



There is a legend, that at the time of the Crucifixion the dogwood had been the size of the oak and other forest trees. So firm and strong was the tree that it was chosen as the timber for the cross. To be used thus for such a cruel purpose greatly distressed the tree, and Jesus, nailed upon it, sensed this, and in His gentle pity for all sorrow and suffering said to it: "Because of your regret and pity for My suffering, never again shall the dogwood tree grow large enough to be used for a cross. Henceforth it shall be slender and bent and twisted and its blossoms shall be in the form of a cross- two long and two short petals. And in the center of the outer edge of each petal there will be nail prints. Brown with rust, and in the center of the flower will be a crown of thorns, and all who see it will remember"



932 Balmoral Victoria BC V8T 1A8 250-388-5188. [office@firstmetvictoria.com](mailto:office@firstmetvictoria.com)

[www.firstmetvictoria.com](http://www.firstmetvictoria.com)

## Let Us Move Through Lent Together 2021



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**Christ has died**

**Christ has risen.**

**Christ will come again.**

### **Closing**

As our readings come to a close, may we continue our life journey seeing the way before us as an open gate. An open gate to explore new areas of ourselves and the world around us. An open gate that will encourage us to open our eyes to the vision that is before us -- and to open our ears to all that is around us. It is our challenge to become pilgrims for heaven and for earth, to live fully our humanity in order to experience the divinity in life itself. The opportunity is ours --- it is our basic freedom to choose this way or that way. We may extend ourselves and our vision -- in return to be offered new ground and new vistas.

Yes it is true, every now and again “our eyes will be opened” and we will see beyond the narrowness of our day-to-day vision. As Gandhi once said, “Be the change you want to see in the world”.

Blessings to you all this Easter season.



The Risen Christ lives today, present to us and the source of our hope ...

We are called together by Christ as a community of broken but hopeful believers, loving what He loved, living what he taught, striving to be faithful servants of God in our time and place. We sing of God's good news lived out, a church with purpose: faith nurtured and hearts comforted, gifts shared for the good of all, resistance to the forces that exploit and marginalize, fierce love in the face of violence, human dignity defended, members of a community held and inspired by God, correct and comforted, instrument of the loving Spirit of Christ, creation's mending. We sing of God's mission.

To read the complete Song of Faith, go to:

<http://www.united-church.ca/beliefs/statements/songfaith>



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Lent 2021

*Dear Friends:*

As we start the beginning of another year we are aware that life seems to present more challenges now than ever before....COVID and other health issues, weather systems, violence and racism. We are clearly faced with finding more ways to “make gentle our bruised world.”

It is our sincere wish that our Lenten/Easter Book of Meditations will help to soothe some of the stress in our lives and give us some room to ponder.

**Joan Dowse**

*A note of thanks from Marion Denton*

My heartfelt thanks to Joan Dowse, Marie McKee and the Mildred Mossop UCW for their many years of doing the Lenten Book, also to Megumi Matsuo Saunders, Edeana Malcolm and Jean Jenkins for their time producing Lenten materials. I have selected writings from these years to make the 2021 book.

Find a quiet center, where you are comfortable and relaxed. Allow our authors to stir your thought and may the Holy Spirit travel with you.

**Prayer:**

God, our Creator, as we enter Lent with our prayers and preparations for Easter, guide us to use this time by initiating positive actions in our life, keeping in mind two commandments Jesus gave us. Let us remember all who are suffering, under problems arising from COVID-19, homelessness, violence and poverty. We have so much to be thankful for and so much we can share. Guide us that we may do all that we can. Amen.

**We Sing of Jesus,**

A Jew, born to a woman in poverty in a time of social upheaval and political oppression.

He knew human joy and sorrow.

So filled with the Holy Spirit was he that in him people experience the presence of God among them.

We sing praise to God incarnate.

Jesus announced the coming of God’s reign, a commonwealth not of domination but of peace, justice, and reconciliation.

He healed the sick and fed the hungry.

He forgave sins and freed those held captive by all manner of demonic powers.

He crossed barriers of race, class, culture, and gender.

He preached and practiced unconditional love - love of God, love of neighbour, love of friend, love of enemies.

And he commanded his followers to love one another as he had loved them.

Because his witness to love was threatening, those exercising power sought to silence Jesus.

He suffered abandonment and betrayal, state-sanctioned torture and execution.

He was crucified.

But death was not the last word.

God raised Jesus from death, turning sorrow into joy, despair into hope.

We sing of Jesus raised from the dead.

We sing hallelujah ...

We sing of a church seeking to continue the story of Jesus by embodying Christ’s presence in the world.

April 4

## Easter Sunday



St Matthew's Gospel tells of the angel greeting Mary Magdalene and the other Mary with the beautiful salutation: "Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said." When the Risen Christ met them, they worshipped at his feet. Christ tells them not to be afraid, and to share the good news. And what good news! Matthew speaks to us in our second Easter of the Covid Pandemic worldwide. The many changes, the losses and the uncertainty can cause deep anxiety. Christ's words are both challenge and promise!

Easter's transformation invites us into the changes that happen with faith. We move beyond what we usually encounter and seek to understand. For we have journeyed to the place of encountering mystery through the power of the love of God. Very few have ever come to believe in Love's resurrecting power without enduring confusion and uncertainty. But the transformation happens in the holy clarity of awe and wonder. These are sacred, Easter moments when we experience that life changing power of God's love. It is a love which is with us in life, in death, in life beyond death. We are not alone. Thanks be to God!

Rev. Shelagh MacKinnon

## A Spiritual Practice for Lent

Here is a simple variation on an ancient spiritual practice called *The Examen* that you can use throughout the Lenten season. At the conclusion of each day, pause and reflect upon three joys and concerns that come to you as you review the day. Briefly jot them down in a notebook or scribbler.



As you approach Easter, go back over your notes of the past few weeks. What joys and concerns are repeated? Do you see any patterns or trends in what you have noted? Do your notes suggest any fresh insights and directions for your life?

Rev. Dr. Allan Saunders



February 17 Ash Wednesday

### Journey Through Lent- A Time of Forgiveness

#### Prayer:

God of all Faithfulness, we thank you for your love and forgiveness that you have given graciously. Your love is steadfast and endures forever. Amen.

As we journey towards Easter, we have many thoughts. What does “being created in God’s image” mean to us? A few years ago when I taught Sunday School, the grade fives had this discussion and decided we are created in God’s image when we are kind and thoughtful, loving and caring, and forgiving. That is how they saw God as they have one visual concept. Faith is the vision of the heart and we can see God in the dark as in the day.

Although we do not see God as an image, we have seen his son Jesus and his acts of healing and teaching. We witnessed his miracles and acts of forgiveness.

#### Matthew 6:9-14

How many times have you said the Lord’s Prayer? Maybe thousands!!! Let us look at the line Matthew 6 Verse 12... Forgive us our debts as we have also forgiven our debtors. Have we truly forgiven? Do we hold a grudge? Forgiving is sometimes very difficult. For each of us to live, we need love, justice and kindness. When we fail, we are in need of forgiveness. To be a part of God’s community, we need to be humble and compassionate. Through prayer, meditation and deed, we can learn how to forgive; as we do this we will experience peace and wholeness.

#### Prayer :

Creator God, we confess that we are sometimes reluctant to forgive others and put aside our differences. As we journey to Easter, let us remember it is a time for us to pray and to offer true forgiveness to others. Teach us to listen with our heart. Give us love and faith to follow the journey you set before us. Amen.

Marion Denton

April 3

### HOLY SATURDAY

John 3:16

Not gone ... but only gone before  
To where love lives on evermore.  
Not lost but only lost from sight  
As one who walks ahead at night.  
Not parted ... only just apart  
In memory, kept close in heart.  
Not of the past ... but now to be  
A part of all eternity.

Constance Parker Graham

Submitted on behalf of all those who mourn



April 2

## GOOD FRIDAY



How could Christ's execution at the hands of the Imperial Roman army inspire us to anything beyond despair or cynicism? How can it be a source of restoration and the search for justice? When faced with the brutality of Good Friday, we recoil of course. But the love and strength of the love of God is stronger than ANYTHING else, including murderous rage. Still, Good Friday is a hard reckoning for us, again this year, of the reality of power's willingness to go to any extremes to silence the voice of truth and love and a call to justice. God's Emmanuel was such a voice. He spoke God's vision and lived God's love. He would die the torturous death the Romans designed, but was to be lifted from death by God.

