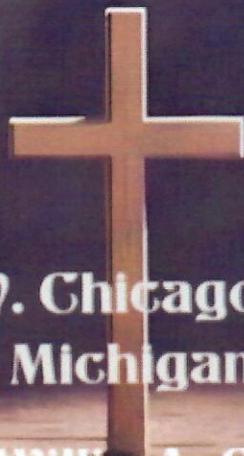


THE HISTORIC EBENEZER AME CHURCH

LENT

"THE JOURNEY TO CALVARY"
RENEWING OUR COMMITMENT,
RESTORING OUR FAITH
AND
RESURRECTING OUR HOPE"

Psalm 51



5151 W. Chicago Blvd.
Detroit, Michigan 48204

Rev. Dr. Willie A. Gholston II
Senior Pastor

www.historicebenezeramedetroit.org

A Word From Pastor G:



Greetings Friends & Family of Ebenezer:

I want to personally give thanks for each of you. Now is a pivotal time for believers in our Ebenezer family with so much happening across the world every day. I am encouraging each of us to draw upon the source of strength through our faith as we simply engage in a new season of **REFLECTIONS**. These **REFLECTIONS** will call for us to embrace all that God has in store for us in our lives as we examine the impact and influence of Jesus Christ while embarking on the power of salvation. I want to encourage us to be a more active believers that are working on our relationship with Christ as we encounter moments of repentance and rebirth in our **REFLECTIONS** of surrendering to God's will and way.

It is my fervent prayer that you will be more intentional about personally seeking to get closer to God by increasing your attendance at our beloved Ebenezer, engaging in ministry opportunities, availing yourself for more involvement and practicing greater stewardship of your time, talent plus treasures as **REFLECTIONS** of intentional sacrifice for the kingdom. Therefore, from the youngest to the most seasoned, as we are on the verge of this brand-new Lenten season, I invite you to participate in this ***"Journey to Calvary: Renewing Our Commitment, Restoring Our Faith and Resurrecting Our Hope"***.

This 40-day Lenten Journey is a season for **REFLECTIONS** through a host of fasting opportunities, prayers, meditations, services and spiritually-uplifting experiences. Join us beginning Ash Wednesday, February 18th with two gatherings at noon and 6pm. I am praying that the Lord will prepare us fully for many blessings and breakthroughs as we surrender unto the Lord while watching God as stated in Psalm 51:10: "Create in us a clean heart O God and renew a right spirit within us".

Because of Him,

Pastor G.



"REFLECTIONS: RENEW, RESTORE & RESURRECT"



The Lenten Fasting Schedule

“The Spiritual Journey: All Roads Lead To Calvary”

Week One: February 18-February 24

Find a prayer and accountability partner to join with you along this spiritual journey!

Week Two: February 25-March 3

No Sweets until Easter

Week Three: March 4-March 10

No Bread and Pasta until Easter

Week Four: March 11-March 17 No

Red Meat until Easter

Week Five: March 18- March 24

No Meat until Easter

Week Six: March 25- March 31

No Fruits until Easter

Week Seven: April 1- April 4**

No Solid Foods until Easter

Sundays are classified as your Sabbath and drink plenty of water.

**Maundy Thursday Meal is an exception on Thursday, April 2

Please adhere to all medical precautions throughout the course of this fast.

“Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry”. Matthew 4:1-2



Historic Ebenezer AME Church Lenten Friday Prayer Schedule

Join us in prayer by lifting up this particular Scripture during every hour from 6am-6pm

Peace- First Hour 6am

Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.

Hebrews 12:14

Comfort- Second Hour 7am

Praise be to the God and Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.

2 Corinthians 1:3-4

Strength- Third Hour 8am

It is God who arms me with strength and keeps my way secure.

Psalms 18:32

Courage- Fourth Hour 9am

Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.

Deuteronomy 31:6

Love- Fifth Hour 10am

Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.

1 John 3:18

Hope- Sixth hour 11am

May integrity and uprightness protect me, because my hope, Lord, is in you.

Psalms 25:21

Unity- Seventh Hour 12pm

*How good and pleasant it is for brothers and sisters to dwell together in unity.
Psalm 133:1*

Faith- Eighth Hour 1pm

*For we live by faith, not by sight.
2 Corinthians 5:7*

Joy- Ninth Hour 2pm

*Consider it pure, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance.
James 1:2-3*

Order- Tenth Hour 3pm

*For it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.
Philippians 2:13*

Unity- Eleventh Hour 4pm

*How good and pleasant it is for brothers and sisters to dwell together in unity.
Psalms 133:1*

Restoration- Twelfth Hour 5pm

And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.

1 Peter 5:10

Healing- Thirteenth Hour 6pm

*Heal me, Lord, and I will be healed;
save me and I will be saved, for you are the one I praise.
Jeremiah 17:14*



Lenten Season Services & Gatherings

2/18	6pm	Ash Wednesday Pastor G	(IN PERSON)
2/25	Noon	Rev. Gladys Burroughs	(ZOOM)
3/4	Noon	Rev. Vickie Gray	(ZOOM)
3/11	6pm	Rev. Gwen Wilson	(ZOOM)
3/18	Noon	Rev. Elaine Donaldson	(ZOOM)
3/25	6pm	Prayer, Praise & Proclamation Pastor G	(IN PERSON)
4/2	6pm	Maundy Thursday	(IN PERSON)
4/5		Resurrection Sunday	
	8:30am	Unity Breakfast	
	9am	Church School Ministry	
	9:45am	Resurrection Holy Communion Service	

PSALM 51

A Prayer of Repentance

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David when Nathan the prophet went to him, after he had gone into Bathsheba.

51 Have mercy upon me, O God,
According to Your lovingkindness;
According to the multitude of Your tender mercies,
Blot out my transgressions.
2 Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
And cleanse me from my sin.
3 For I acknowledge my transgressions,
And my sin *is* always before me.
4 Against You, You only, have I sinned,
And done *this* evil in Your sight—
That You may be found just ^[a]when You speak,
And blameless when You judge.
5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,
And in sin my mother conceived me.
6 Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts,
And in the hidden *part* You will make me to know wisdom.
7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
8 Make me hear joy and gladness,
That the bones You have broken may rejoice.
9 Hide Your face from my sins,
And blot out all my iniquities.
10 Create in me a clean heart, O God,
And renew a steadfast spirit within me.
11 Do not cast me away from Your presence,
And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.
12 Restore to me the joy of Your salvation,
And uphold me *by Your* generous Spirit.
13 *Then* I will teach transgressors Your ways,
And sinners shall be converted to You.
14 Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God,
The God of my salvation,
And my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness.
15 O Lord, open my lips,
And my mouth shall show forth Your praise.
16 For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give *it*;
You do not delight in burnt offering.
17 The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit,
A broken and a contrite heart—
These, O God, You will not despise.
18 Do good in Your good pleasure to Zion;
Build the walls of Jerusalem.
19 Then You shall be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness,
With burnt offering and whole burnt offering;
Then they shall offer bulls on Your altar.

AMEC Hymn #283 I Am Thine O Lord

*I am Thine, O Lord, I have heard Thy voice,
and it told Thy love to me;
but I long to rise in the arms of faith,
and be closer drawn to Thee.*

Refrain:

*Draw me nearer, nearer, blessed Lord,
to the cross where Thou hast died;
draw me nearer, nearer, blessed Lord,
to Thy precious, bleeding side.*

*Consecrate me now to Thy service, Lord,
by the pow'r of grace divine;
let my soul look up with a steadfast hope,
and my will be lost in Thine.*

*O, the pure delight of a single hour
that before Thy throne I spend,
when I kneel in prayer, and with Thee, my God,
I commune as friend with friend!*

*There are depths of love that I cannot know
till I cross the narrow sea;
there are heights of joy that I may not reach
till I rest in peace with Thee.*

REFLECTIONS

Going into this Lenten journey, describe how you feel at this time in your life.

What areas of my life do I want God to speak to?

Be Prayerful. Be Positive. Be productive. Be present.

My Lenten Journey

As I begin my Lenten journey in the presence of Jesus,
What will I find along the way?

Reflection: A time to learn from my past to share my faith's leading me to a life
in increased faith and love to Jesus Christ.

THE SEASON OF LENT

Reflection: With an emphasis on the Lenten season, I will be able to share my faith's leading me to a life
in increased faith and love to Jesus Christ.

I believe I'm going to follow Christ for Lenten.

Under the
YPI mission

My Lenten Journey

As I begin my 40 Day Lenten Journey in the presence of Jesus.

What will I find along the way?

Reflection: A time to learn from my past to shape my future leading me to a shift in increased Faith and Trust in Jesus Christ.

Renewal: With my increased Faith & Trust the Holy Spirit will move within me to soften my heart, enlighten my mind and empower me to live every day in accordance with the will of God.

Resolve: With an enlightened mind I will make a conscious decision to prioritize my Spiritual Growth.

I Resolve I'm going to follow God No Matter What!

Sandra Hall
YPD Director

What is Lent?

Lent begins Ash Wednesday, and goes through to Resurrection Day also called Easter. It is a 40-day period for fasting to bring forth purification, surrender and selflessness. This time of penitence and self-discipline will prove to bring us closer to God if we stay in prayer and meditation on the Word of God.

Read these passages and harvest the tenacity shown by those on their journey towards discipleship.

Israel, wandering for forty years in the desert,

Deuteronomy 8:2,4

Moses staying on Mt. Sinai for forty days and nights,

Exodus 24:18

Elijah who walked for forty days to Mt. Horeb, 1 Kings 19:8

Christ fasts forty days and forty nights in the desert,

Matthew 4:1-2

Note: In order to have an exact forty days of fasting, Lent begins on Ash Wednesday and ends on Holy Saturday as Sundays (even during Lent) are considered non-fasting days.

What are the Ashes?

Ashes are from the prior year Palm Sunday are burnt and used to put a mark on the forehead as a reminder of our failures in the course of the past year. These ashes encourage us to live true to the high ideals to which the soul awakens as we are reminded of the time Jesus rode into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday.

Spiritual Practices

Let us seek greater awareness of union with God; we take this period of time, 40 days, to bring forth a greater degree of confidence in God with light while patiently waiting upon him.

The three acts found in the Book of Matthew are penance for goodwill towards others: Fasting (Matthew 6:16-18); Almsgiving (Matthew 6:2-4); Prayer (Matthew 6:5-6)

Psalms 27

Daily Meditations for Morning Devotion

The LORD is my Light (27:1)

Those who have witnessed “The Light” know that there is something special. Light is the best way to describe God revealing Himself to us responding to our cry. He enlightens our eyes, our minds, and our souls. He gives light to our path and shows us the way out of darkness.

