spend time with a Friend	19 Do a daily chore with Joy	20 Help a Friend or Relative	21 Fast from TV
<b>22</b>	23 Pray for a Friend in Need	24 Call a distant Friend	25 Pray for our Pastor and Church	26 Exercise	27 Try Meditation	28 Forgive someone who hurt You
<b>29</b>	30 Prepare a meal for Someone	31 Spend some time in Nature				



## Thursday, February 27th – Opening Prayer

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*Lord, in this time of Lent,*

*Teach me to cut ties with greed and feast on Love.*

*Teach me to abstain from overindulgence and utilize self-control.*

*Teach me to filter out selfish thoughts and focus on those in need.*

*Teach me to fend off insecurity and to embrace grace.*

*Lord, in this time of Lent.*

*Help me to commit each new day with the following:*

*Just for today I will not worry.*

*Just for today I will not be angry.*

*Just for today I will do my work honestly.*

*Just for today I will give thanks for my many blessings.*

*Just for today I will be kind to my neighbor and every living thing.*

*Lord in this time of Lent.*

*Thank you for the freedom you give,*

*To soak up your word, rest in the warmth of your love*

*And bathe in the power of your Spirit.*

*Amen.*

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**Read Psalm 19 & 1 Timothy 6: 6-21**

*Contributed by Suzanne King*

## Friday, February 28<sup>th</sup> -Journey

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### Read Matthew 16:21-26

**When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. Luke 9:51 NRSV.**

Luke says that Jesus “set his face to go to Jerusalem.” He told the disciples it meant his suffering, death and resurrection. Their reaction? “God forbid it!” We often want to avoid suffering for our faith.

This period of Lent is a time for thinking about what kind of sacrifice God is asking of us. We should listen for God’s will and how we might be used by God to invite others to know Jesus, to teach them the Bible, to pray for our enemies, and to give money sacrificially for God’s work. All of this is costly. “Setting our face” to follow Jesus then requires that we follow through and do our best to obediently do God’s work.

The first step in our Lenten journey is deciding to follow Jesus. It is a good step to take and helps us claim our identity as Christians and as church members.

The second step is learning what it means to follow Christ. We are called to be holy, to love God with all we have and to love our neighbors as ourselves. We need God’s sanctifying grace given through weekly worship, prayer, Bible Study and Christian community to continue on the journey.

The third step is perseverance. The going will get tough at points, and we need to have the spiritual strength to keep heading in the same direction. Jesus persevered to the end and was faithful unto death.

Thinking about Jesus’ Lenten journey should give us the guidance we need for our lives as his disciples.

### Thought for the Day

Perseverance on the journey is a gift from God

**Prayer:** Oh God, when our journeys get difficult, give us an extra quantity of grace to give us the gift of perseverance and determination to keep following you. Amen.

**Prayer Focus:** Deciding to do the right thing

Written by Bishop Scott Jones, Texas Annual Conference

## Saturday, February 29<sup>th</sup>-Not a Building, Not a Gathering

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### Read John 3: 12-16

**For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. John 3:16 NKJV**

Traditionally, we've used the word "church" in a number of ways. For instance, we say "I went to church today", or "We had good church today." We use the word "church" to define either a physical location or any religious gathering. While most individuals clearly understand what is meant by these statements, using this very powerful word in this manner not only takes it out of context, but it also dilutes its power and meaning. The church is not a building, nor is the church merely a gathering. The church is more about people than anything else. The church is not a building, but rather is a "called out" people.

Think about it, would God have given His only son for a building, song or program? Not at all! "For God so loved the world (dying and lost people) that HE gave his only begotten son, that whoever believes in HIM shall not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

The church is about people. However, is the church more about us, our breakthrough, or our blessing, than it is about those who are lost and in darkness?". Have we begun to drift from our missional priorities? Are we more consumed with ourselves rather than those who stand in need of our Savior?

Romans 12:5 declares that we "the church" are one body in Christ—many members, yet one body. If the church rises up and begins to shift its focus to the lost, then maybe the glory of God can be seen in a way that this world has never seen before. Will you do your part this Lenten Season?

### Thought for the Day:

How much do we love and show the love of God as the body of Christ in the world?

**Prayer:** Lord, help to create "church" within us and in the world. Amen

**Prayer Focus:** Embracing the true meaning of church

**Written by** Rev. Dr. Carolyn McCall Livingston



**BE STILL AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD!!!**

*Reflections at Archbishop Joseph A. Fiorenza Park Hwy 6*

*Photo Taken By: Linda Richards-Best*

## Monday, March 2nd – Seeing the Face of God

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### **Read Luke: Genesis 32: 28 and Genesis 33: 4**

**"You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with humans". Genesis 32:28. NRSV**

In Genesis, we see the story of Jacob - he wrestled with "a man". At the end, the "man" tells him that his name is no longer Jacob, but Israel, because "you have striven with God and with humans. . ." On the heels of that story comes the story of Jacob (Israel) going out to meet his brother Esau, the brother he cheated not once, but twice, stealing his birthright AND their father's blessing! He leads Rachel, Leah, and all their children out, ready to meet whatever fate his brother has in store for him. But what he sees in Esau isn't an angry man bent on hurting him - he sees a loving brother who falls on his neck, embraces and kisses him! Surely in this one act, I believe Jacob sees in his brother the face of God.

Have you ever done something for which you thought someone could never forgive you? Or been so ashamed of something that you did, that when you admitted it to another human being you thought that you'd be forever cut out of their lives? I have. And when that person forgives you, and acts in a Christ-like way - loving and accepting you instead - it truly IS seeing the face of God! Very few of us have the gift of seeing visions, but we can all see other human beings just like us. And when others choose to follow Christ, forgiving us instead of condemning us, we can see the face of God.

Thought of the Day: Who has seen the face of God in you?

**Prayer:** Heavenly God, forgive me for those times I have hurt and betrayed others and You. And God - please help others forgive me too, if it be your will. In Jesus' name I ask it. Amen.

**Prayer Focus:** Forgiveness and Reconciliation

**Written by** Mary Jane Newton

**Read John 3:14-18**

**They said to each other, when he talked with us along the road and explained the Scriptures to us, didn't it warm our hearts? Luke 24:32 CEB**

On 1/15/20, I was on a Christian Overeater's Anonymous War Room phone prayer meeting when they were praying for the Lord to bind up the brokenhearted and heal those wounded in spirit. Suddenly, my chest (almost my whole torso) grew exceedingly warm inside and out for several minutes. The Lord was touching me with healing and it felt wonderful! I have had great peace since then. God truly warmed my heart!

Here is the chorus from the hymn "He Touched Me" by Bill Gaither, Page 367 in the United Methodist Hymnal: He touched me, O he touched me, and O the joy that floods my soul! Something happened, and now I know, He touched me and made me whole."

**Thought for the Day**

God loves us with an everlasting love and wants to heal us and make us whole.

**Prayer:** Dear Lord, please help us to receive your everlasting love, healing and wholeness, to your Glory, Honor and Praise. In Jesus' name. Amen

***Prayer Focus:*** God's Healing Touch

**Written by** Peggy Moree

## Wednesday, March 4<sup>th</sup> - Worrying is a Waste of Time

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### Read Matthew 6:25-30

**Therefore, I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Matthew 6: 25-25 NSRV**

Jesus told us that worrying about the things of this world is useless. When we worry, we allow our minds to be fixed on difficulties or troubles in our lives, which in turn make us anxious, uneasy and sometimes sick without hope. Worrying is something we do in a state of uncertainty over the actual or potential; meaning that we worry about things that haven't even happened yet. Instead of worrying, cast your cares on the one who has clothed the fields with flowers of beauty. Trust God and be mindful of your thoughts. Keep your mind fixed on your provider. God keeps His promises. Don't worry about "it", whatever "it" is. Instead, trust God.

### Thought for the Day

Keep your mind and heart fixed on the finished work of Jesus Christ and don't worry about it.