On Good Friday, we grieve. Our own losses have taught us of the vulnerability of human life. To be fully present in this world is to live and love as Christ did: and so, to be vulnerable in the most profound ways. Good Friday has much to teach us. In silence, in shared loss, we arrive at this day of darkness and pain. We stand vigil with Mary in silent witness.

The Reverend Shelagh Mackinnon

February 18

## Forgive and Let Go

### Scripture: *The Prodigal Son*

When I'm asked to write about a given topic, I first like to look the word up in the dictionary just to see what it has to say. In this case, the dictionary says forgiveness is: *to excuse a wrong or a wrong-doer, to pardon, to remit or cancel a wrong or a debt.*

The story of the Prodigal Son, as told by Jesus, is a great story of greed, forgiveness and celebration. This father did not need a lot of time or thought to forgive his lost son and welcome him home. However, forgiving a wrongdoing or an offence does not always happen quite so easily before the big celebration!

What is nice to realize though, is that being able to forgive actually helps the person who does the forgiving! Forgiving helps us become free of a hurtful burden. Forgiving doesn't necessarily mean that all memory of the offence will be removed, but once we forgive the hurt, we are able to let it go and everyone can get on with their lives.

Bishop Tutu wrote a book about the end of apartheid in South Africa. It was entitled: *No Future Without Forgiveness*. Tutu argues that true reconciliation cannot be achieved by denying the past. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission brought about the end of apartheid on April 27 1994.

There have been many thoughts written about forgiveness: "We forgive too little, forget too much" We should try to forgive freely but forget rarely." To err is human, to forgive divine. "Forgiveness saves the expense of anger, the cost of hatred, the waste of spirits;"

In closing, I recall a person who once said to a friend: "I never forgive" the friend replied; "Then I hope you never sin" So, Let's try to achieve relief and glory by being able to forgive.

*Joan Dowse*

### Prayer:

Thank you God, for the lovely story of the Prodigal Son. May we recall it often to help us on our journey. Amen

February 19

### Forgiveness

One day two elephants came to a pond. In the middle of the water was a set of rocks with a group of turtles sunning themselves. As they waded in, the first elephant noticed one particular turtle, went in for a closer look and kicked the turtle across the pond.

The second elephant, rather surprised, said, “Why did you do that?”

The first elephant said, “Fifty years ago I came to this pond for a drink and that turtle bit my trunk”

“Well, I know elephants never forget.” said the second elephant, “ But how did you know it was that one?”

The first elephant replied, “ I have turtle recall.”

It’s a funny story but, like the first elephant, sometimes cultures, societies, families and individuals carry grudges and sustain feuds, occasionally for years or even centuries. And unlike the elephant they often don’t even know why. They haven’t, like the elephant, learned that forgiveness is better and the load is lighter when they’re not carrying a burden of hate or a want for revenge.

The song of recent Sundays tells us, “ You’ve’ got to learn to let it go,” or as Jesus taught us: “ Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us”

David Bray

**Prayer:** Creator Spirit, help us to walk the path of forgiveness, to treat others as we would like them to treat us and put away revenge, the urge to get even and the tendency to hold a grudge. Give us the ability to truly let “bygones be bygones” and help us to learn to “let it go.”

### Snow

**Matthew 28:3** His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. *(description of an angel the women beheld at the tomb at Easter)*

As I walk through the falling snow on a dark but amazingly bright night, the world almost seems to stop. Inspecting the tiny flakes landing on my sleeve, I ponder how beautiful each is. From a distance they can look very similar and yet, when examined closely, how different they really are from one another, each unique in its own way.

The snow flakes remind me of God’s children in the world. They are all so different but in many ways they are the same.

A single snow flake is an amazing thing. However, with all the snow flakes working together they create this absolutely wondrous environment which has no end to its beauty, peacefulness, rejuvenation and reflection.

This is my favourite time to have a walk with God and to admire all that was given to us; to be amazed at all that we can become.

Leanne Tuey

**Prayer:** Dear God, thank you for the gift of others. Thank you for the gift of community. Show me ways I can join with others in accomplishing something I could ever do on my own. Amen

April 1

### Sylvan Acres Camp

**Psalm 131:2** I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with its mother.

Deep in a forest filled with dark gloom,  
The elders cut down trees to create a plot -  
A clearing with benches like a roofless room -  
A chapel of silence, a most sacred spot.

The girls of summer camp chattered on their way  
Till they came to the fork in the wooded trail.  
One path led up to the field where they played,  
The other led down to the chapel in the vale.

Beyond the fork all the chatter was to cease,  
And the girls stifled giggles till the silence grew,  
And from the silence came the wondrous peace -  
The sounds of the forest, ever ancient, ever new.

Carve in your heart a tiny silent space  
And God will enter in to that Holy place

**Edeana Malcolm**

**Prayer:** Dear God, may I be quiet and still just now, that you may dwell more fully within my heart. Amen

February 20

### Jesus and Zacchaeus

**Luke 19: 1-9**

When Jesus was entering Jericho, watching at a distance was a tax collector named Zacchaeus. He was hated by the people because he became rich by taking extra money that he kept for himself. Zacchaeus, being short, could hardly see Jesus, so he climbed a nearby sycamore fig tree. When Jesus reached the tree, He saw Zacchaeus and invited Himself to his house. This made the surprised Zacchaeus happy and they went to his house.

The people uttered, "He has gone to be the guest of a sinner"

But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look Lord, here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor and if I have cheated anybody out of anything I will pay back four times the amount."

Jesus said to him, "Today, salvation has come to this house, because this man is the son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what is lost."

So Jesus forgave him of his sins and He helped both Zacchaeus and those that he'd stolen from.

**Gloria Stott**

**Prayer:** Dear God, I pray that people will realize that everyone deserves a chance to change and become a better person in spite of his or her sins. Thank you for your loving forgiveness. Amen.

February 21

### Forgiving Bullying

**Luke 6: 28** Love those who curse you and pray for those who mistreat you

Throughout the school part of my childhood, the other kids teased me mercilessly and sometimes the teasing was very mean. When I was in Grade 7, I was transferred to another class, and was then in a class of kids who had learning and behavioural challenges. Most of the time, I disliked other kids in that class, because I was the subject of bullying there as well. I never considered at that time that the other kids were having their own difficulties. As an adult, I still deal with the long term effects of being bullied. However, some things happened that eventually helped me forgive the bullies.

At an event a few years ago, I met a fellow who was in my Grade Seven class at school. He was one of the bullies from that class. It turns out that he was also going through a challenging time at that point in his life. When he told me that, I felt both forgiveness and compassion for him.

I attended the twenty fifth anniversary of my high school class. There I met some of the people, now adults who had teased and harassed me. As adults, they were civilized people, and some admitted that they were going “ through a stage” when they were bullying me and other kids. Meeting them as adults and experiencing them as decent people also helped me forgive and heal a little from childhood experiences.

Patricia (Trish ) Simpson

**Prayer:** Help me understand that if I could walk in another’s shoes for a moment, I might be able to see the reason for their unkindnesses and deflect my own pain with empathy.

March 31

### Experiencing God

**Psalm 143:5** I remember the days of old; I think about all your deeds.

I first experienced God in my early life when I went to Sunday school. Walking home down the gravel country road from our little white wooden church, I knew God was with me. In the afternoon I’d go to Grandma’s house, near our house, and show her my Sunday school card that I was given, that had all the coloured pictures and a biblical story. She would happily read it to me while sitting in her rocking chair.

Sometimes I prayed to God that we’d have company on Sundays, because we had so many wonderful relatives. My Mom was from a family of 7 and Dad, from a family of 9. Some relatives would usually come, and on the sunny summer days, we’d have a picnic and swim at our nearby beach. We’d have so much fun (and great food!) to share.

God was with me during both the good and bad times though.