Psalms 18:1, Psalms 18:28, Psalms 36:9

In this will I be confident (27:3)

There is a blessing available to every Christian. That blessing is being able to put our trust in God, no matter what the situation may be. You will need this truth one day, if you have not come to that place already. It is a shame that so many will get to the place where they can benefit from this wonderful blessing, but they fail to see it and/or take advantage of it.

Psalms 118:8, Proverbs 3:26, Proverbs 25:19

ASH WEDNESDAY: REMEMBERING WHO WE ARE

"Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

These words, spoken as ashes are placed on our foreheads, aren't meant to depress us—they're meant to ground us in reality. In a culture obsessed with youth, beauty, success, and immortality, Ash Wednesday tells us the truth we spend most of the year trying to forget: we are fragile, temporary, and mortal.

We are dust.

This isn't pessimism; it's honesty. We weren't meant to live forever in these bodies. We weren't created to be self-sufficient. We are finite creatures who need an infinite God.

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent, forty days of intentional reflection, repentance, and preparation for Easter. It's a season to strip away the distractions, the pretenses, and the illusions we've built around ourselves. It's a time to acknowledge our brokenness, confess our sin, and remember our desperate need for a Savior.

The ashes remind us of our mortality, yes, but they also point us toward resurrection. We are dust, but we serve a God who breathes life into dust. We are broken, but we worship a God who specializes in restoration. We are sinners, but we follow a Savior who died to make us new.

Today, we begin the journey to Calvary, knowing that the cross leads to an empty tomb. We embrace our dust, trusting that God will one day raise us to glory.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, as we enter this season of Lent, we acknowledge the truth: we are dust. Fragile, broken, mortal dust. We confess our sins, our pride, our attempts to live as though we don't need You. Forgive us. In these forty days, strip away everything that distracts us from You. Help us face our mortality honestly, so we can embrace Your grace desperately. Create in us clean hearts. Renew right spirits within us. And as we journey toward the cross, remind us that death is not the end—resurrection is coming. In Jesus' name, Amen.



The Lenten Journey

Daily Check Box

Day # _____

Prayer Journal Scripture Reading Meditate Other

How did I experience God on today? (hear, see and interact with God)

What am I learning about myself? Mentally? Emotionally? Physically? Spiritually?

What do I need or want God to do for me?

How can I get even closer to God?

I am committed to being all that God wants me to be!

Initial _____ Date _____

THE WILDERNESS SEASON

Embracing the Desert Journey

"Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me."

Psalm 51:10

Lent echoes Jesus' forty days in the wilderness, a season of testing, temptation, and preparation. After His baptism and the Father's affirmation, the Spirit led Him into the desert. Not to punish Him, but to prepare Him for what was ahead.

We often resist wilderness seasons. We pray for breakthroughs, comfort, and easy paths. We want the mountaintop experiences without the valley walks. But the wilderness is where transformation happens. It's where excess is stripped away, where what's nonessential falls off, where we discover what we're really made of.

In our overstimulated, overconnected, overcrowded lives, Lent invites us into intentional wilderness. We fast from food, social media, entertainment, or comfort—not to earn God's favor, but to create space to hear His voice. We choose discomfort to remember our dependence. We embrace simplicity to rediscover what truly matters.

The wilderness isn't punishment, it's preparation. Jesus emerged from His forty days ready for ministry. What might God be preparing you for in this Lenten season? What is He stripping away so something better can emerge?

Don't rush through the wilderness. Let it do its work in you.

Prayer

Lord Jesus,

You willingly entered the wilderness, and You invite me to follow You there. In this Lenten season, I embrace the discomfort of fasting, the silence of solitude, the discipline of saying no to what I crave. Strip away everything that clutters my life and clouds my vision. In this wilderness, teach me dependence. Show me what I've been using to fill the void that only You can fill. Prepare me for whatever lies ahead. I trust that this season of sacrifice will lead to resurrection power. In Your name, Amen.



The Lenten Journey

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Day # _____

Prayer Journal Scripture Reading Meditate Other

How did I experience God on today? (hear, see and interact with God)

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Walking Toward the Cross

"Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow... Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit."

Psalm 51:7, 12

Lent is a journey with a destination: Calvary. Every day of this season, we walk closer to Good Friday, closer to the cross where Jesus would bear the weight of our sin, suffer the consequences of our rebellion, and die the death we deserved.

It's tempting to skip ahead to Easter, to rush past the suffering and get to the celebration. We want resurrection without crucifixion, glory without the cross, crowns without thorns. But you can't have Easter Sunday without Good Friday. You can't experience resurrection power without embracing the cross.

This Lenten journey asks us to slow down and consider: What did it cost for me to be forgiven? What did Jesus endure so I could be free? What price was paid for my salvation?

The cross wasn't Plan B. It wasn't a tragic accident or a defeat that God somehow redeemed. It was the plan from the beginning, the only way to reconcile a holy God with sinful humanity. Jesus walked toward it willingly, knowing what awaited Him, choosing us over His own comfort.

As we journey through Lent, we're invited to pick up our own cross daily to die to ourselves, to surrender our will, to follow Jesus even when it's costly. Not to earn salvation, that's already accomplished, but as a response to the One who gave everything for us.

The road to Calvary is painful. But it leads to an empty tomb. Keep walking.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, as I journey through this Lenten season, I fix my eyes on the cross. Help me not to rush past it in my hurry to get to resurrection. Let me pause and consider what You endured for me, the betrayal, the beating, the mockery, the nails, the separation from the Father. Forgive me for taking Your sacrifice for granted, for living casually in light of what it cost You. Teach me to pick up my cross daily, to die to my own desires, surrender my will, and follow You wherever Thank You for walking this road for me. In Your precious name, Amen.



The Lenten Journey

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Day # _____

Prayer Journal Scripture Reading Meditate Other

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THE COST OF DELAYED REPENTANCE

Because I have called and you refused, I have stretched out my hand and no one regarded,
Because you disdained all my counsel, And would have none of my rebuke,
I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your terror comes,
When your terror comes like a storm, And your destruction comes like a whirlwind,
When distress and anguish come upon you. "Then they will call on me, but I will not answer;
They will seek me diligently, but they will not find me.
Proverbs 1:24-28

Four days into Lent, and perhaps you're still carrying something you haven't confessed. You meant to deal with it on Ash Wednesday. You intended to come clean when the season started. But here you are, days later, still holding onto that secret sin, that hidden compromise, that unconfessed failure.

David waited too. He didn't confess immediately after his sin with Bathsheba. Months passed, long enough for her to discover she was pregnant, long enough for David to orchestrate Uriah's murder, long enough for the cover-up to seem successful. But all that time, the weight grew heavier. The distance from God grew wider. The joy leaked out day by day.

When he finally confessed, his greatest fear wasn't punishment, it was abandonment. "*Cast me not away from thy presence.*" He had tasted what it felt like to live with unconfessed sin, to go through spiritual motions while feeling spiritually dead, to maintain appearances while dying inside.

Why do we wait? Sometimes it's shame, we're too embarrassed to admit what we've done. Sometimes it's pride, we don't want to need God's grace that desperately. Sometimes it's fear we're afraid of what confession might cost us. Sometimes it's simply that we've grown comfortable with the distance, numb to the conviction, accustomed to living with less of God's presence.

But delayed repentance doesn't make sin disappear, it just gives it more time to do damage. Every day we wait is another day we live beneath the weight, another day we miss out on the joy of restoration, another day we settle for spiritual survival instead of abundant life.

You're four days into Lent. Don't waste another day. Whatever you've been holding onto, whatever you've been avoiding, whatever you've been too ashamed or proud or afraid to confess, today is the day. God hasn't cast you away. His Spirit hasn't left you. He's been waiting for you to stop running and come home.

The restoration you're longing for is one confession away.

Prayer

Lord, I confess that I've been delaying. I've been holding onto sin I should have released, avoiding conversations I should have had, postponing repentance I should have embraced days ago. Forgive me for waiting, for thinking I could handle this on my own, for believing that time could somehow make it easier. Thank You for waiting patiently for me to stop waiting. In Jesus' name, Amen.

THE JOURNEY

When the Resolve Begins to Fade

"The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Matthew 26:41

"But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus."

Acts 20:24

It's only been a few days since Ash Wednesday, and already the enthusiasm is waning. The chocolate you gave up is calling your name. The prayer time you committed to feels like a burden. The fast that seemed so doable on Wednesday feels impossible on Friday.

Welcome to the reality of the first week. The ashes have barely dried, and you're already doubting you can make it forty days.

This is normal. This is expected. This is not failure; it's the honest struggle of every person who has ever tried to change. Jesus knew this about His disciples, and He knows it about you. "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." He's not disappointed; He's realistic.

The first week teaches us that we cannot do this on our own strength. That's the lesson. We start Lent full of determination, convinced that this year will be different because we're finally serious. Then day four hits, and we realize: I'm not strong enough.

Good. That's where grace begins. Lent isn't about proving you have willpower. It's about discovering you need God's power. When your resolve fades, His faithfulness remains.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, I'm already struggling, and the journey has barely begun. My spirit wants to follow You, but my flesh is weak. Help me to lean on Your strength rather than my own. When my resolve fades, remind me that Your grace is sufficient. Give me what I need just for today. Amen.



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The Fear of Failing Again

"For though the righteous fall seven times, they rise again, but the wicked stumble when calamity strikes."
Proverbs 24:16

"The Lord upholds all who fall and lifts up all who are bowed down."

Maybe this isn't your first Lent. Maybe you've tried this before, made commitments, set intentions, started strong. And maybe you've failed before. Quit by week two. Forgot about your fast. Let the prayer practice slide.

Now here you are again, and a voice whispers: "Why even try? You'll just fail like you always do."

This apprehension is real, but it's not the truth. The truth is that the righteous fall seven times and rise again. The defining characteristic of a righteous person is not that they never fall, it's that they keep getting up.

God is not tired of you trying again. He's not rolling His eyes at your fresh start. The Lord "upholds all who fall and lifts up all who are bowed down." He specializes in new beginnings. His mercies are new every morning—not just on Ash Wednesday, but on every morning of this Lenten journey.

Past failures do not disqualify you from present faithfulness. They teach you humility. They teach you dependence. They teach you that this journey is about God's faithfulness, not your track record.

So, what if you've failed before? Try again. Fall again if you must. And then get up again. That's the rhythm of discipleship.