**Prayer:** Dear God, thank you for bringing heaven down to earth. Spirit of God take away any fears that have made way into our lives causing us to worry. Father God help us to keep our minds focused on you and your goodness, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### Prayer Focus: Worry

**Written by:** Rev. Cathleen Haughton

## Thursday, March 5<sup>TH</sup> – Listening to God

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### Read Psalm 46:10-11

**...Be still and know that I am God... Psalm 46:10 NIV**

God speaks to us in many ways and times. Sometimes His voice is loud and clear, but often it is a soft voice, and we must listen carefully when we hear it. To do this we must find a quiet moment daily to study his Word and sense his direction. Are you willing to pray sincerely and quietly wait for God's response?

If you truly desire to hear God's voice, you must listen carefully, you must do this in the silence of your quiet with a willing heart.

### **Thought for the Day**

The purpose of all prayer is to find God's will

**Prayer:** Abba Father, I whisper to you. My heart and soul are quiet now. I long to hear your voice. Fill me with the Holy Spirit, so that I can become one with you. In your son's name. Amen

### **Prayer Focus: God's Word**

**Written by** Linda Hooker



## Friday, March 6<sup>TH</sup> – God Knows

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### **Read Psalm 139: 1-6 & 13-15 NIV**

Verses 1-6: O Lord, you have searched me, and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down, you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue, you know it completely, O Lord. You hem me in- behind and before; you have laid your hand upon me. Such Knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.

Verses 13-15: For you created my innermost being, you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful; I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place

### **Thought for the Day** God knows us all

**Prayer:** Dear Lord, thank you for creating me and always loving me

**Prayer Focus:** God's Creation

**Written by** Rebecca Gazaway

## Saturday, March 7TH – The Divinity of Christ and Resisting Temptations

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### Read Philippians 2:3-6

**In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage. Philippians 5-6 NIV.”**

Jesus is found in every encounter; with the sick, poor, and nameless. The story is in Matthew 4. Satan challenges Jesus to turn stones to bread, jump off the temple to land unscathed, and promises all the treasures and kingdoms of the world in exchange for Jesus’ worship of him.

None of us would be tempted to accept those challenges because we know we aren’t capable of doing them. The challenge for Jesus, therefore, was to not use His powers. Theologian William Sanday described the temptations of Christ as “the problem of what to do with supernatural powers”.

Satan was not looking for proof of Christ’s divinity; he was looking for Jesus to discredit himself. Jesus had to resist showing off. Proving Himself to the devil would have been an act of pride; accepting Satan’s challenges would have discredited Jesus as worthy to be Christ or Savior.

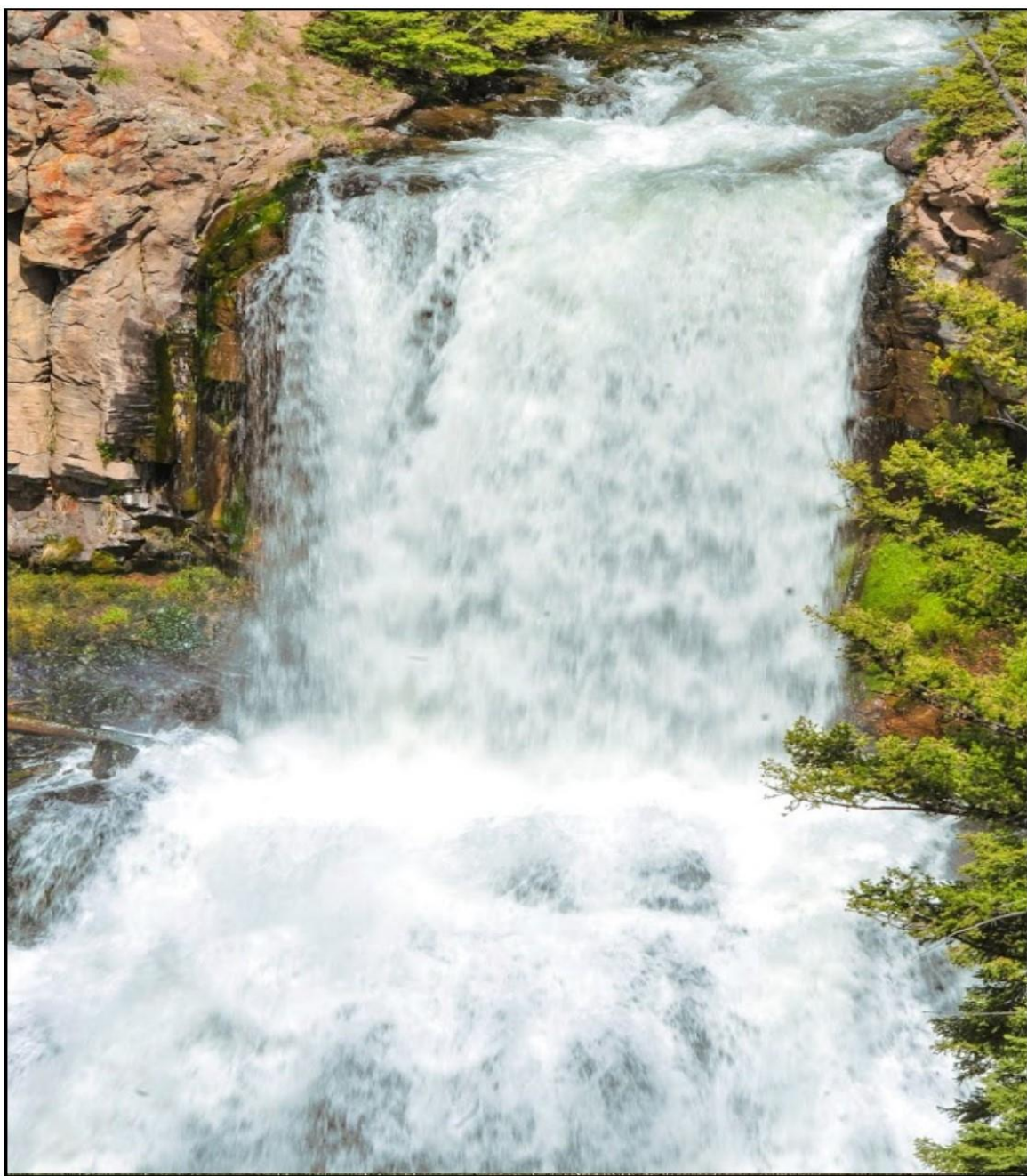
At the very end of the gospel, Jesus used His supernatural powers on the cross for our good; it was His divinity that made His blood sacrifice possible for us to be reconciled to God. Let Jesus’ example of His purpose for us keep us reminded of how we should respond to some sweet-sounding but prideful thought.

### Thought for the Day

Lord please don’t let us not forget who we are in you and let us live accordingly.

**Prayer:** Dear God, please keep us keenly aware of any beguiling voice that plucks the strings of our egos and let us respond as Jesus did by remembering that we are part of your plan and not Satan’s.

Written by Kathy Aaron



**Christ Is The Living Water!!!**

*Nature Photography*

*Photo Taken By: Michael Livingston*

**Read Psalm 66: 1-2**

**Make a joyful noise unto God, all ye lands.  
Sing forth the honour of His name, make His  
praise glorious. Psalm 66: 1-2 KJV**

I love to sing and make music. My parents loved to sing, and they encouraged me and my five siblings to sing and make music. I have always liked music, but as a child I did not know that it was a gift from God. I just liked it. Over the years, we six kids sang at home, at church, at school. By the time we were in middle school, we began singing together in various sibling groups. Beyond high school and college, we continued to sing in sibling groups for weddings and special family events. Although some of us moved away from our hometown, all six of us continued to sing in our church choirs.

Noise is a negative encounter of sound. Webster defines joyful as experiencing, causing, showing joy. As God's Word puts those two words together, we are encouraged to experience, cause and show joy. Let us sing unto the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms. (Psalm 95:1-2 KJV). Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands. Serve the Lord with gladness; come before his presence with singing. (Psalm 100:1-2 KJV) Be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord. (Ephesians 5:18b-19 NKJV)

**Thought for the Day**

How can we grow into our gifts?

**Prayer:** Dear God, Let the word of Christ dwell in us richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in our hearts to the Lord. And whatever we do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him. (Colossians 3:16-17 NKJV) May it be so, even today, Amen

**Written by Nancy Denison**

**Read Psalm 139**

**You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is so high that I cannot attain it. Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence?  
Psalm 139:5-7**

In his book *1984*, George Orwell wrote about a political presence known as “Big Brother” who watched over everyone. And because his intent was to maintain absolute control over people, the concept of “Big Brother” was terrifying.