One time there was an unexpected hail storm and friends came to warn us to come home from the beach and we did. The large pellets of ice came down and there was damage everywhere. But at home we stayed away from the windows and got under the kitchen table and God protected us from harm.

Gloria Stott

**Prayer:** Thank you, God, for blessings of my childhood and memories that uplift and sustain me. Amen

March 30

### My Forever Friend

**Psalm 42:1** As a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God.

One time when I felt closest to God was when I was on a hike near Goldstream Park. It was a beautiful day and the sunlight was shining through the trees providing a glow to the forest floor. I remember being overcome with awe at this simple, yet moving sight.

I decided to sit and take the opportunity to really talk with God. This is something which I had not done for a while. It made me realize that making time for Him does not have to be a chore. It can be as easy as lying in the sun or, as in my case, going on a hike.

In that moment, I thanked God for being with me even if I did not realize that He was there. I thanked Him for listening to me even if I did not always speak. I thanked Him for being my forever friend and for guiding me on my journey.

**Brendan Tuey**

**Prayer:** Dear God, help me to take this moment as a time to reflect upon what it means to call "my forever friend." Help me name the qualities of your friendship for which I am especially grateful. Amen

February 22

### Forgiveness, Letting go of Hurt

When someone's words or behaviour hurt me or those whom I love, I may immediately feel upset, angry or sad. These are natural reactions of protection for self, family, and friends. Sometimes I realize that I was overreacting and need to address my reaction. At other times, after thought I know my reaction was justified. However I've learned that for the long run, holding on to those these feelings is not healthy for me or for the one who hurt me. This is when I need to embrace forgiveness; to make the commitment to forgive. It is rarely easy to forgive. How to move forward? How to live a life of love and respect?

I have been so fortunate in life, My parents were strong, loving and accepting and they modelled understanding. My husband has so often demonstrated real care--rushing to help when asked and never mentioning it again, no matter the situation. And my daughter has an amazing capacity to accept people "where they are". All are good role models.

I have also been able to imagine, sometimes to remember, myself behaving in a way reminiscent of the way the one who has hurt me has behaved. Putting myself in his or her position is a good way for me to understand him or her and to help me start the process of forgiving. It is hard work to forgive but it's a goal well worth pursuing.

By practicing forgiveness--and it is practice-- I am nowhere near perfect. However, I am slowly growing into the person of compassion, understanding, and wisdom I aspire to be. Lent is a time to think about relationships. Forgiveness is one path to the holy.

Pat Dykes

**Prayer:** Holy God, forgive the wrongs I do as, with your help, I forgive the wrongs done to me . Amen

February 23

### My Back Pack

**Scripture:** the Lord's Prayer, The Prayer of Jesus or alternate version of the Prayer of Jesus.

A surveillance camera showed the moment my back pack was taken away--it was so quick! It was in the beautiful city of Barcelona, full of Gaudi's architecture and with such an amazing history. I was shocked by the theft--almost paralyzed. I was angry--but at whom? Surprisingly, not at the thief but at myself. "give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us" Jesus' daily prayer wove itself through my thoughts.

My culture and my upbringing had taught me that if incidents such as thefts happened, it meant I hadn't been prepared or I wasn't careful enough. It was *my* fault. I shouldn't blame others; I should blame myself. It was my habit to always be careful and I thought I was being watchful. What arrogant thinking! There I was humbled; humiliated.

It has been taking me a while to forgive myself. This Lent, the work "forgiveness" means not only forgiving someone who did hurtful things to me but it also means forgiving myself, a person who was bound by expectations and pride. In thinking it over, I know I have to be more fully aware that Jesus came to us to *free* us from all these things that bind us--our guilt and our unrealistic expectations of ourselves. In spite of our failings, he encircles us with LOVE!

Well I just hope someone in Barcelona is enjoying my red heart gold necklace. I hope it is still shining to share its message of "love" from God.

Megumi Matsuo Saunders

**Prayer:** Loving God, Thank you for nudging me from time to time to let me know you are with me and for reminding me that what ever happens, you love me unconditionally. Amen

March 29

### It Only Takes a Spark

**Proverb 17:17** A friend loves at all times.

*"It only takes a spark to get a fire going  
And soon all those around can warm up in its' glowing  
That's how it is with God's love,  
Once you've experienced it: you spread God's love to every-  
one, you want to pass it on."* Voices United #289

When do I feel closest to God? One word: friends. When I am with friends -- new ones, old ones, ones I know well, and ones I know I will meet today for the first time, I feel close to God.

Jesus -- our friend, our brother -- showed us how to draw nearer to our gentle, loving God -- our mother, our father. People who have touched me with their friendship, knowingly or not, have touched me with a little bit of God.

When we don't expect anything in return and we freely offer time, talents or a simple smile, God is in that smile that you may get in return.

So, I will try every day to be a friend and keep my heart and eyes open for God.

Give it a try and then pass it on!

Leanne Prestwich

**Prayer:** Dear God, show me this day someone who needs a friend. Teach me how to befriend others. Amen

March 28

## Palm Sunday

### Matthew 21:1-11

After raising Lazarus from the dead, Jesus' reputation skyrocketed. People's expectations heightened. People lined up to see Jesus, shouting "Hosanna" and waving palm branches, expecting the King's entry.

Today marks the beginning of the most intense week of Jesus' life. Are you ready to journey with him? Every year, I relive this week remembering his acting for justice, healing, teaching, eating together, praying, the betrayal, his suffering, death and resurrection. Each scene is so real and powerful and every year whatever is happening in my life and in the world at the time, I reaffirm my faith in Jesus and God and I am glad that I chose to be a Christian. Here we meet a Jesus who knows our pains, struggles, betrayals, sufferings; who shares with us his courage and faithfulness and forgiveness. The dialogue between Jesus and the silence of God makes it all the more real. However, his trust in God, as he enters Jerusalem knowing what might await him ... is truly remarkable and gives me strength. Being a follower of Jesus, I can venture into the future not knowing what might happen, but trusting in God, knowing we are loved and cared for and that beyond, a new life is waiting for us. Are you ready to journey with Jesus?

**Megumi Matsuo Saunders**

**Prayer:** Jesus, throughout my life's journey, teach me your integrity and how to pray "Not my will, but thine be done."  
Amen

February 24

## Learning to Let Go

Recently, at the end of the Children's time at Sunday Worship, the song "Letting Go" was sung. Since then, the song has been running through my mind so when I was asked to write a few thoughts on Forgiveness for the The Lenten Booklet, I felt that using the words of that song would help me center my thoughts on the topic of Forgiveness. "*You've got to learn to let it go*" In addition to those words on forgiveness, a quotation on wisdom has also made me stop to think. "*Wisdom involves an integration of knowledge, experience, understanding, and introspection*"

Now I have come to see how these two concepts are related. May I tell you what I have consequently learned about myself? I have learned that letting go and forgiving myself and others is an *ONGOING* process and part of my life's journey. It is not *ONLY* about forgiving one another for the wrongs of the past.

I have also learned that, oh my, *LETTING GO/FORGIVING* is difficult to do! I have often berated myself, with the "should have", "could have" scenarios--knowing full well that to hold these hurts in my heart for too long will inhibit my spiritual growth and my relationships. This hugging my hurt to my chest can easily become little 'wounds' in my heart and thence justification for treasuring my precious hurt feelings. The struggle really becomes: My mind is able to let go--but my heart can't! So drawing on God's constant loving presence in my life and the understanding and experience I have gained over my years, I search my mind and heart. How I can best return to living my life in harmony and peace with my God and me fellow travellers on this journey of life? It is mostly always about Forgiveness.

*"Forgiveness is a gift you give yourself"* Irene Baddely

**Prayer:** Loving and Gracious God, daily I seek your forgiveness as I pray the prayer that Jesus taught. Help me to always seek the best in others and in myself, by being more understanding, tolerant, and forgiving, in the life that I live and in the work that I do in Your name. Amen.

February 25

The Prayer of Faith

**James 5:14-16**

“Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up; and anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective.”