Prayer:

Faithful God, I confess my fear that I'll fail again. I carry the weight of past Lents where I didn't follow through. But You are the God of new beginnings, the One who lifts up all who are bowed down. Help me to trust Your faithfulness more than my track record. When I fall, lift me up. Teach me that trying again is not foolishness but faith. Amen.



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Feeling Like a Fraud

"God, have mercy on me, a sinner."
Luke 18:13

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." — Matthew 11:28-29

You're trying to pray more, but your mind wanders. You're fasting, but your motives feel mixed, is this really about God, or are you just trying to lose weight? You go to midweek services, but you feel like everyone else is more spiritual than you are.

The first week of Lent can make us feel like frauds. We're going through the motions, but our hearts feel far from God. We wonder if we're just pretending, playing at piety, fooling everyone but ourselves.

Here's the beautiful truth: the tax collector who prayed "God, have mercy on me, a sinner" went home justified. Not the Pharisee who had his spiritual act together. Not the one with perfect focus and pure motives. The one who knew he was broken.

Jesus doesn't invite the spiritually impressive to follow Him. He invites "all who are weary and burdened." He invites the ones who feel like frauds, whose prayers are distracted, whose fasting is imperfect, whose motives are tangled.

You don't have to have it all together to be on this journey. In fact, pretending you do is the real fraud. Lent is for sinners who know they need mercy. That's you. That's all of us.

Prayer:

Jesus, gentle and humble in heart, I come to You feeling like a fraud. My prayers are distracted, my motives are mixed, my heart feels far from You. But You invite the weary and burdened, not the impressive. Have mercy on me, a sinner. Teach me that honesty, not perfection, is what You desire. Give rest to my striving soul. Amen.



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The Disruption of Routine

"Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." Romans 12:2

"See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland." Isaiah 43:19

The first week of Lent disrupts everything. Your morning coffee routine is interrupted. You have to wake up earlier for prayer. The evening glass of wine you unwind with is gone. The comfortable patterns you've relied on are suddenly full of gaps.

This is uncomfortable. You feel off-balance, irritable, unsettled. Part of you wants to quit just to restore the familiar rhythm.

But this disruption is precisely the point. We conform to patterns without even realizing it, patterns of comfort, distraction, self-soothing, avoidance. These patterns become so familiar they feel like who we are. Lent disrupts them so we can discover who we might become.

"Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed." Transformation requires disruption. The old must be disturbed for the new to emerge. God says, "I am doing a new thing," but we can't perceive it if we're too comfortable in the old thing.

Yes, this first week is disorienting. That's how change begins. Stay with the disruption. Don't run back to the familiar too quickly. God is making a way in the wilderness of your uncomfortable new routine.

Prayer

God of Transformation,

This disruption is harder than I expected. My comfortable patterns are broken, and I feel off-balance. Help me to see this not as chaos but as the necessary unsettling that precedes new growth. You are doing a new thing in me. Give me patience to stay with the discomfort and eyes to perceive what You are creating. Amen.



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When You Notice What You've Been Avoiding

"Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

Psalm 139:23-24

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."

Matthew 11:28

Three days without your usual glass of wine, and suddenly you notice how anxious you feel at 6 p.m. A week without scrolling through social media, and you realize how often you were using it to avoid uncomfortable feelings. You've given up Netflix, and now you're sitting with yourself in the quiet—and it's harder than you expected.

This is one of Lent's most uncomfortable gifts: it reveals what we've been using to numb ourselves. The habits we gave up weren't just habits, they were coping mechanisms, escape routes, ways of not feeling what we didn't want to feel.

Now you're feeling it. The anxiety. The loneliness. The anger you've been pushing down. The grief you haven't processed. The fear about the future. Without your usual distractions, it's all right there, impossible to ignore.

This is terrifying. It's also holy. Lent strips away our defenses so we can finally see what's really going on inside. David's prayer invites God to search us, to test us, to see what's offensive, not to condemn us, but to heal us. You can't heal what you won't feel. You can't address what you won't acknowledge.

Jesus invites the weary and burdened to come to Him for rest. Not the people who have it all together. Not the ones who've successfully avoided all pain. The weary. The burdened. The ones who are finally feeling what they've been running from.

Bring it to Him. The anxiety, the loneliness, the anger, all of it. Let Lent do its work of revealing what needs healing.

Prayer:

Lord, this first week has shown me what I've been avoiding. Without my usual distractions, I'm feeling things I'd rather not feel—anxiety, loneliness, anger, grief. It's uncomfortable and I want to run back to my comforts. But search me, God. Show me what needs healing. I come to You weary and burdened, asking for rest. Lead me through this discomfort toward wholeness. Amen.



The Lenten Journey

Daily Check Box

Day # _____

Prayer Journal Scripture Reading Meditate Other

How did I experience God on today? (hear, see and interact with God)

What am I learning about myself? Mentally? Emotionally? Physically? Spiritually?

What do I need or want God to do for me?

How can I get even closer to God?

I am committed to being all that God wants me to be!

Initial _____ Date _____

Wondering If It Really Matters

"And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up."

Galatians 6:9

"He told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart."

Luke 18:1

By day five or six, a question creeps in: Does any of this actually matter? Will giving up dessert really make me more holy? Will getting up early to pray actually change anything? The connection between these small practices and real spiritual transformation feels tenuous.

This is the apprehension that makes people quit. If we can't see immediate results, we assume nothing is happening. We want transformation to be dramatic and instant. Instead, it's subtle and slow.

"In due season we will reap, if we do not give up." In due season—not this week. Not when you can measure it or feel it or prove it to others. The seeds planted in the first week of Lent won't show green shoots for a while. That doesn't mean nothing is growing beneath the surface.

Jesus told a parable about persistent prayer precisely because we lose heart. He knew we'd wonder if our prayers matter. He knew we'd be tempted to quit when we can't see results. His answer? Keep praying. Keep fasting. Keep showing up. Not because you can prove it's working, but because God says it does.

Trust the process. The harvest comes in due season. But first, you have to plant. And keep watering. And wait.

Prayer

Faithful God,

I confess I'm wondering if any of these matters. I can't see the results yet, and I'm tempted to give up. Help me to trust that You are at work beneath the surface, even when I can't perceive it. Give me persistence to keep planting seeds of prayer and fasting, trusting that in due season, the harvest will come. Amen.



The Lenten Journey

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Prayer Journal Scripture Reading Meditate Other

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The Loneliness of the Journey

"Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up."
Ecclesiastes 4:9-10

"And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching."
Hebrews 10:24-25

Nobody else at work is giving up coffee. Your friends are still scrolling social media while you've deleted the apps. Your spouse isn't fasting. You're trying to pray more, but you're doing it alone in the dark at 6 a.m. while everyone else is sleeping.

The first week can feel isolating. You're swimming upstream while everyone else floats downstream. You're making sacrifices no one else notices or understands. The loneliness makes you wonder if you're the only one taking this seriously.

But you're not alone. Around the world, millions of Christians are walking this same road. Some are struggling just like you. Some are questioning just like you. Some are feeling lonely just like you.

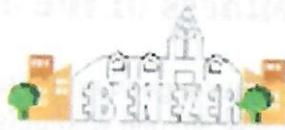
"Two are better than one." We need each other on this journey. If you're feeling isolated, reach out. Tell someone you're observing Lent and ask if they'll check in with you. Join a small group or a prayer community. Attend a Lenten service. We're not meant to do this alone.

And remember, even when you feel alone, Jesus walks with you. He spent forty days in the wilderness without human companionship. He knows the loneliness of the spiritual journey. He is with you.

Prayer

Lord Jesus,

I feel alone in this journey. No one else seems to be doing what I'm doing, and I wonder if I'm the only one taking this seriously. Remind me that I am surrounded by a global community of believers walking the same road. Lead me to companions who can encourage me. And when I feel most alone, help me to sense Your presence walking beside me. Amen.



The Lenten Journey

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I'm Available To You

Rev. Million Brunson & Thompson Community Singers

*You gave me my hands to reach out to man
To show him Your love and Your perfect plan
You gave me my ears; I can hear Your voice so clear
I can hear the cries of sinners
But cannot wipe away their tears
You gave me my voice to speak Your Word
To sing all Your praises, to those who never heard
But with my eyes I can see a need for more availability
I've seen the hearts that have been broken
So many people to be free*

*Lord, I'm Available to You
My will I give to You
I'll do what You say to
Use me Lord to show someone the way
and enable me to say
My storage is empty and I am Available to You*

*Now I'm giving back to You all the tools You gave to me
My hands, my ears, my voice, my eyes
So, You can use them as You please
I have emptied out my cup so that You can fill me up
Now I'm free, I just want to be more available to You.
Use me Lord to show someone the way, and enable me to say
My storage is empty and I am available to you.*

RENEWING OUR COMMITMENT

Renewing Our Commitment

"Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me."

Psalm 51:10

David's prayer emerges from profound brokenness and a deep awareness of his need for God. He doesn't ask God to simply repair what's broken. Instead, he asks God to create something entirely new, a clean heart that will renew his spirit of commitment. David recognizes a fundamental truth: he cannot fix himself. His best efforts at righteousness fall short, and only God can make him truly clean. The same is true for us.

Renewing our commitment means coming before God with authentic hearts confessing our sins, admitting where we've fallen short, and asking for divine transformation. We must be willing to surrender control and invite God to do His creative work within us. A steadfast spirit isn't something we manufacture through willpower alone; it's a gift from God, granted to those humble enough to ask.

When we renew our commitment, we're not simply promising to try harder. We're positioning ourselves to receive God's transforming grace.

Prayer

Most Gracious God,

Create in us pure hearts and renew steadfast spirits within us. We confess that we have fallen short of Your glory and cannot cleanse ourselves. Wash from us our iniquities and cleanse us from our sins. Renew our commitment to walk in Your ways, not by our strength but by Your sustaining grace. Give us hearts that seek You above all else and spirits that will remain faithful through every season. In Jesus' name, Amen.



The Lenten Journey

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Prayer Journal Scripture Reading Meditate Other

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COMMITMENT TO HONESTY WITH GOD

"For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is always before me."

Psalm 51:3

Commitment to God requires this level of transparency. It means keeping our sin "ever before" us, not to wallow in guilt, but to stay grounded in our need for grace. It means coming to God with unfiltered truth, trusting that His love for us is greater than our worst moments.

True spiritual growth begins when we stop managing our image before God and start being real with Him.

Prayer

Lord God,

Starting today I commit to being radical honesty with You. I acknowledge my transgressions, calling each one them by name. I will no longer be minimizing, justifying, or explaining away my sin. I keep my failures before me as a constant reminder of my need for Your grace. I trust that Your love is big enough to handle my unfiltered truth. In Jesus' name, Amen.