What a contrast to our heavenly Father, who sees all that we do, and yet responds to us with patience, tenderness, and love. Far from wanting to control us, he simply asks that we remain true to our purpose in creation: to be in communion with him. In fulfilling our purpose in creation, in finding meaning in life through our connection with our God, we are fulfilled.

Does God need our love and attention? Certainly not, it is not for his sake that God seeks a relationship with us, but for ours. He is our loving Father and can do nothing except act in the best interest of his beloved children. How wonderful to be able to claim ourselves as sons and daughters of the author of creation. How good it is to be in the family of God!

**Thought for the Day**  
God is our Big Brother!

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, I know you are ever mindful of me. Help me to be ever mindful of you. Mold me and make me your faithful servant, that I may live a life totally for you. AMEN.

**Written by Connie Fowler**

## Wednesday, March 11<sup>th</sup> – The Love of Christ

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### Read 1 Corinthians 13: 4-13

**And now these three remain: And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.**

### 1 Corinthians 13: 13 NIV

When I think of the impending decisions facing the United Methodist church regarding the LGBTQ community, I am filled with contradictory ideas. I anticipate that full inclusion of LGBTQ persons will be a dividing issue for many congregants at Mission Bend United Methodist Church as well as the entire United Methodist church. No matter how ambivalent I may feel regarding this issue, I know that we must go through this with as much love as possible. Love is the main thing that God expects of us as Christians. God says we must love him and others. This tells us how we must be towards our fellow man, and at the same time, reveals God's nature towards every person.

An author by the name of Stephen Mitchell said that “at the age of 30, Jesus had an extraordinary experience of waking up to the truth. With this revelation, Jesus became a man in love with God, who gave himself completely to the acts of human kindness that proceeded from that love”

### Thought for the Day

No matter what we do in life; without love everything we do is meaningless

**Prayer:** God allow the actions in my life to reflect the selfless love exhibited by your son Jesus, Christ.

**Prayer Focus:** Christ's Love for us.

**Written by** Katherine Odum

## Thursday, March 12<sup>TH</sup> – Planting Fruitful Seeds

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### **Read 1 Corinthians 3: 6-9**

**I planted a seed in your hearts, and Apollos watered it, but it was God who made it grow 1 Corinthians 3 NLT**

I was very fortunate to have Ms. Connie Fowler as a mentor growing up. My interactions with her in Sunday School and youth planted seeds in me to love God and do the right thing always.

When I learned that the church did not have an active youth group, I jumped at the opportunity to do the right thing and lend my talents to create one.

As Ms. Connie planted seeds many years ago, I pray that my efforts will do the same in the lives of the youth I serve today in Mission Bend's MYF.

### **Thought for the Day**

Do what is right, not what makes you comfortable

**Prayer:** Dear God. Please continue to plant seeds in me and in the church and give us all the strength to do what is right.

**Prayer Focus:** Those who teach and lead in the church.

**Written by** Katie Kerns

## Friday, March 13<sup>TH</sup>- His Way, Not Mine

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### Read Jeremiah 29:11

**For I know the plans I have for you", declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.  
NIV**

I have a hard time being patient. I like to have answers when I need them and then get to work doing what needs to be done. I am reminded with this verse, that God always knows what I need and all that is required of me is to rely on HIM. Oh, my days would be so much easier if I just got out of the way.

### **Thought for the Day**

Rely on and trust God. His ways are better than mine!

**Prayer:** Lord, give me the patience to follow you. Amen!

### **Prayer Focus:**

Quiet Time

**Written by** Tami Laugharn, Woodlands UMC



Saturday, March 14<sup>TH</sup> – Lets Get Rid of Fear

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**Read 2 Timothy 1:7**

**For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline. 2 Timothy 1:7 NIV**

Fear is the reason we never become what God wants for us. Fear is the reason that we don't level up, find joy in being challenged, or even step out in faith. Fear tempts us to stay right where we are, in our comfort zones, even if it means complacency. When fear begins to rise up in us whether physically, emotionally, or spiritually, we must remember that we have the tool we need to remove fear - it's called the Word of God. God is on your side and will help remove all fear and doubt.

**Thought for the Day**

Do not let fear control you.

**Prayer:** Lord, you know we live in a world that is confusing at times, you also know that we struggle with fear in our lives. When life becomes too chaotic, and fear steps in, remind us to call on you. Help us to trust in you God and declare that fear will not control us. We claim that our hearts, minds and spirits will be open to peace and comfort in Jesus name.

**Prayer Focus:** Those struggling with Fear

**Written by** Marylyn Green

NANCE BARNETTE



**Read Luke 17: 5-6**

**The apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith! “He replied, “If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it will obey you. Luke 17: 5-6 NIV**

It was time to take off the training wheels on my granddaughter’s bike. The beginning of a new Big Step. Day one started slowly. She kept her eyes down, struggling to keep her feet on the familiar pedals, losing balance and tipping over. After an exhausting number of attempts, with no visible progress, we stopped.

Day two required a new strategy. With encouragement, Peyton stopped looking at her feet and kept her eyes straight ahead. She forgot about her feet being anchored to the pedals and took off down the road, legs on each side, pushing down the road and finding her balance! Her new path was shaky at best. Grinning ear to ear, she was driven by the exhilaration of winning the prize- riding her new bike!

Peyton’s experience reminds us that when we begin to follow Christ there will be times when we falter. It is so very important to get back up again and learn from our mistakes with the help of others whenever we need to.

**Thought for the Day**

Sometimes it takes a leap of faith to get to the prize

**Prayer:** Father, thank you for your love and grace on our journey to get to the prize

**Prayer Focus:** New Faith

**Written by** Monte Hyman

## Tuesday, March 17<sup>th</sup> – When God Calls

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### Read: Isaiah 6:8

**Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying: Whom shall I send? And who will go for us? And I said, ‘Here I Am. Send me.**

I love that music can keep me in the Word of God. Sometimes, the music is powerful classic pieces originally meant to be performed in great cathedrals or symphonic halls. Sometimes, the music comes from simple scripture such as Isaiah 6:8 when God asks who He can send to tell all the people. Dan Shutte composed *Here I Am, Lord* based on this text. It is a message that lets us know that the Lord gives us the risky choice to follow Him. It affirms that the Lord is creator of all-wind and sea, snow and rain, wind and flame. He has the power to rescue us from the dark and sin, to break our hearts of stone, to tend the poor and lame, and to provide a feast for us with the finest bread. He willingly gives his life for us. He asks us to go into the world and spread the Good News. We, like Isaiah, respond with: “Here I am Lord. Is it I Lord? I have heard you calling in the night. I will go Lord, if you lead me. I will hold your people in my heart.”

There are over 80 instances in both the Old and New Testaments where people have answered His call despite the risks involved. Abraham in Genesis 12:14, took the risk and obeyed the call to leave everything and everyone to go where God led him. By risking the journey, three major world religions were formed: Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. In the Gospels, the disciples answer Christ’s call to follow Him. In John, Nicodemus risked all by answering Christ’s call and later by tending to Christ’s lifeless body. We must have faith in our Creator and trust that when he calls us we obey Him knowing that His plan for us is wonderful and that he is with us all the way.

### Thought for the Day

Am I listening to God’s call to me?

**Prayer:** Lord, give me the courage to take the risk and answer your call with “Here I Am Lord, Send Me.” In the holy name of Jesus Christ, amen.

**Prayer Focus:** Those resisting God’s Call

Written by Sandra Bratton

## Wednesday, March 18<sup>th</sup> – Jesus Sends Out the Twelve

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### Read Matthew 10:16-20

**Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; therefore, be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves.” Matthew 10: 16 NASB**

In Matthew 10:5-42, Jesus sends out the twelve to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matthew 10:6). He instructs the twelve to preach, saying, “the Kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 10:7). He tells them to “heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons; freely you received, freely give” (Matthew 10:8). He tells them “Do not acquire gold, or silver, or copper for your money belts” (Matthew 10:9). Jesus points out why money is not needed: “for the worker is worthy of his support. And into whatever city or village you enter, inquire who is worthy in it; and abide there until you go away” (Matthew 10:10-11). Jesus instructs them to bless the hospitable: “And as you enter the house, give it your blessing. And if the house is worthy, let your greeting of peace come upon it” (Matthew 10:12-13). Then Jesus actually sends them out: “Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; therefore, be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves” (Matthew 10:16).