This is one of my favourite passages from the New Testament. I have found that when I have been discouraged or feeling low it has given me comfort. In this passage we are shown the power of God’s grace and forgiveness. What I find truly powerful about this passage is that it remind us that God’s power to forgive also resides with each and every one of us. We are literally being told to admit our shortcomings to each other and to seek forgiveness. For myself, there have been times when I have found this especially hard. It is easy to fall into patterns of denial, or to feel like we do not need help because we can do it ourselves. Yet James tells us that we cannot do it alone. We need the support and care of each other This is why we are not only called to serve, but we are also called to build communities of faith and forgiveness. What a truly amazing thing.

**Brendan Tuey**

**Prayer:** Dear God, thank you for friends and colleagues. Thank you for those who support and encourage us, even when there may be times we feel we don’t deserve it. With your help, may we be bastions of support and forgiveness to others. Let it be so. Amen

March 28, *Palm Sunday*

**PALM SUNDAY - THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY**

*Jesus went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. As he approached Bethphage and Bethany at the hill called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, “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. If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you untying it?’ tell him, ‘the Lord needs it’”.*

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

*They replied, “The Lord needs it”.*

*They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it. As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road.*

*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: “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!”*

*“Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”*

*Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples!”*

*“I tell you,” he replied, “if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.”*

*As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city,, he wept over it.*

March 27

**Luke 10:25-37** The Good Samaritan

**Modeling**

“We don’t learn from being told. We learn from watching, observing, picking it up and trying it out.” These words were written by Leo Buscaglia, psychologist, lecturer, and writer. It makes sense that we learn from having good models to observe. Knowing somebody who loves a lot, who is responsible, who is passionate about and enjoys life, such a person is a great incentive to others. So who knows perhaps every day we are modeling for someone! The question we should ask is what kind of model are we? Do we choose boredom or life? If we can get involved enough in life we’ll see that it is many things: joy, wonder, magic, even rapture and holiness. But life is also pain, misery, despair, unhappiness and tears. If we truly want to live in the moment we won’t want to miss any of it --- joy or pain, laughter or tears. One wants to know how to laugh but also to truly embrace life - we want to know how to cry as well.

**Submitted on behalf of those who want to learn and live life.**

**Prayer:** Thank you God for our mentors and models as we learn to live life to the fullest. Amen

February 26

**Cleaning House for 2021**

Last week I threw out Worrying, it was getting old and in the way.  
It kept me from being me, I couldn’t do things my way.

I threw out those inhibitions, they were just crowding me out.  
Made room for my New Growth,  
got rid of my old dreams and doubts.

I threw out a book on MY PAST  
(didn’t have time to read it anyway).  
Replaced it with New Goals, started reading it today.

I threw out childhood toys (remember how I treasured them so)?  
Got me a NEW PHILOSOPHY too, threw out the one from long ago.

Brought in some new books too, called I Can, I Will, and I Must.  
Threw out I might, I think, and I ought;  
Wow, you should’ve seen the dust.

I ran across an OLD Friend, Haven’t seen him in a while  
I believe his name is GOD, Yes I really like His style.

He helped me to do some cleaning,  
and added some things Himself.  
Like Prayer, Hope and Faith, Yes I placed them right on the shelf.

I picked up this special thing and Placed it at the front door.  
I found it -its called PEACE. Nothing gets me down anymore.

Yes, I’ve got my house looking nice.  
Looks good around the place.  
For things like Worry and Trouble, there just isn’t any place.

It’s good to do a little house cleaning,  
Get rid of the old things on the shelf.  
It sure makes things brighter, maybe you should TRY IT YOURSELF.

Author Unknown.

**Marie McKee**

February 27

### A Daily Experience

I was raised in a family that believed it was important to be actively involved, not only in our family but in the community around us. So as a young person and teen I visited and learned how play chess with seniors, served tea at church functions, helped coach gymnastics, was a camp leader, welcomed guests into our home, and many other volunteer activities. I know now as a parent of three wonderful young people that it was not just the 'doing' of these activities that my parents had thought were 'useful' but that by doing these or other such activities I would learn caring and compassion, respect for diversity, and that God is there, manifest in all these places. By giving me opportunities to experience nature through camping, hiking, and visits to the cottage, I learned to see, and feel God alive in her wonder and beauty, in all living things.

I am so grateful for the choices my parents encouraged me to take and I only hope that I have encouraged such opportunities for my own children to see the wonder and the goodness of God in all that they do.

It is very easy for me to feel that I am too busy or have too much to do, to wonder what any particular activity I am doing has to do with God. However, I know that it is by immersing myself in the experience of each day and fully valuing it that I find God. I feel that every thing I do is an opportunity to deepen my experience with God. Whether it is being fully present whilst washing dishes, listening carefully to a friend, paying attention to how I respond to people, working in my garden, or being aware of the changes in my natural work, I feel a presence, a feeling of lightness and well being, a fullness of heart, that I call God.

Janet Gray

March 27

### Trusting in the Face of the Unknown

**Psalm 139:12** Even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is as bright as the day; the darkness is as light to you.

*I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year -  
"Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown"  
And he replied  
"Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the hand  
of God.  
That shall be to you better than light and safer than a  
known way."*

**Excerpt from the King's message Dec. 1939**

When I was a child I often visited my Aunt and Granny in Victoria. In my Aunt's bedroom, where I always slept, there was an embroidered copy of this speech. Over the years I would read it and try to understand this saying. It went from the literal translation -- imagining some man outside and thinking that it would be better to have a lantern because I was afraid of the dark -- to wanting to help God, so that if He didn't have a light, the He should ask this old man at the gate for one.

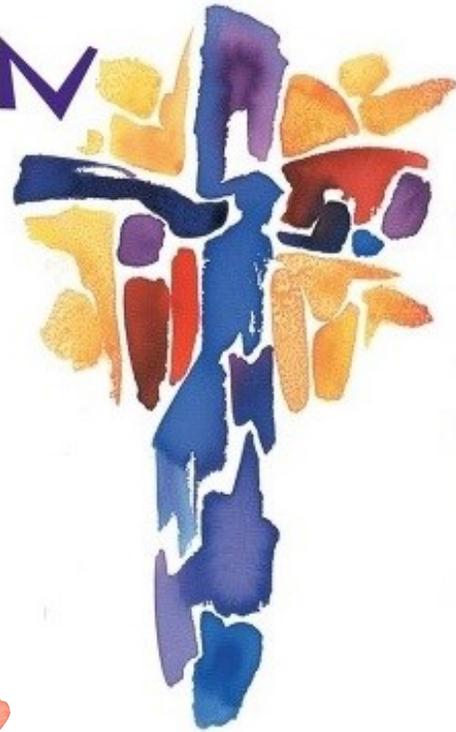
Slowly, over the years, I began to understand this passage to explain the sometimes scary, unknown future (the darkness) and to trust in God to help lead into that future.

I think that the times when we are most uncertain about choices is when the greatest peace can be found when that choice is finally made. It often becomes a moments of "Ah-Hah!"; why didn't I see that before ? ... Probably because it wasn't something to be seen but rather felt in the heart.

**Mary Jean Krawciw**

**Prayer:** Dear God, help me to take your hand this day and be led by your Spirit. Calm my heart and keep me open and attentive to engage each new moment faithfully. Amen

**RETURN**  
to the  
**LORD**  
**YOUR**  
**GOD**



February 28

### To Know God

I am an engineer and have lived and practiced in underdeveloped countries for about 25 years. As a result I have developed deep respect for the application of science for the betterment of human welfare. My training and experience has broadened my understanding of God. For me science is a manifestation of God as the creator and sustainer of the universe and of all life. As human beings we are empowered by consciousness and capability to act with intention to fulfill loving and compassionate ends. I have been taught and understand through experience that to act effectively with this intention is to know God.

#### John 4:12-13:

My dear people, since God has loved us so much, we too should love one another. No one has ever seen God; but as long as we love one another God will live in us and God's love will be complete in us. We can know that we are living in God and God is living in us because God's spirit is shared with us.

**Larry McGill**

#### Deuteronomy 4:29

#### Open Your Heart

I said I believe in God. I said I believe in Jesus. But it was not till I said I know God, I know Jesus that I truly used my heart. My mind said I believe, my heart said I know. So open your mind and open your heart to the awareness of God in this your busy life!