The Lenten Journey

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Prayer Journal Scripture Reading Meditate Other

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Renewing Our Commitment

“Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.”

Psalms 51:10

At the beginning of the Lenten Season, there is a tendency to commit to some type of discipline that involves “giving up” something for Lent. However, instead of giving up something, consider adding something different in renewing your commitment to God during Lent. Add something that you will continue to do after the Lenten Season ends.

Begin with a prayer including Psalm 51:10, *“Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.”*

Ask God to lead you in the way He would have you to go in renewing a commitment to grow closer to Him. Ask God to lead you in what He would have you do as you grow closer to Him. It might be regularly attending Sunday School, Bible Study or calling in on the Prayer Line twice a week.

Ask God to lead in what He would have you do in renewing your commitment to serving your church. It might be joining an usher board, the new Gospel Praise Team or Evangelism Team, the Lay Organization or the Women’s Missionary Society.

Pray and trust God to lead you in growing closer to Him, and trust God in leading you where He wants you to commit to serving your church. Just pray, trust God and then get ready to see how God will bless you in renewing your commitment to Him!

All Praise and Glory to God
Rev. Elaine Donaldson



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Renewing Our Commitment

“Commit your works to the Lord, and your thoughts will be established.”

Proverbs 16:3

As we find ourselves living in times of uncertainty and struggle, God is our source of stability, and He is essential to sustaining our peace and direction. Our commitment to God is not dependent or debilitated by our circumstances. Remaining committed to loving, serving and obeying God, is the way to safely navigate and endure the storms of this world. Modeling God's unwavering faithfulness allows us to not only survive, but to thrive during the winds of change. Even when life feels overwhelming or when we face setbacks, God's commitment to us remains true. God will give us the spiritual and physical tools we need, if we trust in his power in the midst of our problems. We are always protected by his mercy and grace. The focus must be towards maintaining a renewed confidence in God's guidance and knowing that he is with us through every challenge, this assures our victory! *Proverbs 16:3: “Commit your works to the Lord, and your thoughts will be established.”* However, renewing our commitment requires an active trust in God's timing and plan. When we become discouraged, when answers or change don't come as quickly as we'd like, then remember, that throughout scripture and in personal experiences, God's ways are always more effective than ours, because His timing is always perfect. We just have to let go of our anxieties and worldly expectations and allow faith to flourish. Trusting that God is working behind the scenes, even when we cannot see it, will always strengthen our resolve and bring comfort in waiting. Commitment to engaging in prayer, worship, and fellowship, along with uplifting words of encouragement and acts of kindness all have the potential to change this sinful world.

Prayer for Commitment

Heavenly Father,

I come before You with a humble heart, seeking Your guidance and strength as I commit my life to You. Help me to surrender my plans and desires, trusting fully in Your wisdom and love. Teach me to walk faithfully, to persevere in hope, and to be steadfast in prayer. May Your Word shape my actions and Your Spirit lead me daily. I dedicate myself to following Your will, loving others as You have loved me, and growing deeper in faith. Thank You for Your endless grace and for never leaving my side. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Rev. Gwen Wilson

Ministerial Staff



The Lenten Journey

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Prayer Journal Scripture Reading Meditate Other

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Fresh Start

"Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me."
Psalms 51:10

Repentance gives us a chance to start over and live righteously. God forgives us because He knows we're not perfect. He loves us unconditionally.

Forgiveness is a change to revitalize your spiritual journey with focus on God and His Word.

Prayer

O Lord,

I come to You asking for what only You can give, a fresh start. Create in me a clean heart, Lord. Not a patched-up version of my old heart, but a completely new one. Renew a right spirit within me, make me new from the inside out. Today I receive the fresh start You offer. Wash away my past. Remove every stain. Make me clean and whole. Thank You for being the God of new beginnings, second chances, and divine recreation. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Ebenezer Member



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When the Motivation Is Gone

"Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me."

Psalm 51:10-12

You're halfway through Lent, and the motivation that carried you through Ash Wednesday has evaporated. The daily Scripture reading feels like a chore. The fasting is just annoying. The prayer time is boring. You're going through the motions, but your heart isn't in it anymore.

You remember how excited you were at the start. You felt close to God. You were eager to grow. Now? You feel nothing. You wonder if you should just give up since it clearly isn't working.

David's prayer speaks directly to this emptiness: "Create in me a pure heart... renew a steadfast spirit... restore to me the joy." Notice what he's asking for. Not "help me try harder" or "give me more willpower." He's asking God to do what he cannot do for himself—create, renew, restore.

You can't manufacture motivation. You can't conjure up joy. You can't create a pure heart through sheer determination. Only God can do these things. And He will, if you ask. The prayer itself is the commitment—showing up even when you feel nothing, asking God to renew what has grown stale.

Your Lenten practices aren't failing because you feel nothing. They're working exactly as designed—showing you that you need God's Spirit to sustain you. Keep showing up. Ask for renewal. Trust that God can restore joy even when you can't feel it yet.

Prayer

Creator God, I feel empty and unmotivated. The practices I started with enthusiasm now feel lifeless. Create in me a pure heart that desires You. Renew my steadfast spirit when I want to quit. Restore the joy of Your salvation that I've lost. Grant me a willing spirit to sustain me through the rest of this journey. I cannot do this alone. Amen.



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Prayer Journal Scripture Reading Meditate Other

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Strengthening Your Walk When You've Stumbled

"Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness."

Lamentations 3:22-23

"The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love."

Psalm 103:8

Let's start with the truth: the journey isn't perfect. You'll forget. You'll fail. You'll have bad days. That's not a character flaw, that's being human.

Here's what changes everything: God doesn't keep score. He's not in heaven with a clipboard, marking down your successes and failures. He simply loves you—on your best days and your worst days.

And here's the crucial part: God's mercy isn't just a Lenten commodity. His compassions never fail. They're new every morning—Ash Wednesday mornings, random Tuesday mornings, Easter Sunday mornings, and every ordinary morning of your life. Lent doesn't unlock some special grace you can't access other times. It simply creates space for you to notice what's always been true.

So how do you strengthen your commitment when you've stumbled? Not by trying harder or feeling guiltier. You strengthen it by remembering who God is. By letting His character—not your performance, be the foundation.

You show up tomorrow not because you earned it yesterday, but because His mercies are new. You return to prayer not because you haven't missed days, but because He's compassionate. The strongest commitment isn't built on your resolve. It's built on His faithfulness.

Prayer

Compassionate God,

I'm grateful that You don't keep score of my failures. Thank You that Your mercy isn't limited to Lent but is new every morning of my life. Strengthen my commitment not through guilt or striving, but through remembering who You are—slow to anger, abounding in love, always ready to receive me back. Help me walk this imperfect journey anchored in Your perfect faithfulness. Amen.



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Prayer Journal Scripture Reading Meditate Other

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RESTORING OUR FAITH

God's Promise

*"I will never leave you nor forsake you."
Hebrews: 13:5*

It is comforting to know that I serve a forgiving God who will forgive my sins even though they be as scarlet.

Even though I have moments when I think God will surely turn away from me, I know in my heart that He never will. The reason I know is because He said in this Word, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." Hebrews: 13:5

Prayer

Dear Lord,

I thank you for always standing between me and harm in all the dark and lonely where I walk.

Amen

Velma Dortch
Senior Steward



The Lenten Journey

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Restoring Our Faith

*“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”
Hebrews 11:1*

When you come to Christ, things that are falling apart will start to come together. Faith and trust are only limited by our own belief and understanding of who God is and what he can do. Quality and Quantity of Faith is Restored through a journey that invites us to return to the foundational truths that anchor our spiritual lives. The first significant thing to remember is that faith is not merely a feeling but a deliberate choice to trust in God’s character and his word, no matter what the circumstances or how the situation may seem. *Hebrews 11:1 – “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”*

It can be very easy to allow doubt creep in during challenging times, but if we use this as a tool to strengthen what God gives us inside, and recall God’s faithful promises, He will show us that we have nothing to worry about. Faith works when we work, and Faith grows when we know the power in scripture and prayer. The word and the will of God should shape our perspective. By consistently engaging with the Bible, we remind ourselves of God’s unchanging nature and His commitment to fulfill what He has spoken. Prayer opens our hearts to God’s guidance, giving us the assurance that we are not alone in our struggles. This ongoing relationship building and faith increasing, helps restore our confidence, and allows us to see that a setback is only a set up for transformation and restoration. God is always helping us to persevere and trust Him more deeply as we walk toward him in faith. Self-appreciation and self-encouragement play a vital role in maintaining our faith in God. Let us share these concepts along with the stories of God’s faithfulness, and create an environment where love, trust, and faith become contagious.

Prayer for Restoring Faith

Heavenly Father,

When our faith feels fragile and doubts begin to grow, we turn to You, the source of all strength and truth. Remind us of Your unwavering love and of the countless times You have carried us through hardship. Help us to trust in Your promises and to find courage in Your word, even when our path seems uncertain. Fill our hearts with renewed confidence and hope as we seek to walk in faith each day. Guide us to lean on Your wisdom, to seek Your guidance in prayer, and to share our journey with those who also need encourage and uplifting. Thank You for Your patience, for restoring our faith, and for drawing us ever closer to You. In Jesus’ name, Amen

Rev. Gwen Wilson
Ministerial Staff



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Prayer Journal Scripture Reading Meditate Other

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Restoring Faith in Hard Seasons

“Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.”

Psalm 51:12

There are many things that can trigger a faith-struggle in our lives. Tragedy, extended seasons of suffering, and hopelessness hit without warning. In those desperate times we may wrestle with where God is, or if He hears us. Thankfully, when the difficulties of life pile on us these hardships may cause our faith to wane, but God is ready to restore that faith when we ask.

Restoration can be defined as the act of returning something to its former condition. The Bible has a lot to say about restoration. God loves to restore us and His restoration promises apply to our physical bodies, our minds, and even our faith.

King David knew the precious gift of God’s restoration. After his infidelity with Bathsheba, David cried out to God with these words recorded in Psalm 51:12. “Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.”

David knew only One could cleanse him from unrighteousness, restore his spirit, and renew his hope. Only God the Master Restorer.

So whatever hard season you're going through that has caused you to lose faith, take heart. God is faithful, and He will provide the restoration you need.