### Thought for the Day

Jesus instructs His twelve to have pure motives: (1) Preach the Good News, (2) heal the sick, raise the dead, cast out demons, (3) because you freely received, don't charge money, (4) bless the people who offer hospitality, and (5) they must be shrewd as serpents AND be innocent as doves. This expands on the Great Commission.

**Prayer:** Lord, I confess my motives are not always pure. I apologize and repent. Please instill pure motives in my heart and head and allow me to fulfill thy Great Commission. In Jesus' name, Amen.

**Prayer Focus:** Developing a pure heart

**Written by** Mike Ellis

**Read John 16:33**

**For the Grace of God has appeared that offer Salvation to all people  
Titus 2:11 NIV**

God's Grace is Divine and though we could look at it as undeserved - it sanctifies, strengthens and inspires us to do good or virtuous acts of kindness for ourselves and others. We are given Grace by the Lord but it's up to us to accept and receive it. God does not force us to accept His Grace, but He has some expectations when we accept it. We are to follow and live lives worthy of Him and be willing to live by the Spirit and resist temptations to live by the flesh. I have been a recipient of God's Grace. He has given me the strength to overcome many challenges that I faced in my life and most importantly he has given me a partner whom he has also graced with the gift of being there, working side by side with me throughout my adult life.

There were times when I faced health challenges that seemed impossible to overcome and in the midst of giving in or thinking there was nothing that we could do, God stepped right in and said "You must know that you cannot rely on your own strength and understanding" in instances such as these" but that I am always there for you as "I have told you these things, so that you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." I know that in my daily interaction with God and my brothers and sisters in Christ, I can always rely on God for His Grace and His Mercy, so I take solace in knowing that regardless of how difficult or challenging the circumstances seem - we are all just a "Mercy" call away from the help and good resolution we seek. So, let us all be reminded that we must pray unceasingly (every moment of every day) giving thanks and seeking God's Grace upon each other in **LOVE!!!**

**Thought for the Day**

God's Grace is available for all to claim it

**Prayer:** Dear Lord, help us to always be mindful that your Grace is available to all of us.

**Prayer Focus:** Those Yearning for God's Grace  
**Written by** Hylton James

## Friday, March 20<sup>th</sup> – Teach Us to Pray

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### Read Matthew 6:5-8

**And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Matthew 6:5 NIV**

Jesus modeled a lifestyle of prayer and the importance of solitude. Jesus' prayer life was so impacting that in Luke 11.1 we read the following request by his disciples: He was praying in a certain place, and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray..."

Prayer is to be personal and not done for attention or to be measured on how "spiritual or religious" we can appear to be. Going into your room is not only a physical place but it is a metaphor for your heart. Jesus is encouraging for prayer to be applied as a spiritual practice. Early Orthodox Church Father, St. Basil the Great provides a description on prayer that Jesus modeled and is encouraging us to apply from his words in Matthew 6.5-8.

***This is how you pray continually, not by offering prayer in words, but by joining yourself to God through your whole way of life, so that your life becomes one continuous and uninterrupted prayer.***

Prayer was never meant to be a monologue or us talking to God giving him our grocery list of things to do for us...or sadly...prayer has become a ritual rather than what it was meant to be...the author of the book, Intimacy with God, Thomas Keating says...Prayer is Divine Therapy:

### **Thought for the Day** How to make prayer a discipline

**Prayer:** Our loving God, lure us towards silence and solitude trusting that your Divine Presence will embrace our weary hearts. Ignite a fervent desire for us to surrender in the Holy Space you have provided for us where our transformation is possible. We desire to be instruments and advocates of Your undying love, Your hope and Your grace. Amen.

**Written by Rev. Victor Resendiz-Memorial Drive UMC**

## Saturday, March 21<sup>ST</sup> – Gazing Upon Christ

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**Read: Numbers 21:4-9**

**And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. ‘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 3:14-16 NRSV**

Our Lenten journey takes us into the wilderness every year for around 40 days. I wonder what we can learn from Moses and the Israelites whose wilderness wandering lasted relentlessly for 40 years! As we drop in on the former slaves recently escaped from Egypt, they have broken their covenant promise to God. In their indignation and impatience with the way life was unfolding in the desert, they blamed God for their circumstances. Have you ever felt this kind of impatience with your life? with God? We might join the Israelites in their grumbling, “Why, O Lord?” We may cry long into the night in our grief or get angry with God in our frustration, “How long, O Lord?” I’ve never really gotten an answer as to why bad things happen in our lives nor do I think I ever will. I think maybe the only reason I even ponder it is that it would give me someone to blame. That just keeps me drowning in the rushing waters of my regrets. It’s so easy to become wrapped up in our own stuff. But while John does not minimize our lives, he does encourage us to look past our sins and our troubles so that we might gaze upon Christ and find grace. It’s not about us, it’s about God. Right here, right now and into eternity. It is about the love of God “with us” and the immeasurable gifts we receive when we keep our focus on God.

### **Thought for the Day**

How can I gaze upon Christ and breathe in the love of God today?

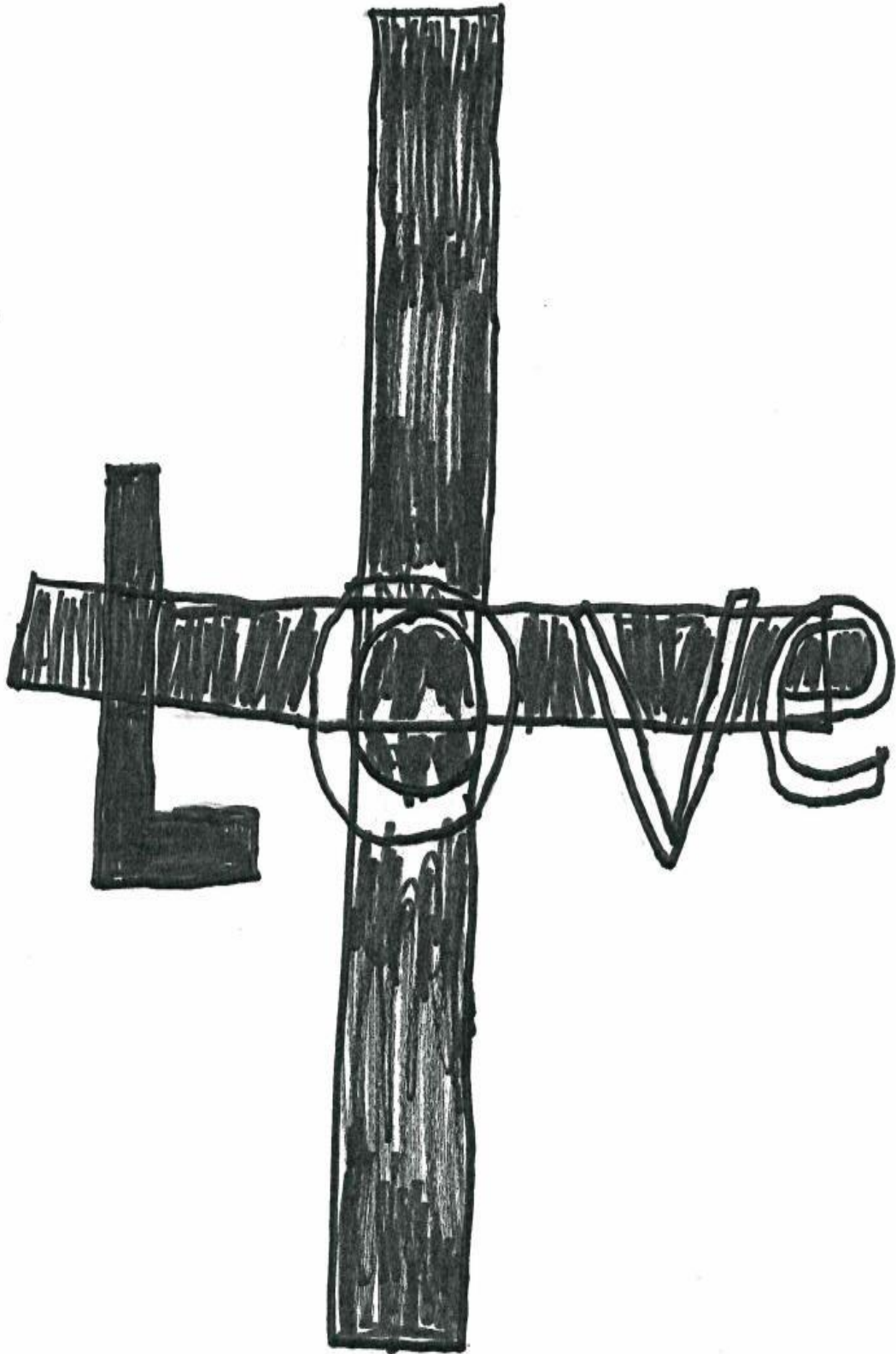
**Prayer:** Take a moment for a deep cleansing breath. Spend a few moments centering yourself on God. In your imagination, gaze upon Christ as you settle into a place of openness within yourself. Breathe this prayer often and as long as it takes to know God’s love for you: ***Breathing in ... Gazing upon Christ (pause) I am filled with love (pause)***