It is not so much in knowing ABOUT God that we grow, but in getting to KNOW GOD in a personal relational way. It is talking with God as our companion along the way.

**Joan Dowse**

March 1

### Learn to Sing a New Song

**Luke 5:20** When he saw their faith he said, Friend, your sins are forgiven you.

Megumi's story to the children at church about losing her backpack and the self-blaming that followed struck a familiar chord with me. We think forgiveness always involves another person or persons but often it involves only ourselves. How often we beat our brows saying, "if only I had done this...or that..." We cannot forgive ourselves because in our minds, what we have done was less than perfect.

If we have wronged someone we must learn to ask forgiveness, then learn to forgive ourselves, To raise our spirits and accept ourselves as we are, we can perhaps take a trip-not a guilt trip that we revisit over and over-but rather another kind of trip.

For example:

- ◆ A trip to visit a friend
- ◆ A trip to take an evening casserole to a busy person
- ◆ A trip to see a friend in hospital
- ◆ A trip -through a card, a note, an email-to someone who is hurting.
- ◆ A trip to the park or a walk in the woods.

Here is my added verse to the children's song by M. Burrows:

*You've got to learn to let it go  
As help to let your spirit grow.  
When you forgive yourself  
You can learn to forgive another.  
You need to learn to let it go*

**Kathy Bender**

**Prayer:** Help me O God to accept myself as I am, a child of God, learning and growing. Help me to not dwell on my wrongdoings, but move ahead in finding the positive things in life.

Amen

March 26

### In Beauty

**Psalm 65:9** Those who live at earth's farthest bounds are awed by your signs; you make the gateways of the morning and the evening shout for joy.

Sitting in the warming sun  
On my balcony ... my sanctuary...  
I savour rich morning coffee  
Enfolded by old trees: cedar, fir, red-barked arbutus, cherry,  
pine.

In the deep silence of dawn  
I gaze at the snowy Olympic mountains;  
At flowing ocean tides, (calm now, tho' surging at times).  
I hear the calling of gulls and geese;  
A jogger with a yappy dog on their early walk.

The whisper of a breeze passes by.  
But, more than just looking at nature (gift enough!)  
I am *in* creating ... embraced in beauty  
And part of it.

From my inner quiet I hear:  
This, all this, is God ...

Loving Presence  
So different from past absence and  
Darkness where there was only distance and longing.

This I know: It is all of a piece, we are all one ...  
Coffee-ocean-trees-gulls-jogger-dog-breeze-me-  
Divine Mystery.

**Susan Clough**

*'I found God in myself and I loved her.  
I loved her fiercely'* **Ntozake Shange, author)**

**Prayer:** Dear God, this day I pray for any who feel disconnected - disconnected from others, from creation, from their own best selves - and disconnected from you. Amen

It was the organist practicing for the next day's service. I relaxed, staying on the floor and soon I was lost in the music and the feeling I was where I should be. This was my place; God was with me and all was well. Of course I went home and all was not well. I had been gone for the entire day. My parents were frantic and the police were out looking for me.

It was the days of corporal punishment and I did receive my due. I was also suspended from kindergarten for two days and upon my return had to make a public apology to my class mates and the teacher. It was also impressed upon me how some poor lady had to scrub very hard to clean my trail of paint for Sunday.

However that sense of wonder, amazement, peace and feeling of being with God's presence has returned many times through the years.

**Leslie Biederman**

**Prayer:** Dear God, thank you for experiences in church that have created a sense of wonder and peace within us. Amen



March 2

## One World

### Revelations 21:1-4

O for a world where everyone respects each other's ways  
Where truth is spoken, children spared, equality achieved.  
O for a world preparing for God's glorious reign of peace,  
Where time and tears will be no more, and all but love will  
cease.

We welcome one work family and struggle with each choice  
That opens us to unity and gives our vision voice.

Words: Miriam Therese Winter

Voices United 697

**Agnes Lesyk**



**Prayer:** Help us Lord, to live a truthful life, a life in which we are guided by a knowledge that comes from knowing you. Amen



March 24

### Unconditional Love

**1 Corinthians 13:13** So faith, hope, love abide, these three, but the greatest of these is love.

My Dad was part of a family of 12 and my Mom had 3 siblings. When they married, both pictured a home with a number of children. Unfortunately it didn't work out. There was a series of miscarriages, and as the first-born, I was the only one who made it.

I was never spoiled. I was expected and taught to do my share. But I was so very fortunate because I was given the gift of unconditional love. If my parents did not like something I did, I was told why - and then expected to do better next time. They knew I was capable. They did not give up on me.

Being an only child, I was mature for my age. My Dad travelled a lot for work and I became my Mom's friend as well as her daughter. The only school in town was run by Catholic nuns and was very segregated - girls at one end of the building, boys at the other. I was happy but very shy in many ways.

Still, my treasured gift was that indispensable Unconditional Love

Jean Jenkins

**Prayer:** God, help me to be more open and less shy with people.

March 4

### Books and Music

**Matthew 6: 21** For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also

God is known to us in many and varied ways. Since we are different in our emotions, feelings, thoughts and actions, the Spirit moves us in different ways.

For me the written word brings God closer than I would have thought possible. I do not mean just Scripture from the Bible put poetry that is able to express so well what I have actually felt myself. Nature is often present in poetry with the presence of God.

I have worshipped in churches and chapels  
I have prayed in the busy street  
I have sought my God and have found him  
Where the waves of the ocean beat.

Music is a great conveyer of the movement of the Spirit. Just the sound of the notes and melody can transform a person. When words are added, for me it is possible to become emotionally involved with my whole being. One such hymn is 586 *We Shall Go Out with Hope of Resurrection*.

*We'll give a voice to those who have not spoken,  
We'll find the words for those whose lips are sealed,  
We'll make the tunes for those who sing no longer,  
Expressive love alive in every heart.*

Words can convey God's presence to me as I read, and music carries the Spirit to me as I listen. Does it work that way for you too?

**Prayer:** Encourage me God to search for you in many places and in many ways to feel your holy spirit. Amen

Joan Dowse

March 5

### What About Faith?

**Hebrews 11:6** Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him.

Yes, faith is a godly virtue, without it we cannot win,  
faith is like a magic pilot, can help us detour sin;  
key to all worthwhile achievement,  
power greater than the sword,  
bring us through trial and trouble,  
with success as our reward.

Faith makes for a happy ending, matters not how rough the road.

If we keep it deep inside us,  
we can shoulder life's great load.

Faith once held will never leave us,  
with each challenge it will grow,

giving life a tender meaning, conquering our fears and woe;  
most constructive of all forces,  
guiding light for all mankind.

Faith is waiting to be taken, if we seek it, we shall find.

Dear God, have mercy on us all-live at your command-instill in us the faith we need- to yield a righteous hand-give us the inward peace of heart-that we need more and more- enlighten us with holiness- we humbly implore-stay ever near to all of us- we need your Godly touch-to help us follow through when we are batting in a clutch- we beg you to protect us all-and keep us in your fold-so that someday the gray of life- will change to heavenly gold.

**Eileen Thurbide**

March 23

### Life's Mysteries

**Colossians 2:2-3** I want their hearts to be encouraged and unified in love, so that they may have all the riches of assured understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery.

“What have we here?”

I stopped - dumbfounded! My Dad, in his 70s, had been robbed of memory and communication by dementia. We were out for a walk, and for the first time in months, he had been able to put together a complete sentence. It was the characteristic question I had heard from him so many times before. When I was a child, proud of something I had made or discovered in nature and looking for my Dad's reaction , he would always ask *that* question.

My parents were teachers. If I thrust a caterpillar toward my Mother as she hung up the wash, she didn't scream like the other moms. Instead, she stopped and shared in my amazement. My parents, like all good teachers, instantly knew “teachable moments” long before anyone had coined that phrase.

I owe so much to teachers in my family; to classroom teachers and to life teachers including my kids, my brother and in particular to Margery, who taught me that the divine mystery is just that - - and so much more.

**Don Bourdon**

**Prayer:** Thank you for teachers, God, for everyone who has taught us throughout our lives. May we continue learning until we draw our last breath.