Prayer

Lord,

Renew my faith right now, just as you have done before. Help me trust in your steadfast Word instead of what I see happening all around me. Your promises are powerful, even when circumstances seem hopeless. I know you desire to restore my spirit and my faith. You are my Healer, Provider, and Deliverer. I put my trust in you alone. In Jesus' name, Amen



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The Unchanging One

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever "
Hebrews 13:8

The world around you is constantly changing, technology advances, relationships shift, bodies age, and certainties crumble. Even with all of modern science's attempts to prolong life, everything in this world is temporary and in motion.

But Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He never changes.

My love for you is constant. My promises are eternal. My presence is unwavering. When everything else shifts and shakes, I remain your solid foundation—the one unshakable constant in your life.

I will never leave you. And when you move from this life into the next, I will be right there beside you. You will shine brighter with every eternal step because I will be with you forever.

In a world of chaos and change, I am your anchor. I am the Alpha and the Omega. I am yours for all eternity.

Prayer

Eternal God,

In a world where everything changes, I thank You that You remain the same yesterday, today, and forever. When I feel overwhelmed by life's constant shifts and uncertainties, anchor me in Your unchanging love. When my body weakens and my circumstances crumble, remind me that You are my solid foundation. Thank You for the promise that You will never leave me or forsake me., Amen.

Annie Collins
Senior Steward



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Prayer Journal Scripture Reading Meditate Other

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THE FEAR OF LOSING HIS PRESENCE

"Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me"
Psalm 51:11

David's deepest fear wasn't losing his throne, his reputation, or even his life. It was losing God's presence. He had seen what happened to Saul when the Spirit departed—a slow, tragic descent into destruction. David knew that life without God's presence wasn't worth living.

Today, we're afraid of losing our jobs, our health, our savings, our social status. We stress about our kids, our marriages, our futures. But how often do we lie awake at night terrified of losing God's presence? How often do we weep at the thought of the Holy Spirit departing from us?

Our fears reveal our values. And if we're honest, we often value God's blessings more than we value God Himself. We want His provision without His presence. We want His benefits without His nearness. We treat Him like a vending machine rather than a Father.

Restoring our faith means reordering our fears. It means recognizing that the greatest tragedy isn't losing what we have, it's losing who we have. Every other loss can be survived if we have God. But without Him, even success feels empty.

Stop taking His presence for granted. Pursue it like it's the only thing that matters most because it is.

Prayer

Holy Spirit,

Forgive us for taking Your presence for granted. We confess that we fear losing earthly things more than we fear losing You. We worry more about our bank accounts than our spiritual condition, more about our careers than our closeness to You. Today, we reorder our priorities. We declare that nothing matters more than Your presence in our lives. Cast us not away from You. Take not Your Spirit from us. Stay close, even when we wander. Dwell richly in us, even when we neglect You. Let our greatest fear be distance from You, and let our greatest joy be nearness to You. Restore our hunger for Your presence. In Jesus' name, Amen.



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SEEK THE KINGDOM FIRST

And when we pray... seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness all these things will be added to you. God's response to our petitions come from an all knowing, all powerful, all loving God. We must believe we're praying to an all knowing and all-powerful God. A God who hears our prayers and guides and directs us to an outcome that is best for us. During this season of Lent let us pray and reflect on how He is leading us to restoration through his Son.

Jesus' wilderness experience in the desert is an example for our Lenten journey. The Bible tells us Jesus called upon the Word of God to strengthen him against Satan's challenges.

Now as we reflect upon Jesus' words we know he was able to resist the devil and he did flee. When we're tempted to test God's provisions ...we're reminded of Jesus' words" man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

Help us God to call upon your Word as Jesus did in the wilderness...knowing that you are able to remove all temptations and restore us to your righteousness. So, Father give us the strength to remain faithful unto you. Let the Words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord my strength and my redeemer

This is my prayer in Jesus' Name. Amen

Rev. Burroughs
Ministerial Staff



The Lenten Journey

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Prayer Journal Scripture Reading Meditate Other

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What am I learning about myself? Mentally? Emotionally? Physically? Spiritually?

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How can I get even closer to God?

I am committed to being all that God wants me to be!

Initial _____ Date _____

O Lord How Excellent!

*Oh Lord How excellent!
How excellent! How excellent!*

Harmony: How excellent is Thy name

*There is none like you, none
like you, none like you
Jesus excellent is Thy name*

*In all the Earth
All: Jesus excellent is Thy name*

*In all the Earth
All: Jesus excellent is Thy name*

*Every knee shall bow and
every tongue confess that He is Lord
All: Jesus excellent is Thy name*

Thank you for...

...the support and encouragement...

...the love and care...

RESURRECTING OUR HOPE

...the faith and trust...

...

Thank You Lord

Way Maker, Miracle Worker, Awesome Ruler, Light in the Darkness. My God that is who you are.

Most Precious, Kind and Loving Heavenly Father.

I come, thanking you for yet another day.

I thank you Lord God for being my bridge over troubled waters. I thank you, "O Lord: for always providing a way out of no way for me. I thank you, my Father, for your faithfulness toward me and your grace and mercy showed unto me.

Lord, as I reflect on your goodness, let me never forget the sacrifice you made for me. Guide me, Oh Lord, to show mercy, love justice and to walk humbly with you. Strengthen me Lord as I walk through this journey called Life. Show me what you would have me to do. I pray for your protection and your provision. I stand on your promises.

I love you, Lord, and I give you all of the praise, glory and honor, for you alone are worthy to be praised.

In the Mighty Name of Jesus Christ, I pray. Amen

Carol Griffin

Grant Women's Missionary Society

When Hope Dies

*"Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice."
Psalm 51:8*

David's affair with Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah didn't just violate God's law. It shattered David's sense of who he was. The man after God's own heart had become a man hiding in darkness. The king who led others had lost his way. The psalmist whose songs brought healing now found his own voice silenced by shame.

Hope dies when we can no longer see a way forward. When the gap between who we are and who we were meant to be feels unbridgeable. When we've hurt too many people, waited too long, fallen too far. Hope dies when we believe the lie that our best days are behind us, that our story has been written, that restoration is for others but not for us.

Prayer

Most Merciful God,

I stand here today not just broken, but feeling dead. Dead to joy. Dead to purpose. Dead to the person I once was and the dreams I once carried. I have nothing left to offer, no strength left to rise, no faith left to muster on my own.

But I thank You for loving me enough to redeem my past, use my present, and secure my future. I thank You that in Your hands, nothing is beyond restoration—not even me.

*In the precious name of Jesus, my Redeemer and Restorer,
Amen.*



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Resurrecting Hope

"Restore to me the joy of Your Salvation, and uphold me by Your generous Spirit"
Psalm 51:12

There are seasons in life when hope doesn't just fade, it dies. When the weight of our failures, the consequences of our choices, or the darkness of our circumstances buries hope so deep that we wonder if it can ever live again. David knew this place. Psalm 51 is the prayer of a man standing in the graveyard of his own making, surrounded by the death of his integrity, his joy, his peace, and his hope.

But this psalm teaches us something profound: the God who creates can also resurrect. The God who breathed life into dust can breathe life into dead hope.

Prayer

Dear Lord,

Today I come asking You to do what only You can do: resurrect my hope. Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation, bring back to life what has died in me. I cannot revive my own hope, but You are the God who raises the dead. Uphold me with Your willing Spirit. Sustain the hope You resurrect in me, because I know I cannot maintain it on my own. Breathe life into my weary soul. Let hope rise again. In Jesus' name, Amen.



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Resurrecting Our Hope

"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise."

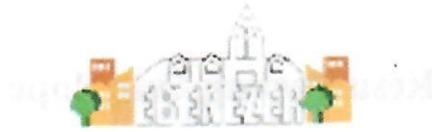
Psalms 51:17

Hope can feel crushed under the weight of our mistakes, our regrets, and our awareness of how far we've fallen. We may believe we've gone too far, failed too badly, or broken too much to ever be made whole again. But Psalm 51 reveals a beautiful paradox: what we think disqualifies us is actually what qualifies us for God's grace. God doesn't despise our brokenness, God receives it.

Our broken hearts are not the end of the story; they are the beginning of resurrection. When we bring our brokenness honestly before God, we position ourselves for divine transformation. God doesn't need our perfection; God desires our honesty. From the ashes of our failures, God resurrects hope. From the ruins of our mistakes, God builds something beautiful. The very place where we feel most hopeless becomes the place where God's power to restore is most evident.

Prayer

God of New Beginnings, resurrect our hope when it feels dead and buried. We come to You with broken spirits and contrite hearts, trusting that You will not despise us but will receive us with love. Blot out our transgressions and create in us the capacity to hope again—to believe that our best days are ahead of us, that our story isn't over, and that You can make beauty from our ashes. Give us hope that anchors our souls and reminds us that with You, resurrection is always possible. In Jesus' name, Amen.



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Resurrecting Our Hope

“But those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not be faint”

Isaiah 40:31

God’s plans don’t always make sense until he wants them to. Instead of dwelling on disappointments or fears, we should work harder at focusing on the promises of God, which remain steadfast regardless of our circumstances. Resurrecting our hope begins with a deliberate choice to shift our perspective. This intentional change in mindset allows us to see beyond the immediate challenges, anchoring our optimism in God’s enduring faithfulness and love. By regularly reflecting on His goodness and the ways He has provided in the past, we cultivate an attitude of hope that carries us through periods of uncertainty. *Isaiah 40:31 – “But those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not be faint”*

The work lies in our ability to embrace perseverance as we fight to trust in God’s timing. When we feel that our hope is tested or when answers seem delayed or situations remain unresolved, that is when we must increase our faith, trust and hope in God’s power. Learning to pause with faith so that God can work builds resilience and deepens our trust. Patience is not passive; it’s an active stance of expecting good to come, grounded in the conviction that God’s plans are always for our benefit, even if they unfold differently than we imagined.

Finally, using the power of community plays a significant role in resurrecting our hope. Sharing our struggles and victories with others creates a supportive network where encouragement and faith are multiplied. Through prayer, fellowship, and honest conversations, we receive reminders that we are not alone and that hope can be renewed through the kindness and support of those around us. This collective strength helps us hold on, while inspiring us all to persevere and trust in God’s abilities together.

Prayer for Resurrecting Our Hope

Gracious God,

In moments when hope feels distant and our hearts grow weary; we call upon Your presence to revive and renew us. Help us to remember Your promises and the many ways You have shown Your faithfulness throughout our lives. Teach us to lean on Your strength, to trust in Your perfect timing, and to open our hearts to the encouragement of Your Spirit. Lift our eyes beyond our challenges and remind us that Your love is unfailing and Your plans are always good. Restore in us a spirit of perseverance, surround us with a supportive community, and help us share hope with others. Thank You for making all things new and for holding us close even in seasons of uncertainty. We place our hope in You, knowing You will never let us go. In Jesus’ name, Amen.



