**Lenten Bag Prayer Guides**

**Lenten Christ Followers, the items in this bag are guides to prayer** and follow the devotional booklet included here *A Story to Tell.* Some will like to find a time and space for the daily reading of this devotional, maybe with family gathered in the morning or evening. Each week, beginning on Sunday, there is a new prayer object in the bag for your devotional space. You could carry the prayer reminder with you during the day - possibly in a pocket or purse. Hope this reminder helps us to become more aware of Jesus’ presence and great love for us. Here are the items that you’ll find in the Lenten Bag prepared for you by the Confirmation Youth, Cindy and Gayle. Thanks all.

**Ashes** Ash Wednesday, February 18th, 7pm worship in-person at Bethlehem or in the home via Zoom or YouTube Live. You are named, claimed, and beloved. The ashen cross represents both our vulnerability and our salvation. Thanks to the Confirmation group for burning palms (from Palm Sunday 2 years ago) to prepare and to bless the ashes that you’ll find here in a little baggie. Make a sign of the cross on your forehead or the back of your hand on Ash Wednesday as a reminder of God’s great love for you, his child. The daily devotions begin today on pg. 4.

**Stone** Lent 1/Week of February 21, beginning page 22 in the devotional. *The stone that the builders rejected has become the corner stone.* Jesus heals and gathers all those who others have rejected. In 1Peter, Chapter 2, the apostle Paul encourages us to ***5****like living stones, let yourselves be built[*[*a*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Peter%202%3A5&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-30387a)*] into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.* How is God calling you to be a part of something special that he is doing in the world?

**Seeds** Lent 2/Week of February 28th, beginning page 26. Jesus compared growth in God’s kingdom to when tiny seeds bring into the world something beautiful and rare. Hopefully, this happens with the tiny flower seeds that you’ll find in your Lenten bag. Plant them. Water them. Wait on them. Remember God brings the growth. Meanwhile, are there ministries in the church or community that need planting, watering, or care to bloom into something beautiful and rare? Or maybe even simpler, there will be a person that God calls you to give special care to this week?

**Cross ..**Lent 3/Week of March 7 beginning page 40. Jesus heals the deaf and the blind and then asks us, “*Who do you say that I am?”* Jesus’ human life was lived in the shape of the cross, in generous, sacrificial love. How might we consider our lives in the shape of the cross? *If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves, pick up their cross and follow.*

**Stumbling Block** Lent 4/Week of March 14th, beginning on page 54. My first reaction to his block of wood that Cindy and Gayle found for us was this: “How am I going to carry that thing around in my pocket?” As we read through this week’s devotional, we might discover that we have already been lugging around a lot more that that😊. *If your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off*. *Mark 9:45.* Maybe Jesus was using the art of exaggeration to make a point, but Jesus makes a point. God help us to see our own stumbling blocks. Grant us help to remove them, and then give us the faith of a little child.

**Heart**, Lent 5/Week of March 21, beginning on page 68. In week 3, we talked about living Cross shaped lives, sacrificing self to love others. Here Jesus makes it plain in Mark 12:28, “*The greatest commandment this, Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. And love your neighbor as yourselves.”* Who is God calling you to love this week? Maybe that will be revealed.

**Candle** Lent 6/Week of March 28, beginning on page 82. (Holy Week)Lord, as we enter into these holy days, may this candle be a reminder for us to take the time to pray. Thank you for such great love.

Blessings on your journey,

Pastor Carol