March 22

### Sister of Encouragement

**Ephesians 4:2** Be always humble, gentle, and patient. Show your love by being tolerant with one another.

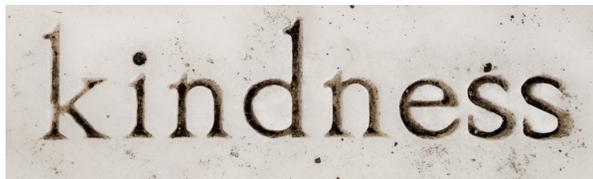
Thinking back to a dark moment in my life when someone reached out to me and gave me the encouragement I needed to continue, I was surprised by the almost-buried memory that surfaced.

I was hundreds of miles from my home and family, recently divorced and alone with three young children, and my sister Gayle flew across the country to be with me. She brought her camera and took videos and photos of me and my kids. One of those photos of the four of us standing in the fallen autumn leaves on my front lawn is framed and on my dresser. When I look at it now, it still gives me strength and courage knowing that I got back on my feet again and marched on.

I sometimes forget to appreciate the person who took the photo, my dear and thoughtful sister who gave me a boost just when I needed it.

**Edeana Malcolm**

**Prayer:** May we never take our loved ones for granted. The simplest act of kindness, easily overlooked and forgotten, may have the most profound of consequences.



March 6

### Stepping Stones-Lessons for Life's Journey

It is the summer of 1938, the setting is the Laurentian Mountains of Quebec. A group of little girls carrying small pails are descending a steep hill towards a valley, where berries are ripe for picking. The "best" berries are to be found on the other side of a fast-flowing stream. The challenge is to avoid a "soaker" (wet runners!) on the way across, and not spilling the berries on the way back. The success to the crossing depends not only on agility, but that there are enough stones and rocks, 'above' the water, within the range of little legs and feet. This is the first time out- the rushing water can be heard, long before the little girls arrive so hearts are pounding as they reach the shore. Where to start? A few forays - testing the best way to go-how solid are the stones, will they wobble, will they lose their balance? So there is risk, uncertainty, fear, (although too proud to admit! ) But, all must come with their pail full of berries!

Over the summer, the berry patch is picked clean. With practice and persistence, the little girls have navigated the crossing many times. Yes, there were some 'soakers' and some berries spilled, BUT life -long friendships were forged, with a store of happy memories of that time and place. (Plus the pies were wonderful!) Life experiences shape us. In my heart, I am still one of those little girls, carrying my pail of God's bounty, then forging the stream, on my way home, to help make those wonderful pies!

Like a rock God is under my feet.

**Irene Baddley**

**Prayer:** We are blessed to have Jesus' journey with us as we step forward, sometimes on 'wobbly stones' that lead us to firmer ground. Thank you God for your gift of Jesus. Amen

March 7

### A Journey

I am on a journey- a journey of wonder, of question, of ideas. The thought of a journey may conjure up the wonder of exploration, the fear of the unknown or even the worry of continually moving forward and having no time to rest or enjoy. In my busy life I need to take time to enjoy the journey.

The best part of the journey is that I am not alone. As life progresses I sometimes catch that glimmer of understanding that God is with me always-loving and supporting me. How do I reach that understanding, that hope, that light, that life? For me there are two distinct times when I experience the joy and strength of living in the light. One is in the quiet times when I am open to basking in God and centering myself- my idea of prayer. The other is in crossing paths with others on their own journey.

I appreciate the opportunity to exchange ideas, questions, dreams and hope with them in a spirit of respect and love. It doesn't matter that we're at different steps and have many different experiences. It is important that we can value one another and realize the wonder of each other's journey. No two are alike.

Having a connection with God,( however tenuous, as it often is) and having connections with other seekers sustains me through troubles, worries and adverse circumstances. Knowing God delights in us always, gives me strength to keep traveling the path ahead.

Holy One, you are our God and we are your people. We journey in your love and light. You are with us always. We are fortunate indeed.

Pat Dykes

March 21

### Daughter of Encouragement

**1 John 3:18** Let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.

“ I cannot do everything, but still I can do something”

Edward Everett Hale

As a child I was often told: 'Actions speak louder than words" Years later, as our children matured, they challenged us to actively live the lessons that we had passed on to them.

Around 1986 Knox United Church in Terrace hosted the BC Conference. At that time, our home hosted 6 delegates, but perhaps more importantly, our daughter attended as a youth delegate. She was given the opportunity to participate in the discussions around arising issues. Words and thought about what we should do to understand and support human rights jumped into action.

Relatives--event grandparents--and friends alike were challenged and encouraged as she lived her ideals.

Her selection of friends became inclusive of a broad range of society. She marched, created posters, tried her hand at journalism and, when cold weather arrived, our closets were raided for retired coats.

Theresa encouraged us to 'look to understand' and 'to grow through the challenge of action'

Carol Newhouse

**Prayer:** Dear God, help us to become the people we were always meant to be, by your grace through Jesus Christ.

*Life has loveliness to sell,  
Music like a curve of gold,  
Scent of pine trees in the rain,  
Eyes that love, arms that hold,  
And for your spirit's still delight,  
Holy thoughts that star the night.*

*Spend all you have for loveliness  
Buy it and never count the cost:  
For one white singing hour of peace  
Count many a year of strife well lost,  
And for a breath of ecstasy  
Give all you have been, or could be.*

*Sara Teasdale  
1884-1933*

May you pass on the love that has been given to you

**Jean Jenkins**



March 8

There is no doubt that, at the beginning of the 21st century, life can be complex. In the days, quite a few years ago, when I began my working career, words like 'stress' and 'anxiety' were not as associated with the working situation, nor, indeed, with life itself, as they are today.

Quite some years ago, a former minister of this congregation preached a sermon in which he asked if we had ever really looked at a rose. Now roses are amongst my favourite flowers, so I felt I had. However, upon closer examination, I discovered many intricacies I had not previously observed. Like Joyce Kilmer who wrote in the poem *Trees*: '*Poems are made by fools like me, but only God can make a tree*'. I realized no matter how complex or confusing life becomes, the simple beauty God has created is always present, if we only take the time to appreciate it.

When there seems to be a million things to be done, or a big task to accomplish, by taking each one step at a time, it is amazing what can be achieved. Sometimes, in our rush, we forget this.

Have you stopped to look at a rose, or better yet, to smell it? This could be a good place to start on the road from anxiety and doubt, as it confirms there is a power greater than we are, who is always there if only we open our eyes and our hearts. Just this week, I came upon a verse with which I would close these thoughts.

#### God's Promise

God didn't promise days without pain, laughter without sorrow or sun without rain  
But God did promise things for the day, comfort for the tears and a light for the way.  
And for all who believe in His kingdom above, He answers their prayers with everlasting love.

*Author unknown*

**Shirley Chatfield**

March 9

### Faith, Anxiety, and Doubt

Anxiety and doubt confront us when we are faced with life's challenges: we must act and uncertain as what needs to be done, how to do it, and what will be the consequences. When faced with critical challenges, our innate reaction mechanisms for survival are triggered, and we seek inspiration, understanding, enlightenment and wisdom to dispel the feeling of anxiety and doubt that arise.,

One of the definitions of faith is a 'complete trust or confidence'; another is 'firm belief especially without logical proof'. Faith, by both definitions, is a prerequisite for effective action, for we must act even when logical proofs are neither available to us nor are they well understood- if they are, there is really no reason for anxiety and doubt.

In exercising faith, we ought not to disengage from challenge, but rather marshal our resources to attain our objective. In his letter to the *Ephesians* (6:10-20), Paul urges from his prison ". . . Put on the whole armour of God ... the belt of truth ... the shoes ... to proclaim the gospel of peace ... the shield of faith ... the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God ... Pray in the Spirit ..."

Think also of Job's faith. When faced even with his challenges he could sense vindication when he said "...For I know that my Redeemer lives, and that at last he will stand upon the earth; and after my skin has been thus destroyed, then in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see on my side ..." (*Job 19:25-27*)

Faith, understanding, and logical proof have something in common: each can evoke within us responses that tell us something about the appropriateness of an idea as a basis for action. It is this physiological and psychological response that is at the core of our ability to act.