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From the Grave to New Life

"Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me."

Psalm 51:10-12

Hope has a graveyard in your heart. You know where it is—the marriage you thought would heal by now, the addiction you can't break, the calling you've given up on. Each grave marker reads: "It's too late. Nothing will be different."

But Psalm 51 is David standing at his own graveyard of hope after catastrophic failure, and he's not there to mourn. He's there to witness a resurrection.

The Excavation: "Wash away all my iniquity" (v. 2). Before anything can live again, the tomb must be opened. David begs for complete washing, total excavation of everything buried under shame. You can't resurrect what you won't uncover.

The Re-Creation: "Create in me a pure heart" (v. 10). God doesn't repair the old heart—He creates a new one. This is Genesis language: something from nothing, life from death. You're not asking for renovation. You're asking for resurrection.

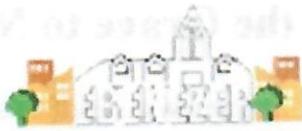
The Breath: "Do not take your Holy Spirit from me" (v. 11). Remember Eden? Adam didn't live until God breathed into him. Without God's Spirit, even a new heart is just another corpse. Hope resurrects when God's breath enters what was dead.

The Movement: "Restore to me the joy" (v. 12). Resurrected hope doesn't just lie there—it moves. It feels joy again. It becomes willing to try, to trust, to believe tomorrow might be different. This is how you know hope has truly risen: it starts moving toward the future instead of lying paralyzed by the past.

Stand at your graveyard of dead hopes. Ask God to excavate, create, breathe, and restore movement. The God who raised Jesus specializes in impossible resurrections.

Prayer

God of resurrection, I'm standing at the graveyard of my dead hopes. Come to this tomb. Excavate what I've buried in shame. Create a new heart where the old one stopped beating. Breathe Your Spirit into my deadness. Restore joy and willingness to what's been paralyzed. Roll away the stone. Speak life. Raise what I thought would stay buried forever. Amen.



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Hope Resurrected in Us

The resurrection of hope doesn't happen all at once. It begins with a prayer, grows through honest confession, and blooms as we experience God's faithfulness. It rises when we:

- Stop pretending and start praying
- Stop defending and start confessing
- Stop hiding and start hoping
- Stop dwelling on what we've lost and start trusting in who God is

Hope is resurrected when we realize that God specializes in impossible resurrections. He raised Jesus from the dead. He can raise your hope from the grave. Your dream from the ashes. Your joy from the darkness. Your purpose from the ruins.

The same God who met David in his darkest moment meets you in yours. The same mercy that restored a broken king is available to you today. The same creative power that formed the world can reform your heart.

Hope may feel dead, but with God, death is never the end of the story. It's the setup for resurrection.

Prayer

I trust that You are not finished with me. That my failures do not define my future. That You can use even my brokenness for Your glory. Resurrect my hope, Lord, and with it, resurrect my life. In the mighty name of Jesus, who conquered death and makes all things new, Amen.



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There Is Room at The Cross

Gracious and Most Heavenly Father,

During this Lenten Season of sacrifice and devotion, we come before you to say thank you, and to give you praise. Thank you for enduring the pain of Calvary, and for dying on the cross that we might be set free and receive everlasting life. We praise you Lord, for fulfilling your promise to be raised from the dead, and we shout "Hallelujah" for your being alive in our hearts today!

Help us to draw closer to you, Lord, and to trust your promises that you would be with us through every trial, through sickness, perplexities, disappointments and the pain of separation. Please order our steps and we shall endeavor to be more faithful and more intentional in our service and our study of your word. Give us a clean heart, O Lord, as we seek a closer walk with you during this Lenten Season. This we ask in Jesus' name.

Amen

Mother Beverly Thomas

HYMN

The cross upon which Jesus died
Is a shelter in which we can hide;
And its grace so free is sufficient for me,
And deep is its fountain as wide as the sea.

There's room at the cross for you,
There's room at the cross for you;
Tho' millions have come, There's still room for one
Yes, there's room at the cross for you.

-Ira Stamphill



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AMEC Hymn #321 Jesus Keep Me Near The Cross

*Jesus, keep me near the cross,
There a precious fountain,
Free to all—a healing stream,
Flows from Calv'ry's mountain.*

*In the cross, in the cross,
Be my glory ever;
From the cross my ransomed soul
Nothing then shall sever.*

*Near the cross, a trembling soul,
Love and mercy found me;
There the Bright and Morning Star
Sheds its beams around me.*

*Near the cross! O Lamb of God,
Bring its scenes before me;
Help me walk from day to day,
With its shadow o'er me.*

*Near the cross I'll watch and wait,
Hoping, trusting ever,
Till I see my Savior's face,
Leave His presence never.*

RESTORATION

Altar of Sacrifice

The altar of sacrifice is mentioned in the Bible as a place where the Israelites offered regular sacrifices for atonement. It was called, "the altar of burnt offering," and it stood outside in the Tabernacle forecourt.

The sacrificial altar is a reminder that our sins requires a sacrificial substitute so that we may receive forgiveness from God, and He sent His Son to fulfill that purpose. Every Sunday, some of us draw near to stand or kneel down at the chancellor rail or the altar to give our supplications to the Lord. We are blessed to know a priest does not have to intercede on our behalf or offer a sacrifice.

Jesus loved us so much He sacrificed His life. He was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed. Jesus' sacrifice was acceptable to God the Father.

We are all like sheep, we have strayed away, and we have left God's path to follow our own. During this Lenten Season is your sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. Are you allowing the Holy Spirit to control your heart? Is your love exhibited in selfless humility?

To put your all on the altar means to stop conforming to the patterns of this fallen world. If our hearts are not aligned with God, we are not aligned with each other.

We cannot worship God with a sincere heart and spirit if we are unrepentant. A sacrifice means to exchange your weakness for God's strength. Remember, you were bought at a price, glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which belongs to Him. We are not our own, Jesus paid the cost to redeem us from the slavery of sin that we may receive eternal life. Amen.

Rev. Vickie R. Gray
Ministerial Staff



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When You Want to Make a Fresh Start

"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you will not despise, O God... Then you will delight in the sacrifices of the righteous, in burnt offerings offered whole; then bulls will be offered on your altar."

Psalm 51:17, 19

You're sitting at your kitchen table on a random Thursday morning, coffee cooling in your cup, and you realize: I want to start over. Not give up—start over. Try again. Recommit. You've stumbled through the past few weeks, but something in you wants to turn back toward God.

Maybe it's after a particularly bad day where you lost your temper with everyone. Maybe it's after a quiet moment where you realized how far you've drifted. Maybe it's just an ordinary morning when grace breaks through and whispers, "It's not too late."

David shows us what God wants when we come back: "a broken and contrite heart." Not perfection. Not a promise that this time will be different. Not even a detailed plan for how you'll do better. Just a heart that acknowledges, "I need You. I can't do this on my own. I'm broken and I'm sorry."

That's the sacrifice God will not despise. He doesn't want your impressive spiritual performance. He wants your honest, humble return. And when you bring Him that—when you come with empty hands and a broken spirit—He delights in you. He receives you. He renews you.

So, make your fresh start. Not because you've earned it. Not because you're confident, you'll succeed this time. But because God invites the broken to come home. Today is a new day. The rest of Lent is still ahead. Begin again.

Prayer:

Loving God, I come to You with a broken spirit and a contrite heart. I haven't been who I wanted to be this Lent. I've failed and fumbled and fallen. But I want to start fresh. Receive this humble offering—not my impressive promises, but my honest brokenness. Renew my commitment not because I'm strong, but because You delight in receiving the broken. Help me to begin again. Amen.



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A Cry for Mercy

"Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me."

Psalm 51:10

David prayer is not a tentative, half-hearted prayer, but a gut-wrenching, nothing-held-back cry for mercy. He doesn't minimize his sin or make excuses. He doesn't wallow in self-pity or give up in despair. Instead, he turns toward the only one who can bring dead things back to life.

"Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me."

David doesn't ask God to improve his heart or help him try harder. He asks God to *create*—the same word used in Genesis when God spoke the universe into existence from nothing. David is saying, "God, I need a miracle. I need You to do what only You can do. I need resurrection.

Prayer

Create in me a clean heart, O God. I cannot clean it myself. Renew a right spirit within me. I cannot renew it on my own. Do what only You can do. Speak life where there is death. Breathe hope where there is despair. Make me new.

This is where hope begins to stir—not in our ability to fix ourselves, but in God's power to make us new. Hope is resurrected when we stop relying on our strength and surrender to His creative power



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God Wants Your Heart, Not Your Performance

*"For you do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it;
You do not delight in burnt offering"*

Psalm 51:16

We try to sacrifice our way to forgiveness. We throw ourselves into church activities, volunteer work, Bible reading plans, hoping that if we just do enough good, it will balance out the bad. But God isn't impressed by our busy religious schedules or our carefully curated spiritual résumés. He wants genuine brokenness, authentic repentance, and a surrendered heart. Stop trying to earn what He's offering freely. He doesn't want your performance. He wants you.

Prayer

Lord,

I confess that I've tried to earn Your forgiveness through religious activity and good behavior. I've thought that if I just serve enough, give enough, attend enough, you'd overlook my sin. But You desire truth, not performance for show. I will stop trying to sacrifice my way back into Your favor. I come with empty hands and a broken heart, receiving Your grace as the free gift it is. In Jesus' name, Amen.



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A CLEAN HEART

*Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.
Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.
Then I will teach transgressors your ways, so that sinners will turn back to you.
Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, you who are God my Savior,
and my tongue will sing of your righteousness.*

Psalm 51:10-14

Heavenly Father,

As I come into your presence, I thank you, I praise you, I honor You. I glorify You and I magnify your holy name. Oh Lord, I love You with all my heart, my soul, my mind and entire being. On this day and every day that you allow me to open my eyes, I come with humility in my heart, asking You to forgive me of any and everything that I may have said, or done by thought, word or deed that was not pleasing in your sight. Father, please forgive me for these misdoings are grievous unto me.

I pray Lord during this Lenten Season that You bestow upon me a clean heart and a renewed spirit. Allow me to be a beacon of light of Your love, mercy and grace that when others that do not know You, they will see, hear Your Word and Spirit which resides within me, and Your children are convicted to know and return back to You. Allow me to love them unconditionally as You love me.