**Prayer Focus:** God’s Love

**Written by** Rev. Cindy Serio- Holy Covenant UMC



PEYTON HYMAN



## Monday, March 23<sup>rd</sup> – Leaning on God

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### Read Proverbs 3:5-7

**I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. Philippians  
4:13 WBT**

It was eighth grade. I was getting ready to run in a 400-meter race. I remember praying before starting the race, that I would do well. In the prayer, I repeated the Scripture that I know that “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me”. I ended up winning that race, and I know without a doubt that giving it all to God in prayer made it all possible!

I believe that as youth it is so important for us to show our faith to our friends at school, especially at times when we feel that we can't pass a test, make friends, or win a race like I did. I am so grateful for my faith in God and his love for me!

### Thought for the Day

How important it is to trust in God

**Prayer:** Dear God, let people know that you are always there for us especially in times of need

**Prayer Focus:** Trust

**Written by** Teni Olufeko- Mission Bend MYF

**Read Isaiah 40:28-31**

**He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Isaiah 40: 29 *KJV***

If you have hope in the Lord, then great things will come upon you. Believing in God is the best thing ever! And it makes you a better person. You will grow from God and if you become sad or tired from life, God's love and grace will give you strength.

I can say this because many times God has given me the strength, I need to face a bad situation. I recommend God and His love to everyone!

**Thought for the Day**

Strength from God is a great blessing.

**Prayer:** Dear God, help us to look only to you in our weakness because in you we will find strength

**Prayer Focus:** Faith

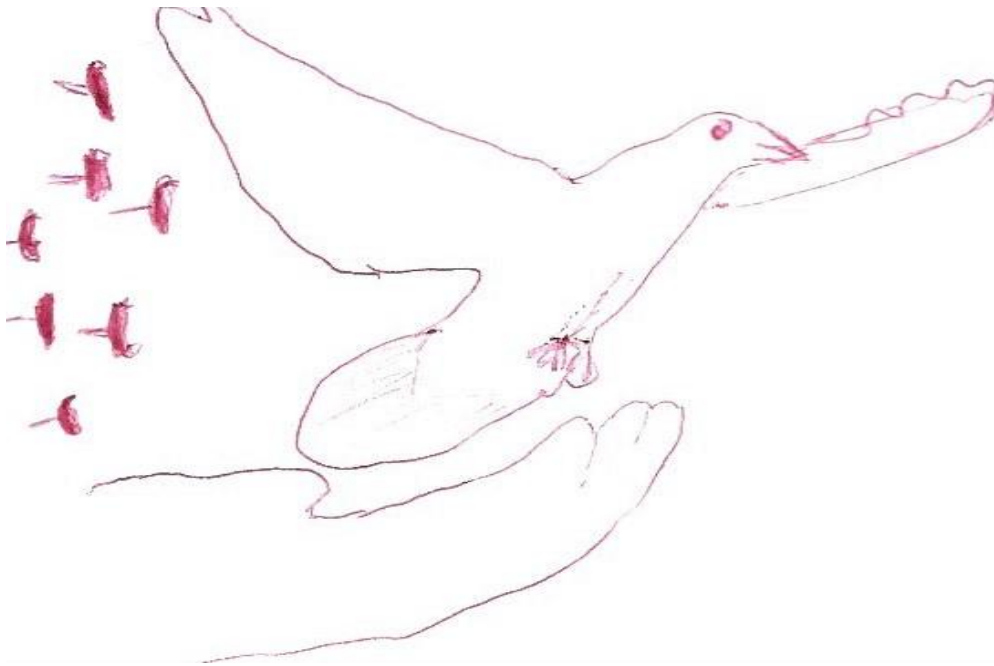
**Written by** Tracy Amoah – Mission Bend MYF

Wednesday, March 25<sup>th</sup> – Spirit of Fear

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**Read 2 Timothy 1:6-8**

**For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. 2 Timothy 1:7 NKJV**



**Thought for the Day**

Don't forget power, love and a sound mind always outweigh fear

**Prayer:** Dear Lord, thank you for everything you do for your people, and for letting us know that fear does not have to control our lives. Amen

**Prayer Focus:** Those who live in fear  
**Written by** Brooklyn Barnett Mission Bend MYF

Thursday, March 26<sup>th</sup> – We are all God's Children

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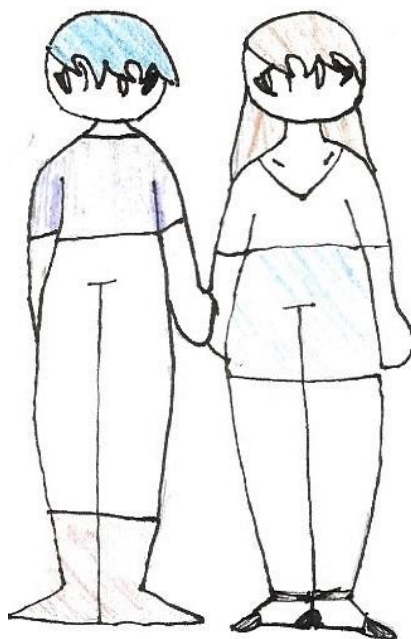
**Read John 15: 13-17**

**This is my command: Love each other. John 15:17 NET Bible**

**Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven**

**Matthew 5:16**

Love one another no matter what race, sexuality or where they come from.  
Love people for who they are



**Thought for the Day**

Be kind to others

**Prayer:** Holy God help us to see past barriers. Help us to express the love that we have. Make your face shine through us

**Prayer Focus:** Love

**Written by** Shelby Smart- Mission Bend MYF

**Read Isaiah 41: 10-13**

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

I love this scripture because it always reminds me that God is with me. When I feel fear, I remember that I have God. When I need strength, I turn to God and he lifts me up. Every time in my life, when times have been hard, God has been with me, and he will be there for all of you in your times of need!



**Thought for the Day**

Always know that God is with you everywhere, throughout your whole day and your life, and he is here to help you.

**Prayer:** Dear God please answer the prayers of those who are experiencing tough times and let them feel your presence.

