

“...We both believe, and  
disbelieve a hundred times an  
Hour, which keeps Believing  
nimble.”

*Emily Dickinson*

## Lent to Easter At Grace

2021

Dear Grace, Sue and I have prepared this Lenten Guide for you this holy season. The theme is: **Beliefs That Undergird Life: Shaping Your Personal Credo.**” (Your own “I Believe”).

What are the beliefs that undergird your life, the ones that give you support in the living of your life?

Are there beliefs which you have discarded over the years because they no longer helped in the living of your life? One theologian spoke of the need at times for “faithful disbelief.” In a letter Emily Dickinson wrote a friend she said:

...we both believe, and disbelieve a  
hundred times an Hour, which keeps  
Believing nimble.

Faith is deeper than beliefs, believing *this* or *that*. It is a believing *in*, that is, a deeply relational thing. As the verse goes, “I know *whom* I have believed....” The deepest

levels of faith have to do with things like *trust*, loyalty, confidence, and engagement. But beliefs are important too. They are like scaffolding on which you build your faith and life. The recent proliferation of conspiracy theories and organizations like Q-Anon remind us of how destructive some beliefs can be.

So, this season, Lent to Easter, let's ponder our own most important beliefs. The question is not "What you *have* to believe" in order to be a Christian, get saved, be part of the church, etc. The question is "What do I *need* to believe" because these beliefs are essential to your life.

This season I will use as a guide to shaping our own beliefs the Statement of Faith of the United Church of Christ (Doxological Form—offered to God as Praise). I will offer a portion of the Statement each week as a theme for the week for my preaching and for your reflection.

## The Schedule

- Feb. 17      Ash Wednesday  
Jesus' Creed and the Great  
Commandment  
Mark 12: 28-31
- Feb. 21      First Sunday in Lent  
God Creates  
Genesis 1:1-8, 26-7, 31.
- Feb. 28      Second Sunday in Lent  
God Seeks to Save  
Hosea 11:1-4, 8-9;  
John 3: 16-17;  
Luke:8-10
- March 7      Third Sunday in Lent  
A Righteous God Judges  
People and Nations  
Amos 5: 21-24;  
Matthew 25:31-46
- March 14     Fourth Sunday in Lent  
God Comes to Us in Jesus  
2 Corinthians 5:17-20; John 1:14
- March 21     Fifth Sunday in Lent  
God Bestows the Spirit and

Creates the Church  
John 3:1-8; Acts 2: 1-4;  
I Peter 2:9-10

March 28 Sixth Sunday in Lent.  
Palm Sunday  
The Crucified God  
Mark 11:7-11; Mark 15:22-39

April 4 Easter Sunday  
The God of Resurrection  
Mark 16:1-8;  
I Corinthians 15:3-8,20-22

### **A Word a Day Through Lent**

Following what we have done in recent years we will offer one word per day that goes with the theme and texts of the week, and you're encouraged to post photo for each day to the church's social media accounts. Look for links on the church's website ([www.gracestatesville.org](http://www.gracestatesville.org)). You'll notice that where possible, we've left blank space throughout this booklet; I'm hoping that

you'll use that space for your own reflections, words and other Theological doodles.

**A Word a Day**

Feb 17	Ashes
Feb 18	Repentance
Feb 19	Faith
Feb 20	Commandment
Feb 21	God
Feb 22	Creator
Feb 23	Animals
Feb 24	Humankind
Feb 25	Image of God
Feb 26	Nature/Creation
Feb 27	Good
Feb 28	Seek
March 1	Save
March 2	Love
March 3	Mother

March 4	Salvation
March 5	Lost
March 6	Found
March 7	Justice
March 8	River
March 9	Rectify
March 10	Righteousness
March 11	Compassion
March 12	Hungry
March 13	Sick
March 14	Jesus
March 15	Teacher
March 16	Healer
March 17	Prophet
March 18	Mercy
March 19	Welcome
March 20	Joy
March 21	Spirit

March 22	Breath
March 23	Wind
March 24	Birth
March 25	New
March 26	Church
March 27	Disciple
March 28	Hosanna
March 29	Temple
March 30	Anointing
March 31	Meal
April 1	Betrayal
April 2	Execution
April 3	Darkness
April 4	Resurrection

In this holy season we walk with Jesus and one another toward the cross and resurrection. Starting on Ash Wednesday we invite you to use the church labyrinth as part of your journey. Before you begin walking toward the center, pause for silence, offering your consent to the presence of God this season. As you walk to the center consider the things in your life you wish to let go of so that you can be who you wish to be as God's daughter or son. Begin to let go. As you wind your way back, ponder the things you would like to be and do as you live less encumbered.