Father, I pray You have mercy on me. I am so thankful and grateful, and undeserving of Your ultimate sacrifice to save a sinner like me. Help me to do better, to know better, and to be a blessing to all of Your children.

Father, I pray You wash me and your children with your righteous. Give us a clean heart, renew our spirit, that we may come before You to worship You in spirit and in truth.

Hallelujah and Amen

Reverend Vickie R. Gray
Ministerial Staff



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THE SURGERY OF A NEW HEART

"Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me"
Psalm 51:10

David doesn't ask God to repair his heart or improve his spirit. He asks God to **create**—the same word used in Genesis when God spoke the universe into existence. He's asking for something completely new, because he knows the old heart is beyond fixing.

In 2026, we're obsessed with self-improvement. We download apps to track our habits, read books on productivity, attend workshops on personal development. We think we can upgrade ourselves like we upgrade our phones, just install the latest version and run better.

But spiritual transformation doesn't work that way. We don't need an upgrade; we need a complete replacement. We don't need to try harder; we need to become different people. And that kind of change is beyond our capability.

This is both humbling and liberating. Humbling because it means we can't fix ourselves. Liberating because it means we don't have to. God doesn't ask us to perform heart surgery on ourselves. He does it for us.

Renewing our commitment means surrendering control of the transformation process. It means praying "create in me" instead of "help me create." It means trusting God to do in us what we could never do for ourselves.



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THE GIFT OF A CLEAN SLATE

"Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow"
Psalm 51:7

In our culture, one mistake can follow you forever. A bad tweet from ten years ago can cost you your career. A moral failure can define your entire legacy. The internet never forgets, and neither do people.

But God offers something radically different: complete cleansing. Not probation. Not conditional forgiveness with an asterisk. Not "we'll see if you've really changed." But whiter than snow—pure, spotless, as if it never happened.

This is the kind of fresh start our world doesn't offer. When God forgives, He doesn't keep a file on you. He doesn't hold your past over your head. He doesn't bring it up in future arguments. He washes you clean and treats you as though you never sinned at all.

Renewing our commitment today means accepting this gift without trying to earn it. We can't scrub ourselves clean through good deeds, church attendance, or penance. Only God can wash us. Our job is simply to stand under the waterfall of His grace and let Him do what only He can do.

Stop trying to clean yourself up before coming to God. Come dirty. Come guilty. Come stained. And let Him make you new.

Prayer

Most Gracious God,

We struggle to believe that forgiveness can be this complete. We're so used to conditional acceptance, to having our past mistakes held against us, to earning our way back into people's good graces. But You offer something our world doesn't: total cleansing. Wash us today. Remove every stain, every spot, every reminder of our guilt. Help us receive this gift without trying to earn it or qualify for it. Let us walk in the freedom of knowing we are whiter than snow—not because we've cleaned ourselves up, but because You have washed us clean. Renew our commitment to live as forgiven people. In Jesus' name, Amen.



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Day # _____

Prayer Journal Scripture Reading Meditate Other

How did I experience God on today? (hear, see and interact with God)

What am I learning about myself? Mentally? Emotionally? Physically? Spiritually?

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How can I get even closer to God?

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Initial _____ Date _____

JOY OF SALVATION

Happiness or Joy

"Make me hear joy and gladness, that the bones You have broken may rejoice"
Psalm 51:8

David doesn't ask God to restore his salvation—he asks for the restoration of its *joy*.

Joy is different from happiness. Happiness depends on circumstances; joy flows from relationship. David had lost the joy that comes from living in unhindered fellowship with God, from walking with a clear conscience, from experiencing the fullness of God's presence without the barrier of hidden sin.

David also recognizes his need for "a willing spirit" to sustain him. He knows himself well enough to understand that good intentions fade, that resolve weakens, that without God's sustaining power, he will drift again. He needs more than a one-time forgiveness; he needs an ongoing grace that keeps his heart inclined toward God.

This verse teaches us that we can be saved and joyless, forgiven yet far from flourishing. God wants to give us more than mere pardon—He wants to restore the richness of relationship, the vitality of walking closely with Him, the sustaining power that keeps us faithful through all of life's seasons.

Prayer

Loving Father,

Restore to me the joy of Your salvation. I confess that somewhere along the way, I have lost the delight I once knew in You. My salvation is secure, but the joy has faded. The worship feels hollow. The prayers feel mechanical. I go through the motions, but my heart is distant.

Bring back the joy, Lord. Let me taste again the sweetness of Your presence again. Amen



The Lenten Journey

Daily Check Box

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Restoring the Joy

"Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit."

Psalm 51: 12

During this season of Lent, I am seeking the restoration of joy. I acknowledge the need for mercy and grace. That sin causes separation from God, leading to emotional distress, guilt, and shame. I realize that we must have a willing spirit, moving from a place of brokenness to a place of joyful obedience.

True joy is not the absence of sin, but the presence of God's restoring grace. We must take responsibility for our mistakes and allow God's unfailing love to bring a fresh, steady joy.

Engaging in praise and worship cultivates a heart of joy.
"Restore to me the joy of your salvation."

Prayer

Gracious God,

Help me to feel the joy that your salvation brings, making my life a testimony to your mercy. In this season of Lent, fill me with the peace that surpasses all understanding and the deep joy of being in your presence. Through Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior I pray. Amen!

Shirley Christian
Class Leader

Coaching Points

*Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.
Then I will teach transgressors your ways, so that sinners will turn back to you.
Psalm 51: 12-13*

“You might not want to do that, sir”, I said to my colleague, a younger man in his 30’s.

I said this to another football coach, as he sought to exhibit toughness and manliness to our players.

“There are some hidden pitfalls if you act without thinking, especially for a man with a young family.”

There is a joy in working with younger men as they mature, watching the progressions they go through... now in my golden years... I am full of willingness to pass on the stories of my blessings... the times the Lord has saved me from my own mistakes... and forgave me for my transgressions. I have been sustained by His love.

“I’m sharing this so you won’t make the mistake of other guys that I know...who put other things above God and family. Don’t do that to your future...”

The distractions of the world are the traps the enemy lays to ensnare us...so that we won’t have the time to concentrate on the lessons of Christ... and his goodness. Sad and distracted is the world... when the Word of God is what we need.

When there are trying moments in my life, I seek out the Joy of Jesus...in scripture...in song... in the scenic beauty of creation...then I can rejoice in knowing the Lord for myself... and share that with others.

“Someday you’ll be a head coach...with greater responsibility...so don’t cut corners now... always have integrity in your process...God first...then family...everything else will come together after that. Now go on home to your family...we will start again tomorrow.”

Prayer

Lord, grant in me a spirit of joy, that I might inspire others to know you and your will. I pray for those who are distracted by the world. Settle their minds and hearts, so that they might receive your Holy Spirit in these trying times. Raise up a new generation of leaders to demonstrate your goodness. Let them be a witness to your power and majesty to that the world to come; so that our future may be found in you. In the name of Jesus I pray this prayer, Amen.

George L. Davis, II
Senior Steward



The Lenten Journey

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Prayer Journal Scripture Reading Meditate Other

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We All Need Restoration, Not Just Forgiveness

***“Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me by Your generous Spirit”
Psalms 51:12***

Many of us stop at asking for forgiveness, but David shows us there's more. Sin doesn't just create guilt—it drains our joy, dulls our passion for God, and leaves us spiritually exhausted. We can be forgiven and still feel distant from God. David teaches us to pray for the restoration of joy, for the rekindling of that first love, for the return of spiritual vitality. In our burnout culture, where even believers can go through the motions feeling empty, this prayer reminds us that God wants to restore the joy we once had in our relationship with Him.

Prayer

Gracious and Merciful God,

Grant me a willing spirit, Lord. I confess that sometimes my heart resists Your ways even when my mind knows they are good. Remake my desires. Realign my will with Yours. Give me a heart that longs to obey You, not out of obligation, but out of love and trust.



The Lenten Journey

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JOY RESTORED BECOMES TESTIMONY

"Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee"
Psalm 51:13

In our hyper-connected world, restored joy becomes a powerful testimony. When your coworkers see that you have peace despite the chaos, they'll want to know your source. When your social media reflects genuine contentment instead of manufactured happiness, people notice. When your marriage thrives while others crumble, when your integrity holds while others compromise, when your joy persists while others despair—that's evangelism without a word.

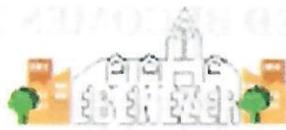
Today's world is drowning in carefully curated lives that look perfect but feel empty. Your honest journey from joylessness to restoration, shared vulnerably, not performatively, gives others permission to admit their own struggles and seek the same healing.

Your comeback from burnout can become someone's roadmap to rest. Your recovery from addiction can become someone's catalyst for freedom. Your restoration after moral failure can become someone's hope for redemption. Your joy after depression can become someone's reason to keep living.

The world doesn't need another influencer with a perfect life. It needs witnesses who've been through the valley and can testify that God brings us through.

Prayer

Lord, we receive our restoration not just for ourselves, but for a watching world that desperately needs hope. In an age of manufactured joy and fake happiness, let our authentic restoration shine as a beacon. May our restored joy, the kind that, persists through disappointments, and endures through trials make people curious about You. In Jesus' name, Amen.



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Your Restoration Matters to the Community

"Do good in Your good pleasure to Zion: build the walls of Jerusalem"
Psalm 51:18

After pouring out his personal confession, David's heart turns outward to his community, his city, his people. He understands that his sin doesn't just affect him; it impacts everyone around him. When leaders fall, communities suffer. When we compromise, it weakens the collective witness. In our hyper-individualistic culture, we think our private sins are nobody's business. Personal restoration has communal implications. When God restores us, He doesn't just rebuild our individual lives He uses us to rebuild communities. Our healing becomes part of the larger work God is doing to build up His people. Your restoration matters not just for you, but for everyone connected to you.

Prayer

Lord,

I confess that I've been focused only on my own restoration, forgetting that my sin affects my family, my church, my community. Do good in Your pleasure to those I've hurt through my failures. Build up what my sin has torn down. Restore not just me, but the collective witness of Your people. Use my restored life as part of Your larger work to strengthen and build up Your church. In Jesus' name, Amen.



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Prayer Journal Scripture Reading Meditate Other

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Serving from Love, Not for Love

"Then You shall be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then they shall they offer bulls on Your altar"

Psalm 51:19

David ends with a promise: after restoration, he'll offer the right kind of sacrifices not to earn forgiveness, but as a response to it. There's an order here that we often reverse. We try to sacrifice first to get God's favor, when God wants us to receive His favor first, then sacrifice in gratitude. This looks like serving God not to prove ourselves worthy, but because we're already loved. It means giving not to earn blessings, but because we've been blessed. It means obeying not to avoid punishment, but because we're grateful for grace. When we understand we're already accepted, our service flows from a place of joy rather than a place of fear, from love rather than duty. Restoration transforms our motivation; we stop performing to be loved and start serving because we are loved.