**Prayer Focus:** God's Strength

**Written by** Tito Olufeko – Mission Bend MYF

## Saturday, March 28<sup>th</sup> – Love-The Key Spiritual Ingredient

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### Read 1 John 4:9-11 (NKJVZ)

*In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.*

*1 John 3:1; John 13:34-35 NKJVZ*

Herein, I am sharing from my heart – based on deep reflection over the Christmas Season into the New Year 2020. I reflect on the diversity within our community, and our church, Mission Bend United Methodist (MBUMC). In Sunday Worship I marvel at the broad spectrum of cultures from around the world, here to fellowship with the Lord. We comprise many races, colors, and creed; all coming together to sing God-Songs of praise, and to thank God for His Mercies and His never-ending Love for us. God's Love for us is all-embracing and constant, through Jesus Christ our Savior. We study His Words: discipleship classes, small private groups. His Words are embraced on Sundays when the main Message, which includes reminders of His promises, is delivered powerfully by our Pastor. In deep meditation, I reflect...Is God's great Love for us transitioned into that same quality of Spiritual Love we should all feel for each other – as He intended? Are we divided? Are His precepts upheld, as in - that we should "love one another as God so Loved us"? Are we binding together through God's kind of Love, and so becoming one in Christ? Or, are we functioning as broken pieces, divided, without unity, attitudinal, full of criticism, hatred, contempt, fault-finding, cynicism, unforgiving...? I pray that the right Spirit be renewed in us each day.

Lenten period is upon us. I pray we become more enlightened; recognize **God's kind of Love** is the **KEY Spiritually Binding Ingredient** that will make us truly love one another; allowing us to become **Spiritually one** - and **remain one in Christ**. He commands this kind of love. May we recognize the power of God's Love, God's kind. What a harmonious place in which to be: God's Church. I love my church...MBUMC.

### Thought for the Day

If God loved us so much, we are to love one another.

**Prayer:** Most gracious Heavenly Father God, we pray to be your shining disciples through love of one another.

**Prayer Focus:** Love one another. God commanded it.

**Written by** Yucca James



**QUIET TIME!!!**

*Reflections at Archbishop Joseph A. Fiorenza Park Hwy 6*

*Photo Taken By: Linda Richards-Best*



**Read Romans 8: 38-39**

**For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8: 38-39 NASB**

When I was a young woman, I never thought of a time when I would feel alone. I was eleven years old when I lost my great-grandmother, and since then I have said goodbye to my parents, sister, uncles, cousins and my spouse. On October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2019, my last and favorite aunt, who carried some of the same blood and DNA as I left this earth.

Even though I have experienced such loss I still have a loving family, church family and friends. With every loss, I have gained in many other ways that I could never have imagined at the time.

Because of God's word I know I am never alone because Christ is with me, before, behind me, beneath me, on my right, on my left, when I lie down, when I sit down, when I arise, in the heart of every man who thinks like me, in every eye that sees me and in every ear that hears me.

**Thought for the Day**

God has promised to never leave us, and he always keeps his promises

**Prayer:** We thank you the many blessings you have bestowed upon us; those that we know of and those that we sometimes take for granted. Amen.

**Prayer Focus:**

**Written by** Sandra Bordelon-First United Methodist, Missouri City

## Tuesday, March 31<sup>st</sup> – Calling America to Repentance

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### **Read Psalm Psalms 86:4-5**

**... Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul. For thou, Lord, art good and ready to forgive, and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee. Psalm 86 :5 KJV**

I thank you, Lord, for the abundant mercy You have shown, in rescuing me, wretched sinner that I am, from the jaws of death and from the worst consequences of my many misdeeds. You have not only rescued me, but You have cleaned me up and nourished me back to health, and further still, You have put me to work in Your harvest fields, and blessed me with more abundance than I ever thought my eyes would see, so that my soul is at peace and my heart sings Your praises.

O Lord, as Moses pleaded for the people of Israel, so I plead for the people of the United States of America, who blame all our current woes on others, being too arrogant and self-righteous to repent. Thus, we remain trapped in the same toxic cycles that have led us to this increasingly dangerous point in our life together. Grant me, and grant us, true repentance, the integrity to do a fearless, honest, and searching moral inventory of ourselves, and to amend our lives accordingly, that we may not have to suffer the catastrophe that is otherwise in store, in the now near future. We have sown the wind, and if we do not turn to You anew, we will surely reap the whirlwind. Have mercy on us, gracious Lord.

### **Thought for the Day**

Is it time to repent?

**Prayer Focus:** Facing our sins

**Written by** Phil Jones -Sunrise Ministries

# April Acts and Contemplations

# April 2020

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2	3	4
			Count your Blessings, & Write them down	Pray for your Church	Take Food to a Foodbank	Pray for our Country
<b>5</b> <b>PALM SUNDAY</b>	6 Spend half an hour in Silence	7 Contemplate Mary's loss of her Son	8 Research the act of crucifixion	9 Imagine Christ's anxiety in the Garden of Gethsemane	10 Contemplate Christ's agony on the Cross	11 Wear a black shirt/top in remembrance of Christ's Death
<b>12</b> <b>EASTER SUNDAY. CHRIST IS RISEN!</b>	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

## Wednesday, April 1<sup>st</sup> – Perseverance

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### Read Hebrews 10: 35-39

**Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope. Romans 5:3-4 ESV**

I was diagnosed with the life-threatening illness of Lupus in my early twenties, and without warning, my whole life changed. I watched my friends and siblings pursue and fulfil their dreams while I spent my days in hospitals, doctor's offices and my bed. I became almost completely dependent on my family and my parents' prayers and unwavering faith sustained me. Because I couldn't work for long periods or even attend college fulltime, I had to find other dreams and purpose for my life. I became a certified Early Childhood teacher, but after being let go because of absenteeism due to illness, I became the Caregiver for my many nieces and nephews. Through it all, I turned to God for strength.

When I had flareups from the Lupus, there was no fear of being fired and my siblings took care of me. I flourished. I taught my nephews to read and write before they went to school and today, they are thriving in their respective professions. This illness has affected my whole family. I am told that I am strong because I never complain, never saying out loud that sometimes I don't feel very strong. I have had excellent doctors, and make sure to follow their directions faithfully most of the time! I believe this has kept me alive. I know though, that my best doctor is God who put me here for a reason, and in retrospect, I understand that it was my faith in God, the love and support of my family and my attitude towards this illness that have all worked together to create in me the ability to thrive and thumb my nose at my illness.

### **Thought for the Day**

Look to God every day for strength.

**Prayer:** Create in me a fearless heart oh God. A heart grounded in the knowledge that you are my healer and guide

**Prayer Focus:** Those suffering from chronic illnesses  
**Written by** Violet Richards

## Thursday, April 2<sup>nd</sup> – Our Tears

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### Read Psalm 6

**I'm worn out from groaning. Every night, I drench my bed with tears;  
Psalm 6: 6 CEB**

My husband, Richard, and I recently watched the Netflix series *Messiah* Season One. In one of the episodes, the main character, Al-Masih, tells the CIA agent, “God hears the tears you don’t cry.” As one who doesn’t cry often, this struck home. The tears I don’t cry are for the young people in our country who are locked up for adolescent behaviors and for the students who are told in so many different ways that they aren’t welcomed in their home school. The tears I don’t cry are for the young families who are desperate for a life free from violence and tyranny and are stuck in a detention facility or holed up in Mexico because we can’t, as a nation, decide how to safely open our borders to these refugees. The tears I don’t cry are for all the ways we don’t lament our role in these daily injustices—one in four in Harris County under the age of 18 will go to bed hungry tonight; there are 24 beds in shelters designed to accept 16-18 year-olds in the fourth largest city in the US; affordable housing has declined post-Harvey while the need has increased. The tears I don’t cry are for the churches who don’t see they have the power to stand up against these wrongs because God is with us. In this Lenten Season, let us all cry aloud for all the ways we fall short.

### Thought for the Day

We all fall short; we all need forgiveness and God’s grace is expansive enough for everyone, especially the easily disposed and readily left out.

**Prayer:** Gracious Three-One God, surround me this day with your Holy Spirit that your presence and your guidance will empower and embolden me to do your will. Help me be quicker to forgive than to judge, quicker to love than to fear. And Dear Lord, move me to act through compassion. Amen.

**Prayer Focus:** Those Needing our help

**Written by** Rev. Carrie Leader- Houston reVision

## Friday, April 3<sup>rd</sup> – Prove Them Wrong

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### **Read Philippians 4: 13** **I can do all this through him who gives me strength.**

Do you have a dream in your heart that others say you will not be able to achieve? Others often attempt to discourage us from achieving our dreams...ours goals. The greatest factor for us is fear, false evidence appearing real. Our faith and trust must be in God, alone. God will guide us through the process of fulfilling our dream(s).