March 20

### Moments to Remember

We've all had moments when we say to ourselves. "I'm going to remember this for the rest of my life!"

It could become a happy memory or a sad one. It could be formed from an exciting or powerful event or from an everyday small miracle. The one sure quality is that it will make a character-forming impression. These are the moments that serve to create our own personal beautiful life quilts. Although individuals often share the same colours and dramas in life, we each weave our quilts together with our own particular perspectives to make the finished product our unique contribution to the beauty of the world.

I feel sad when I see people wasting their moments--too caught up in work and worry to observe sunlight sparkling just so on the water or the miraculous spread of an ancient and graceful tree.

Sitting around the family dinner table, lives are shared and abilities appreciated. It's mind-boggling to realize the miracles we've all been a part of. These are the memorable magic moments that provide life with its purpose and meaning. Sara Teasdale said it well in her poem *Barter*.

*Life has loveliness to sell,  
All beautiful and splendid things;  
Blue waves whitened on a cliff,  
Soaring fire that sways and sings,  
And children's faces looking up,  
Holding wonder like a cup.*

more on next page...

March 19

Matthew 25: 13 Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.

Waiting

Jesus gave parables about waiting. Not the kind of waiting as for looking ahead to the future--where an obstacle in the present prevented you getting it.

The waiting Jesus referred to is the total alertness waiting where something might happen if you don't stay with it, awake and alert. You must be completely in the NOW with full consciousness of presence. All your attention is here, not time for thinking, day dreaming or remembering. You are really all there. Truly you! Perhaps that is the kind of waiting that Jesus asked the disciples to do when in the Garden of Gethsemane and Jesus went aside to pray. It was then that the disciples fell to sleep. Were they truly alert? They were certainly not keeping watch, alert to the moment. At these moment of waiting we surely should be in possession of our full 'being' and conscious of the importance of the occasion. May we struggle to be ready at such moments in our lives.

Prayer: Dear God, help us to grow and know you better in all the issues that we must face in life. Guide us as we treasure the happenings in our past and in the future, always aware of the very present that we live now, using our time to see the importance of each and every day.

Amen

Joan Dowse

In this sense, faith, understanding, and logical proof can be considered to be identical. Through our personal experiences, the shared experiences of others, and the knowledge and wisdom disseminated by our institutions, including our religion and our spiritual community we develop personal stores of resources of faith, understanding and logical proof that inspire us to enlightened action and wisdom.

In *Matthew 17:20*, Jesus explains to his disciples that they could not cast out demons "Because of your little faith. For truly I tell you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you".

Larry and Mona McGill



March 10

### Spiritual Direction

In a book, *A Man Called Peter*, we learn that Dr. Peter Marshall as a youngster growing up on the outskirts of Glasgow, Scotland had a yearning to join the merchant marine and go to sea. In fact at the age of fourteen he attempted to join the Navy but was turned down because he was underage. But as he said later “he received a tap on the shoulder from the Chief” - the description he used when he felt God was giving him the guidance for his life. Peter Marshall was a great admirer of Eric Liddell, the Scottish missionary in China. Peter attempted to complete his education in Scotland and follow a similar pursuit but was thwarted at all turns. Later a cousin encouraged him to go overseas to the U.S.A. and do some manual labour so he could better understand the common man. The initial few months in the new land were disappointing. He was almost at the point of returning to his home in Scotland when some former friends invited him to go to Birmingham, Alabama. He accepted their invitation and found work on the Newspaper. He joined the local Presbyterian church and became involved with the young people’s group, served as scoutmaster, and taught a bible study class. He so impressed his bible class that they arranged for his acceptance by the session as a candidate for the ministry and his entry into a seminary. They also agreed to finance him at the rate of \$50 per month for the first seven months. They continued with their aid for a second year. This was of great assistance to Marshall who had very little in resources.

After graduation as a minister he was in great demand as a preacher and served in a number of congregations of the Presbyterian church in different cities. His unshakeable belief in God’s ability to provide real material needs, hammered out during his early years of hardship and discipline was one of the foundation stones of his ministry.

March 18

### Risks

When we decide to try and discover who we really are, we must not only depend on others to tell us about ourselves. It is when we dig down deep within ourselves, our inner self so to speak, that the wonder of you and I will appear.

Never forget that life gives us choices and it also presents us with risks. We can grow with our choices and with risk taking. We may also fail. But that is OK. It’s alright. We don’t have to be perfect. Leo Buscaglia would say “ The greatest risk in life is to risk nothing. The person who risks nothing, does nothing, is nothing.”

It is true that such a person may avoid sorrow and suffering but in so doing he will not learn, feel, change, grow, love, and live. Only the person who will take a risk is truly free. Are we slaves to our certitudes?

**Submitted on behalf of those afraid to take a risk**

March 17

### Blessings on Saint Patrick's Day

*May you have warm words on a cold evening,  
A full moon on a dark night,  
And the road downhill all the way to your door.*

*May you always have work for your hands to do.  
May your pockets hold always a coin or two.*

*May the sun shine bright on your windowpane.*

*May the rainbow be certain to follow each rain.*

*May the hand of a friend always be near you.*

*And may God fill your heart with gladness to cheer you.*

*Mark 12: 28-34 The Greatest Commandment*

### Good Advice for Our Time

Do all the good you can  
By all the means you can  
In all the ways you can  
At all the times you can  
To all the people you can  
As long as ever you can.

John Wesley

John Wesley also gave good advice on singing. He suggests we sing lustily and with a good courage. We should also sing modestly but be careful that we do not destroy the harmony. Always attempt to unite our voices together. Always try to sing in time --- do not go ahead nor stay behind but follow the leading voices. Above all Wesley suggests that we sing spiritually. Always with one eye to God and to every word we sing.

**Thought:** You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace, the mountains and hills will burst into song before you. *Isaiah 55*

Submitted on behalf of our Wesleyan Heritage

He was finally appointed Chaplain of the U.S. Senate and served for two years until his death.

He left a great legacy in his sermons, prayers, example, and dedication to his Lord.

A close friend commented that one of his great qualities in the midst of the acclaim and adulation which he received, was that he never lost his deep humility. When he left his childhood home his mother's farewell message to him was "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you" Matthew 6:33. He often recalled his mother's words as he encountered difficulties in his life.

Truly he was a great man and a great teacher.

May we all be aware when God taps us on the shoulder to give us spiritual direction.

Ralph Rodger



March 11

## Doubt to Faith

### Hebrews 11

Verse 1 of *Hebrews 11* says: “Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see”. In *John 20: 20-29*, the story of doubting Thomas, Jesus “blessed those who have not seen and yet have believed”.

I have read that it is OK to doubt. Alfred Lord Tennyson wrote in “In Memoriam”: There lives more faith in honest doubt, than in half the creeds. Dr. Robert H. Schuller writes: “Doubt can be a positive force when we learn to doubt our doubts and have faith in our faith”. I find that a powerful statement.

Another person says that faith is dreaming God’s dreams. Jesus lived a life of trying to fulfill the will, vision, or “dreams” of God. Jesus was a true believer. Jesus received strength and endurance as he prayed in the garden. My hope is to move from doubt, to faith, to action. My prayer or dream is to be linked to that of Jesus --- to help build the kingdom of God, the reign of God, the will of God --- here on earth. A world where all people are honoured, respected, included and valued ... not for our sameness but for our differences. All of us seeking God along our varied paths.

Faith is a choice. It is a decision. A decision to become a part of the whole river. We live our lives suspecting that there is more to life than just living. It is part instinct and part human nature. St. Augustine said, “Our souls are restless till they rest in Thee”. There will always be the unknown and unprovable. But by faith may we move forward toward a new adventure!

**Prayer:** Help us as we grow from doubt to faith. Forgive us when we slip and falter. Give us your joy and peace. Thank you for Jesus. Amen

Joan Dowse

March 16

**Luke 22: 39-46**

**Luke 23: 13-25**

We are an oddly assorted group of Lenten travellers - our Master Jesus, who knows the cross is at the end of this journey, and we who only see the end dimly or choose not to see it at all. Fear coils around our hearts, and a serpent within hisses a counsel of despair and advises us sensibly to sacrifice what Jesus has taught so we may live safely and comfortably.