Blessed season,

Your pastor,

Steve

## Week One: God Creates

### *Statement of Faith (From the U.C.C. Statement):*

We believe in you, O God, Eternal Spirit, God of our Savior Jesus Christ and our God, and to your deeds we testify: You call the worlds into being, create persons in your own image, and set before each one the ways of life and death.

### *Passages:*

#### Genesis 1:1-5

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, <sup>2</sup>the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. <sup>3</sup>Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. <sup>4</sup>And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. <sup>5</sup>God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And

there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

### Genesis 1:26-7

<sup>26</sup>Then God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.”

<sup>27</sup>So God created humankind in his image,  
in the image of God he created them;  
male and female he created them.

### Genesis 1:31

<sup>31</sup>God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

## Week Two: God Seeks to Save

### *Statement of Faith:*

You seek in holy love to save all people from aimlessness and sin.

### *Passages:*

#### Hosea 11: 1-4, 8-9

11 When Israel was a child, I loved him,  
and out of Egypt I called my son.

<sup>2</sup>The more I called them,  
the more they went from me;  
they kept sacrificing to the Baals,  
and offering incense to idols.

<sup>3</sup>Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk,  
I took them up in my arms;  
but they did not know that I healed them.

<sup>4</sup>I led them with cords of human kindness,  
with bands of love.

I was to them like those  
who lift infants to their cheeks.  
I bent down to them and fed them.

<sup>8</sup>How can I give you up, Ephraim?  
How can I hand you over, O Israel?  
How can I make you like Admah?  
How can I treat you like Zeboiim?  
My heart recoils within me;  
my compassion grows warm and tender.  
<sup>9</sup>I will not execute my fierce anger;  
I will not again destroy Ephraim;  
for I am God and no mortal,  
the Holy One in your midst,  
and I will not come in wrath.

### John 3:16-17

<sup>16</sup>“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.

<sup>17</sup>“Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

### Luke 19: 8-10

<sup>8</sup>Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, “Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much.” <sup>9</sup>Then Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because he

too is a son of Abraham. <sup>10</sup>For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost.”

## Week Three: A Righteous God Judges People and Nations

### *Statement of Faith:*

You judge people and nations by your righteous will declared by prophets and apostles.

### *Passages:*

#### Amos 5:21-24

<sup>21</sup>I hate, I despise your festivals,

and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies.

<sup>22</sup>Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings,

I will not accept them;

and the offerings of well-being of your fatted animals

I will not look upon.

<sup>23</sup>Take away from me the noise of your songs;

I will not listen to the melody of your harps.

<sup>24</sup>But let justice roll down like waters,

and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

#### Matthew 25: 31-46

<sup>31</sup>“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. <sup>32</sup>All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, <sup>33</sup>and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. <sup>34</sup>Then the king will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; <sup>35</sup>for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, <sup>36</sup>I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’ <sup>37</sup>Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink?’ <sup>38</sup>And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing?’ <sup>39</sup>And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ <sup>40</sup>And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.’ <sup>41</sup>Then he will say to those at his left hand, ‘You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; <sup>42</sup>for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, <sup>43</sup>I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and

you did not visit me.’<sup>44</sup> Then they also will answer, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?’<sup>45</sup> Then he will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’<sup>46</sup> And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”



## Week Four: God Comes to Us in Jesus

### *Statement of Faith:*

In Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, our crucified and risen Savior, you have come to us and shared our common lot, conquering sin and death and reconciling the world to yourself.

### *Passages:*

#### 2 Corinthians 5:17-20

<sup>17</sup>So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! <sup>18</sup>All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; <sup>19</sup>that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. <sup>20</sup>So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

John 1:14

“And the Word became flesh and lived among us,  
and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s  
only son, full of grace and truth.