God's Word says that "We Can Do All Things Through Christ Who Strengthens Us" (Philippians 4:13). Whose opinion do you choose to believe, God's or man's? How bad do you want it? What are you willing to sacrifice? Be determined and stay the course.

It is essential for us to establish and maintain a personal relationship with God. We begin by reading and studying God's Word. Be quiet and still, God will speak to our hearts through the power of the Holy Spirit. When God speaks, we must take action. We must present our goals to God and let God lead us in the direction we should go. Don't procrastinate, we lose leverage. It is essential to listen to God and respond to His promptings. God wants us to be successful at accomplishing our dreams and plans.

We must envision our dreams and goals and make up our minds to step out in faith. Then move forward! It won't just happen! We must have a plan of action that has been shared with God. We must get ready; set up our process, then go forth diligently working to reach our goals. Forget the naysayers! If God says to move forward...then move forward. Shut out the other noises. Ask God to protect you during the process.

### **Thought for the Day**

**Prayer:** Lord, as we dare to dream, let us be reminded that so much is possible when we listen to you

### **Prayer Focus:**

**Written by Rev. Hazel Jackson**

**READ I JOHN 1:8-9**

**If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. <sup>9</sup> If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. ESV**

Jesus loves us through every area and circumstance of our lives. Always and everywhere God is! One's understanding of God's sovereignty, his state of being omnipresent can generate many thoughts and emotions. I have experienced immense freedom in acknowledging and accepting that God knows everything about each of us and loves us unconditionally. The cross demonstrated a love for you and me that is incomprehensible.

Lent continues to be one of the most significant and transformative times of year for me as I am challenged by God to be more present, more available and vulnerable. Yes, I have cried more during Lent, than perhaps any other season, but it has been more healing than any other time of year. I have learned and been blessed by the healing power of confessing from the deepest places in my mind and heart, places that God knows and longs for you and me to experience freedom. Free from hurt, pain, unforgiveness (of self and others).

As we open our hearts to God and invite Him to truly be Lord and Savior, confess with the certainty we are forgiven and long to be in right relationship with Christ and others; sweet whispers from the Holy Spirit begin to dwell within us; God's warm embrace comforts us, the calming streams of thought toward peace are released into our souls. Let us not allow our sin or the sin of others to oppress us. What began as a dreary, dark period of sackcloth and ashes becomes a brilliant tapestry created out of broken promises, denied or delayed dreams, fragile faith, replaced with hope, a vibrant vision and invigorated faith.

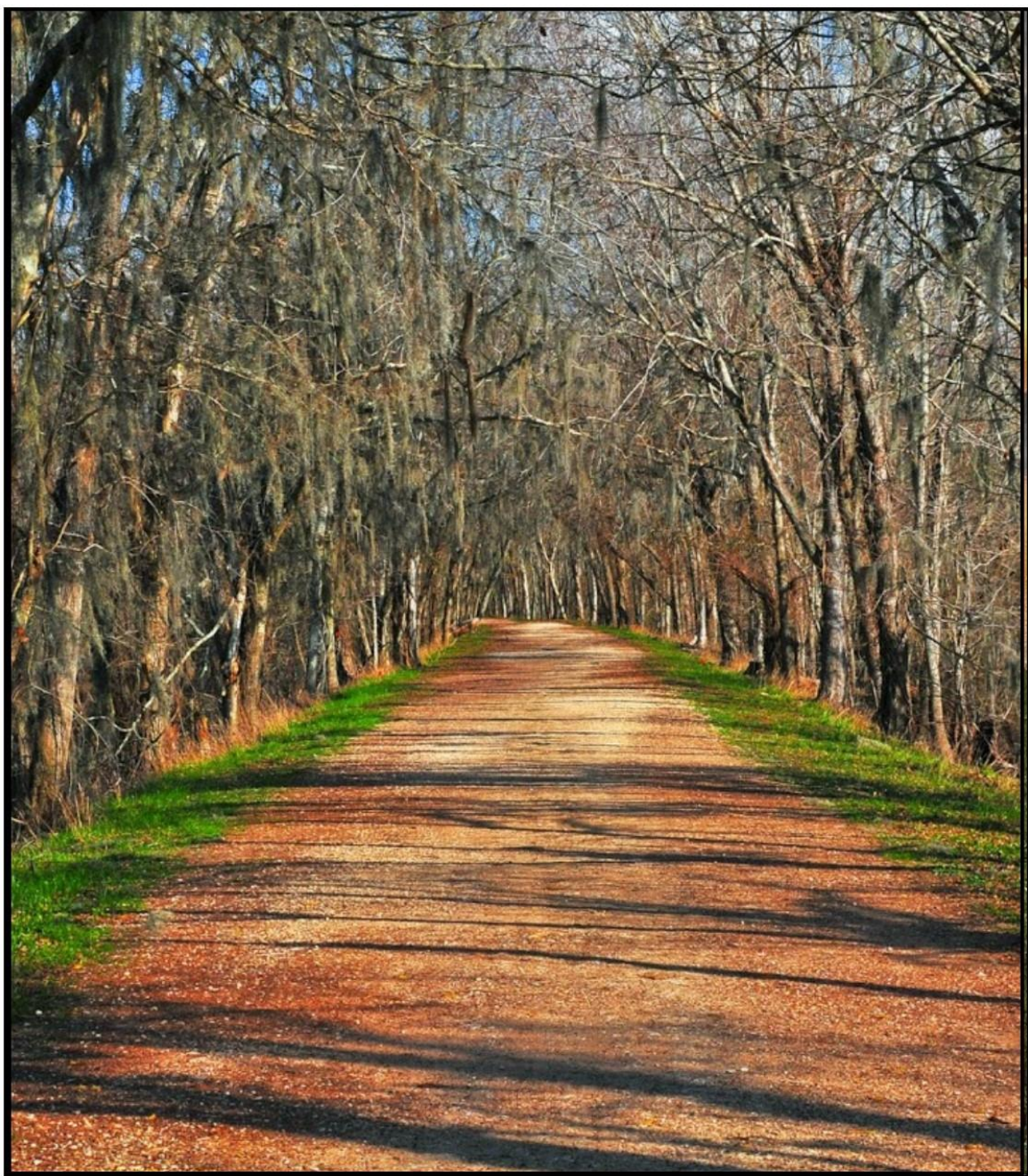
**Thought for the Day**

Do not be afraid to talk to confess to God

**Prayer:** Thank you God in and through Your Son Jesus Christ for loving and protecting us, amen

**Prayer Focus: Love**

**Written by** Rev. Michelle Hall-Christ Church UMC, Sugarland



## **THE ROAD TO GRACE!!!**

*Nature Photography*

*Submitted by: Pastor Carolyn McCall Livingston*



**READ JOHN 12: 1-2, 9-11**

**Because on account of him many of the Jews were going away [from the teaching and traditions of the Jewish leaders] and believing in Jesus [following Him as Savior and Messiah]. JOHN 12:11. AMP**

Six days before the Passover Feast, Jesus went to Bethany where his friends Mary, Martha and Lazarus lived. Many people followed him to Bethany not only to see him but to see Lazarus whom Jesus had raised from the dead. Lazarus had become a living testimony to the saving grace and power of the son of God and “on account of him many of the Jews were going away and believing in and adhering to Jesus”.

During this Lenten season, what a perfect time to commit to being better witnesses as we share our testimony and reflect on the sacrificial love that our Lord showed toward us on Calvary 2,000 years ago. Let’s pray that the Lord will give us a deep desire to share the gospel and not be secret, undercover disciples like Joseph of Arimathea. Pray that He will give us the confidence and boldness to speak His name and share the good news with family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, even strangers so they may not die in their sin and be separated from the living God forever.

When Jesus would not come down from the cross, His blood spoke for us. The question is “Will we speak for him?” As children of the Light who have been given the gift of eternal life, we must bear witness to the True Light and tell everybody we meet that Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Light! We **cannot** and **should not** keep it to ourselves!