But wait, we see our Master’s steady tread toward Jerusalem and a criminal’s death, and we remember every one of his acts and words which shouted, “The truth is too important for fear - even the fear of death - to obstruct it.”

**Prayer:** Dearest God, forgive us for the dozen public acts of moral compromise and the hundred inner gestures of cowardice that have stained our lives. And once forgiven, we call on you for the strength and vision that sustained Jesus so we may help build the new Kingdom he proclaimed and died for. Amen

David Chamberlin



March 15

**Luke 19: 28-44**

### Tears

Our eyes truly demonstrate moments of joy and sorrow. Tears and laughter are indeed universal. I recall the evening before my Dad's funeral, sitting around the dining table in Halifax with family and friends. We were remembering many poignant, funny and wonderful times with Dad. We laughed and cried together. My niece, at the time, was about 10 years old and could not understand our laughing when Papa had just died. We tried to explain that Dad's life had given us so many happy times and much joy, how could we not laugh and cry?

I'm sure Jesus laughed while he danced at the wedding in Cana, smiled when he talked to the children, and joyfully relaxed in fellowship while dining at the home of Mary and Martha. Similarly I'm sure Jesus was saddened to tears at the sight of the many down-trodden, ill, and abused. We read how Jesus cried tears over the city of Jerusalem. Perhaps tears ran down his face as he shared the Last Supper with his disciples, the night before he died.

Sometimes tears are able to express that which is beyond the power of words. Crying may occur as the overflowing of the heart from a great sorrow or a great joy. Many of us have had this experience from hearing a piece of music, viewing a motion picture or a religious ritual or sacrament. Perhaps we could say that tears or any expression of the heart are a good prayer. We might go so far as to say that tears express not only our humanity but also the divine in us all. Thanks be to God.

**Prayer:** In time of joy or sorrow blessed be my tears, the holy prayers of my heart. Amen

**Joan Dowse**

### Tiffany Lamps

Who of us has not seen Tiffany lamps and admired the beautiful colours and designs? Yet, these delightful lamps, which have immortalized the name of Louis Comfort Tiffany, were not the prime focus of his career. He worked on large stained glass installations in churches, universities, government buildings, and the like. Every once in a while, however, a large sheet of stained glass was accidentally dropped and broken. What to do with the broken pieces? Or at the end of a major window installation, there were all sorts of little fragments left over. What to do with *them*? That's when Tiffany got the idea to create his world-famous lamps. Instead of something for the garbage heap, the broken pieces and cast-offs now became a source of light and delight.

Are there any broken pieces in your own life? Or episodes you'd like to discard and forget? Maybe it's time to take another look at them and ask God's help in taking the brokenness and shaping it into something of beauty. How often I have seen such transformation take place. What had been a source of pain or regret was changed into a source of wisdom and beauty.

**Rev. Dr. Allan Saunders**

**Prayer:** O God, give us the grace to see the hidden beauties and the hidden opportunities in life.

March 12

### A Cup

*"I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived."*

Thoreau

It all comes down to a cup of coffee.

A philosophy professor stood before his class with some items on the table in front of him. When the class began, wordlessly he picked up a very large and empty mayonnaise jar and proceeded to fill it with rocks, about 2" in diameter. He then asked the students if the jar were full. They agreed it was.

The professor picked up a box of sand and poured it into the jar. Of course, the sand filled up everything else. He then asked once more if the jar were full. The students responded with a unanimous "Yes".

The professor then produced a cup of coffee and proceeded to pour the entire contents in to the jar, effectively filling the empty space between the sand. The students laughed.

"Now," said the professor, as the laughter subsided, "I want you to recognize that this jar represents your life. The rocks are the important things --- your family, your partner, your health, your children --- things that if everything else were lost and only they remained, your life would still be full. The pebbles are the other things that matter, like your job, your house and your car. The sand is everything else. The small stuff.

If you put sand into the jar first, he continued, there is no room for the pebbles or the rocks. The same goes for your life. If you spend all your time and energy on the small stuff, you will never have room for the things that are important to you.

Strengthen the feet of those who have stumbled; extend your hands to those who are sick; feed those who are hungry; give rest to those who are weary; and raise up those who wish to rise.

Translate that into today's language? How about 'comfort the afflicted. '??

Hymn 701 in Voices United, and the scriptural passage it's borrowed from, ask *"What does the Lord require of you?"* What does God call us to do? What, in other words, is our job description?

How about 'comfort the afflicted. '??

David Bray

**Thought:** *What does the Lord require of you?*



March 14

**Matthew 25**

**Comfort the Afflicted**

‘Comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable.’ The phrase comes from U.S. writer and humourist Finley Peter Dunne a century ago and is adopted by some in the news media as a sort of motto or code of conduct.

Dunne might have taken his wording from our faith community, perhaps condensing the words of Jesus in Matthew 25 to suggest a motto or code for Christians.

“... for I was hungry, and you fed me, thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you received me in your homes, naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you took care of me, in prison and you visited me ... whenever you refused to help one of these least important ones, you refused to help me.”

That scriptural rendering sounds like a longer way of saying ‘comfort the afflicted.’ And for those who don’t comfort the afflicted, the rest of what Jesus said should ‘afflict the comfortable:’ “These, then, will be sent to eternal punishment, but the righteous will go to eternal life.”

It’s a recurring theme that begins long before Jesus. The sentiment appears in Isaiah 61:1 with the advice that “he has ... sent me to bring good news to the poor, to heal the broken-hearted, to announce release to captives and freedom to those in prison.” Put that in modern terms and it comes out ‘comfort the afflicted.’

Early Christian writings that weren’t included in the collection that makes up the Bible pick up the theme. Note the so-called Gospel of Truth: Speak the truth to those that seek it, and speak of understanding to those who have committed sin through error.

Pay attention to the things that are critical to your happiness. Play with your children. Take time to get medical checkups. Take your partner dancing. There will always be time to go to work, clean the house, give a dinner party, and fix the disposal.

Take care of the rocks first --- the things that really matter. Set your priorities. The rest is just sand.”

One of the students raised her hand and inquired what the coffee represented. The professor smiled. “I’m glad you asked. It just goes to show that no matter how full your life may seem, there’s always room for a coffee!”

Author unknown.

**Submitted by Paul and Jean Jenkins**



March 13

**Matthew 13: 10-15**

### **What We Are Called To Do**

How often do we walk by - not seeing, not paying attention, our eyes are focused on the time, or the task at hand. What do we miss? I think Jesus meant for us to

*Use our eyes to see the beauty around us as well as*

*The disarray and destruction around us*

*Eyes to see the terrible misuse of God's creation*

*Eyes to see the pain and the hunger around us*

*Eyes to see those people of compassion around us - who will help and respond*

*And ... In this way we will SEE what we are called to do.*

How often have we turned our 'ears off' and become preoccupied with other things? We miss that plea for help, we miss a friend's kind words, we miss that story of pain and distress - We are busy, we feel we've heard this 'story' so many times before. I think Jesus means for us to:

**Listen with our Hearts - practice empathy, put ourselves in the other person's shoes**

**Listen to the Good - tune our ears to love, hope and courage**

**Listen to the Beautiful - music, birds, poetry and stories, and above all**

**Listen to Ourselves - our deepest yearnings, our highest aspirations, and...**

**In this way we will HEAR what we are called to do.**

**Irene Baddeley**

**Prayer:** We are blessed indeed to have eyes that truly see and ears that truly hear. We give thanks for the many people who give freely of their time and energy to help others and who show great compassion and empathy. Amen

**Colossians 2:10**

### **The Open Window**

Often we are confused by what comes first: divine or human. John Spong in his book "*Jesus for the Non-Religious*" feels that it is from within the human that we experience the divine. It was the human life of Jesus that allowed us to see God. Jesus was as an open window for us to see what divinity is like. Jesus wanted us to become so deep that we would be capable of giving ourselves away in compassion and gentleness with fearlessness. In this deep well we would expose our likeness to God and bring heaven to earth. Abundant living is living an inclusive life, without fear or segregation.