Week Five: God Bestows the Spirit and Creates the Church

*Statement of Faith:*

You bestow upon us your Holy Spirit, creating and renewing the church of Jesus Christ, binding in covenant faithful people of all ages, tongues and races.

You call us into your church to accept the cost and joy of discipleship, to be your servants in the service of others, to proclaim the gospel to all the world and resist the powers of evil, to share in Christ's baptism and eat at his table, to join him in his passion and victory.

*Passages:*

John 3:1-8

3 Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. 2 He came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God." 3 Jesus answered him, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above." 4 Nicodemus said to him, "How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be

born?” <sup>5</sup>Jesus answered, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. <sup>6</sup>What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. <sup>7</sup>Do not be astonished that I said to you, ‘You must be born from above.’ <sup>8</sup>The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

### Acts 2:1-4

<sup>2</sup> When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. <sup>3</sup>And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. <sup>4</sup>Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. <sup>5</sup>All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

### I Peter 2:9-10

<sup>9</sup>But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

<sup>10</sup>Once you were not a people,  
but now you are God’s people;

once you had not received mercy,  
but now you have received mercy.

## **Week Six, Palm Sunday: The Crucified God**

*Statement of Faith*  
*(Presbyterian Church, USA):*

Unjustly condemned for blasphemy and sedition, Jesus was crucified, suffering the depths of human pain and giving his life for the sins of the world.

*Passages:*

### **Mark 11: 7-11**

<sup>7</sup>Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it; and he sat on it. <sup>8</sup>Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields. <sup>9</sup>Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting,

“Hosanna!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

<sup>10</sup> Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David!

Hosanna in the highest heaven!”

<sup>11</sup>Then he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple; and when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.

### Mark 15: 22-39

<sup>22</sup>Then they brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means the place of a skull). <sup>23</sup>And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh; but he did not take it. <sup>24</sup>And they crucified him, and divided his clothes among them, casting lots to decide what each should take.

<sup>25</sup>It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him. <sup>26</sup>The inscription of the charge against him read, "The King of the Jews." <sup>27</sup>And with him they crucified two bandits, one on his right and one on his left. <sup>28</sup>Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying, "Aha! You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, <sup>29</sup>save yourself, and come down from the cross!" <sup>30</sup><sup>31</sup>In the same way the chief priests, along with the scribes, were also mocking him among themselves and saying, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. <sup>32</sup>Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down from the cross now, so that we may see and believe." Those who were crucified with him also taunted him. <sup>33</sup>When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. <sup>34</sup>At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a

loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?” which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”<sup>85</sup> When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, “Listen, he is calling for Elijah.”<sup>86</sup> And someone ran, filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink, saying, “Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down.”<sup>87</sup> Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last.<sup>88</sup> And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.<sup>89</sup> Now when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, “Truly this man was God’s Son!”



## Easter Sunday: The God of Resurrection

*Statement of Faith (Presbyterian Church,  
USA):*

God raised this Jesus from the dead,  
vindicating his sinless life, breaking the power  
of sin and evil, delivering us from death to  
life eternal.

Blessing and honor, glory and power be unto  
you. Amen

*Passages:*

### Mark 16: 1-8

16 When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene,  
and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought  
spices, so that they might go and anoint him. <sup>2</sup>And  
very early on the first day of the week, when the sun  
had risen, they went to the tomb. <sup>3</sup>They had been  
saying to one another, “Who will roll away the stone  
for us from the entrance to the tomb?” <sup>4</sup>When they  
looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very  
large, had already been rolled back. <sup>5</sup>As they entered  
the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white  
robe, sitting on the right side; and they were  
alarmed. <sup>6</sup>But he said to them, “Do not be alarmed;  
you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was  
crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look,

there is the place they laid him. <sup>7</sup>But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.” <sup>8</sup>So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

### I Corinthians 15:3-8, 20-22

<sup>3</sup>For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, <sup>4</sup>and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, <sup>5</sup>and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. <sup>6</sup>Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. <sup>7</sup>Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. <sup>8</sup>Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.

<sup>20</sup>But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died. <sup>21</sup>For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being; <sup>22</sup>for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ.



Georgia O'Keeffe  
*Abstraction White Rose No. 3*