**Thought for the Day**

**Prayer:** Father God, we give thanks for you and your saving grace. Inspire us with the confidence and faith to proclaim you loudly

**Prayer Focus:** Sharing the good news

Written by Rev. Claudette Sims-Wheeler Avenue Baptist Church

## Tuesday, April 7<sup>th</sup> – Go Ye Therefore

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### Read Matthew 28:1-20

**Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Matthew 28:19-20. KJV**

The body of Christ includes those who have been sent, called, and commissioned to carry the good news of Jesus Christ to a world whose news is ever changing. Whether we realize it or not, all of us are itinerant ministers of Christ. When we said yes to Jesus we agreed to God's plans and his way. To go where He appoints us. Daily our question should be, "Lord, what is my assignment today"?

### Thought for the Day

Not my will, but thy will be done.

**Prayer:** Lord, send me today as a witness of your grace and mercy. As I go, Holy Spirit lead and guide me so I may be about my Father's business.

**Prayer Focus:** Submitting to God's plans

Written by Rev. Hilda Marcel Gradnigo

## Wednesday, April 8<sup>th</sup> – What Type of Person do You Want to Be?

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### Read Ephesians 5:1-2

**Follow God's example, therefore as dearly loved children. And walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. Ephesians 5:1-2 NIV**

My parents were a great example of the scripture I have chosen. They did the best they could to follow the example of Christ to love as He loved us. They met during the Second World war when my father served in Glasgow, Scotland in the Army Air Corp. At the end of the war, the Scottish city girl and the farm boy from Texas joined forces in the United States to build a life and family based on the love of Jesus Christ.

My mother's pioneer spirit and love for justice (she wrote letters to congressmen protesting the Vietnam war!), coupled with my father's unconditional love, patience and kindheartedness served as examples for us children how lives based on the love of Christ should be lived!

We soaked it in, sometimes unknowingly, and today, we are all adults grounded in our parents' faith as well as our own. We were taught to look for the good in everyone and to work hard, especially after listening to our father's stories about how as a young man, he helped to support his parents and siblings by picking cotton in Texas and oranges in California. Everyone respected him as a fair, hardworking man.

What type of person do I want to be? I want to be the person my parents taught me to be, through the love of Jesus Christ. God had his hand in the lives of my parents, and they passed on the gift of loving and caring for people to me.

### Thought for the Day

Live your life in a way people may know God.

**Prayer:** My Heavenly Father, I want to be the example you lead in us, so I may show in my actions and in my character. Amen.

**Prayer Focus:** Those seeking purpose in life

Written by Lisa Asi

## Thursday, April 9<sup>th</sup>-Trust the Lord and He Will Take Care of You

### **Read Psalm 91**

**I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him  
will I trust.**

**Psalm 91:2 KJV**

Psalm 91 is a magical remedy for world issues that troubles us. The psalmist invites us to a personal profession of trust, with divine promises of deliverance. Believers are reassured that God will deliver. God will protect. God will answer, and He will save us and show us salvation through His Son Jesus Christ.

### **Thought for the Day**

Trust the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding!

**Prayer:** Dear God, sometimes our fears overwhelm us, and we feel as though we are drowning in a sea of darkness. Help us Lord to trust You and to give all worries and troubles up to You in this day. Lord, we thank You for always taking care of our every need and we thank You for courage to face whatever comes our way, with the full confidence that You are always with us. Lord, give us a strong heart full of hope, make us fearless as we trust You and pray in Jesus name, amen.

**Prayer Focus:** Trust God and fear not

**Written by** Rev. Cathleen Haughton

## Good Friday, April 10<sup>th</sup>– Take an Honest Look

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### Read Romans Psalm 139

**O Lord, you have searched me, and you know me. You know when I sit down and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways...**

**Search me O God and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting. (Psalm 139:1-3, 23,24)**

I have good news and I have bad news. The good news is God knows everything about us. The bad news is, God knows everything about us. Bad news that is, if we hope to keep a few secrets from God as we might do with our friends, our children, our parents or even our spouses.

My mother used to always say that she had eyes in the back of her head. As if to say there was nothing that we could do that she didn't notice. I had a healthy respect for that notion for on more than one occasion her motherly intuition had a way of finding me out. I know now she had nothing on God when it comes to knowing everything about us. I know too, that her supervision and direction for my life was because she loved me so much, that she couldn't stand it if my bad decisions or actions got me hurt. How much more does God love us. How much more does God's heart break when our own decisions bring us, and sometimes others, pain.

The thing we must always keep in mind about God is as the Psalmist suggests in Psalm 103:8-13, that God, in spite of our sin, is quick to forgive and show mercy toward those who turn to Him. Throughout this season of Lent, take an honest look at yourself. Let's also ask God to search our hearts in its darkest places where even we ourselves refuse to see it with honesty. Only then, will it be possible for us to walk in the way everlasting.

### **Thought for the Day**

God's grace is greater than all my sin

**Prayer:** Search me and try me O God and see if there be any wicked way within me. Reveal to me that which needs forgiveness and redemption, that I might walk in your ways all the days of my life.

### **Prayer Focus:** Confession

Rev. Tony Vinson- District Superintendent,  
Southwest District

## Mary's Heart

I am Mary, Mother of Jesus.  
He was crucified today, *by* those who feared him,  
Who saw Him as a threat.  
A threat that needed to be neutralized, deactivated, and just plain annihilated!  
He got it from all sides-His disciples, His family, the establishment.  
His disciples betrayed and denied him out of fear, ignorance and self-preservation  
The High Priests handed Him over to Pilate saying, "crucify him!"  
I am devastated, and at the lowest point of a mother's life.  
I look back to the beginning and the promise of His birth:  
"He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High"  
This was what the Angel told me,  
But today, His body is broken, His side is pierced, and the promise seems vain  
Today, *I* feel broken, *my* heart is pierced, but yet, *I* hold on to the promise.  
I hold on to the promise, because not doing so would mean that  
I have no hope of rising from the abyss, and my son will not fulfil the promise of  
Giving the world what His Father guaranteed.  
As I despair for my son, I hold on to my faith  
As I writhe in anger at the arbiters of His demise  
I ask God for the will to forgive.  
As I question His death, I pray for His resurrection.  
As I wait to go to His tomb, I remember His life.  
He stood out in the temple at twelve years old, and I was so proud!  
His baptism by His cousin John showed me that He was indeed the Son of God  
The many miracles He is performed-saving lives, healing and feeding people  
All infused me with confidence that He was indeed fulfilling what the Angel promised.  
But the conflicts with the Scribes and Pharisees, the betrayals, arrests and trials  
All filled me with foreboding about my son's life  
And now my fears have been realized.  
Will the Angel come again and face the abyss with me?  
Will the Angel promise me release from this pain, this darkness?  
My faith says yes! And so I wait.  
I wait, because I remember that God's grace is upon me  
I wait, because in my son's death I saw the Scriptures fulfilled.  
I wait, because I heard God's promise in my son's words when He said to Peter:  
***"Do you think I cannot call on my Father,  
and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels?  
But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?"***  
I have to believe, because my life so far has been one of conviction.  
I am Mary, Mother of Jesus,  
My Son was crucified today.  
Tomorrow, I go to the tomb at my lowest  
But, I still believe....

Linda Richards-Best

## Saturday, April 11<sup>TH</sup> – Closing Prayer

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Lord, thank You:

For lessons learned this Lenten season,  
For grace and mercy when I faltered,  
For loving me even when I failed,  
For your son who paid the price for my sins.

Lord thank you.

For helping me to live each new day,  
Showing me your word,  
Showing me your love,  
Showing me the power of your spirit.

Help me to continue to commit each new day to you with the following:

Just for today I will not worry.

Just for today I will not be angry.

Just for today I will do my work honestly.

Just for today I will be kind to my neighbor and every living thing

All praise and glory to the risen Lord

Amen.

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***Read Psalm 119 & Colossians 3:23***

Contributed by Suzanne King

A large, dark silhouette of a crucifix is centered against a dramatic sky at sunset or sunrise. The sky is filled with soft, glowing clouds in shades of blue, orange, and yellow. The text 'CHRIST HAS DIED' is written in a bold, white, sans-serif font with a slight drop shadow, positioned in the upper half of the image. The entire scene is framed by a large, faint blue oval.

**CHRIST HAS  
DIED**

**CHRIST HAS  
RISEN**

**CHRIST WILL  
COME AGAIN**