Prayer

My Lord,

Teach me the right order: to receive Your grace first, then respond with gratitude. Help me receive Your love freely and let my obedience flow from a heart overwhelmed by Your mercy. Let everything, I do be a response to grace, not an attempt to earn it. Transform my motivation—from fear to love, from duty to delight. In Jesus' name, Amen.



The Lenten Journey

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Prayer Journal Scripture Reading Meditate Other

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Unspeakable Joy by Douglas Miller

When I think of how He brought me through
and how, how the Lord changed my life;
my soul, my soul is overwhelmed.

CHORUS:

I've got joy, joy, joy,
unspeakable joy.

BRIDGE:

Joy unspeakable, full of glory,
joy unspeakable, pathway bright.
Joy unspeakable, full of glory,
joy unspeakable, burdens light;
every time I think of the goodness of the Lord.

HOLY WEEK

Renewal Prayer

“Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.”
(Psalm 51:10)

Thank You, Father, that in Your wisdom You do not renew and restore the old fallen sin-nature in Adam, but You give us a new nature, a new, born-again life, received through faith in Christ Jesus.

Thank You for the lessons we can learn from biblical saints like David, who was cleansed of his sin, when he confessed his faults and cried out to You.

Thank You for the indwelling ministry of the Holy Spirit, and I pray that You would point out all the areas in my life that grieve You or quench Your ongoing work within.

Create in me a clean heart I pray, and renew a steadfast spirit within me, and may Christ be seen in me as I submit to Your Spirit's leading and do only those things I hear from Him.

In Christ's name I pray, AMEN

Stephanie Darby
Senior Steward

Renewal

“Create in me a clean heart, O God,
And renew a steadfast spirit within me.
¹¹ Do not cast me away from Your presence,
And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.
¹² Restore to me the joy of Your salvation,
And uphold me *by Your* generous Spirit.”
Psalm 51:10-12

Asking God to forgive our sins is just the beginning. True repentance means we don't simply ask for forgiveness and then return to the same patterns. We must truly turn our behavior around and align ourselves to God's Word, His will, and His ways.

We must change our thinking, transforming negative patterns into positive ones. We must change our actions, replacing destructive habits with life-giving choices. We must change our relationships, moving away from influences that pull us from God and toward those that draw us closer to Him.

God's will for us is a life of peace. He calls us to trust Him completely, believing that He is in total control even when circumstances seem chaotic. This trust becomes our foundation for genuine transformation and we find the peace that surpasses all understanding.

Prayer

Merciful and Loving God,

Help me truly repent to turn completely away from my old ways and walk in Your ways. Draw me closer and change my thinking, my actions, and my relationships to align with Your Word and Your will. Restore unto me the joy and peace that comes from trusting You completely. I believe You are in control, and I surrender my life to Your loving guidance. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Ebenezer Member

From Ashes to Beauty

"To all who mourn in Israel, he will give a crown of beauty for ashes, a joyous blessing instead of mourning, festive praise instead of despair. In their righteousness, they will be like great oaks that the Lord has planted for his own glory."

Isaiah 61:3

Reflection:

On Ash Wednesday, we began this journey marked with ashes, dust and death upon our foreheads, a stark reminder of our mortality and sin. "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return." We entered Lent stripped bare, confronting our fragility and need for God.

But the ashes were never meant to be the end of the story. They were the beginning of transformation. Throughout these 40 days, God has been at work beneath the surface of our lives, like spring working beneath frozen ground. The fasting, the prayer, the sacrifice all of it was not punishment but preparation. We were being made ready for beauty.

Now, as Lent draws to a close, look at what God has grown in the soil of your surrender. Where you planted tears, what has sprouted? Where you released control, what peace has emerged? The crown of beauty God promises is not cheap jewelry placed on an unchanged head. It is the radiance that comes from being transformed by His love, the glory that shines through scars that have become holy.

You are not who you were on Ash Wednesday. The mourning is turning to dancing. The ashes are becoming beauty.

Prayer

Lord of Transformation,

You take what is broken and make it beautiful. Thank You for the work You have done in me during this Lenten season. As I emerge from these forty days, let me wear the beauty You have created—not as ornament, but as testimony to Your renewing power. Plant me like an oak for Your glory. Amen.



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Prayer Journal

Scripture Reading Meditate Other

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Standing in Truth ***Rooted and Unshakable***

"Then they sent to Him some of the Pharisees and the Herodians, to catch Him in His words. When they had come, they said to Him, "Teacher, we know that You are true, and ^[a]care about no one; for You do not ^[b]regard the person of men, but teach the way of God in truth. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? Shall we pay, or shall we not pay?" But He, knowing their hypocrisy, said to them, "Why do you test Me? Bring Me a denarius that I may see it." So, they brought it.

And He said to them, "Whose image and inscription is this?" They said to Him, "Caesar's." And Jesus answered and said to them, ^[c]"Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."

And they marveled at Him.

Mark 12:13-17

The religious leaders come with their traps, but Jesus stands unshaken in truth. You watch Him with the confidence of one who has also chosen truth during Lent. You've faced your hard questions, confronted your compromises, surrendered your both and evasions.

You know now what belongs to God: everything. You've stopped negotiating, stopped dividing your loyalty, stopped parsing out percentages of devotion. Lent taught you that half-hearted faith is no faith at all.

As Jesus speaks truth to those who come to trap Him, you stand in solidarity, not as one still discovering truth, but as one **rooted** in it. The questions don't shake you anymore because you've already answered them. The either-or traps don't work because you've already chosen the narrow way.

This Holy Week, you don't seek truth. You **stand** in it.

PRAYER

God of all Truth,

I stand before You with a settled heart. Lent stripped away my excuses, exposed my half-measures, and revealed where I was serving two masters. As Jesus faces His accusers with steady truth, Make me equally unshakable. I will not be moved by popular opinion, intimidated by opposition, or seduced back into comfortable compromise. The hard questions have been answered. The territory has been claimed. I belong entirely to You. Keep me rooted in truth: I am Yours, and You are enough.

In steadfast faith, Amen.



The Lenten Journey

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The Fragrance Remains

"Listen! Behold, a Sower went out to sow. And it happened, as he sowed, that some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds ^[a]of the air came and devoured it. Some fell on stony ground, where it did not have much earth; and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of earth. But when the sun was up it was scorched, and because it had no root it withered away. And some seed fell among thorns; and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no ^[b]crop. But other seed fell on good ground and yielded a crop that sprang up, increased and produced: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred."
And He said ^[c]to them, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

Mark 14:3-9

Mary breaks her alabaster jar, and the fragrance fills the house. You recognize this moment because you've lived it during Lent, you broke open what you were holding back. You poured out your security, your plans, your carefully protected future. The jar is already broken.

Today, you witness Mary's extravagance not as instruction but as **confirmation**. This is what surrender looks like. This is what you've already chosen. As the disciples protest the waste, you understand: those who haven't surrendered always see extravagant devotion as foolishness.

But you know the secret, the fragrance lingers. Your Lenten sacrifice still perfumes your life. The breaking released something beautiful that cannot be contained or taken back. You are living poured out, and it is not waste. It is worship.

This Holy Week, you **live** as one whose jar is already broken, whose perfume is already poured out, whose life is already an offering.

PRAYER

Lord Jesus,

During Lent, I broke my alabaster jar. I poured out what I was protecting, released what I was hoarding, surrendered what I thought I needed to survive.

The fragrance of that offering still fills my life. I am living poured out, And I have discovered it is not loss—it is freedom.

As Mary anoints You for burial, I recognize my own anointing: I have died to my old securities. I am prepared for resurrection life.

Let the fragrance of my surrender strengthen me as we walk toward Your cross. Let my broken jar remind me that loss in Your service is gain, that death precedes life, that extravagant love is never wasted. I remain poured out. I remain Yours.

In Jesus Name, Amen.



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Maundy Thursday: The Upper Room

"Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end... so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him."

John 13:1-5

On this night, everything changes. Jesus gathers His disciples for one final meal, and instead of receiving service, He offers it. The Lord of the universe kneels before His friends, even before Judas, whom He knows will betray Him—and washes the dust from their feet.

This is love "to the end," love that serves, love that humbles itself, love that touches what is dirty and makes it clean.

At the table, He breaks bread and pours wine. "This is my body, given for you. This is my blood, poured out for you." He makes Himself food for the journey, sustenance for the soul. He gives us everything, His very self.

Before the cross, before the sacrifice, comes the gift of presence. Jesus chooses intimacy. He chooses to serve, to feed, to love His friends. He gives us a new commandment: love one another as I have loved you.

Tonight, receive His service. Let Him wash your feet, feed your soul, and call you friend.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, You who knelt to wash the feet of sinners, teach me to serve as You served. Thank You for this gift of the Eucharist, your body and blood given for me. Help me to receive Your love humbly and to offer that same self-giving love to others. On this holy night, make me a servant after Your own heart. Amen.



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Good Friday: The Cross

"When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left. Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.' ... It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Jesus called out with a loud voice, 'Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.' When he had said this, he breathed his last."

Luke 23:33-34, 44-46

This is the day the earth grew dark at noon. The day creation itself recoiled at what was happening on Golgotha's hill. The sinless One hanging between two thieves, dying the death we deserved, bearing the weight of the world's brokenness.

We call it "Good" Friday, though there is nothing good about the suffering. The goodness is in the love that held Him there when He could have called down legions of angels. The goodness is in His refusal to save Himself so that He might save us.

Listen to His words from the cross: "Father, forgive them." "Today you will be with me in paradise." "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" "It is finished." Each word a gift, a revelation, a key to understanding the depth of His love.

The curtain in the temple tears from top to bottom. God's own hand ripping open the barrier that separated Him from His people. No more sacrifices required. The final Lamb has been slain. The way to the Father is open, purchased by the blood of the Son.

Today we stand at the foot of the cross. Our sin put Him there. Our redemption flowed from His wounds.

Prayer

Crucified Savior, on this dark and holy day, I stand at the foot of Your cross and mourn. You suffered what I deserved. You bore the punishment that brings me peace. Forgive me for the sins that nailed You there. Thank You for the mercy that kept You there. By Your wounds I am healed. By Your death I have life. It is finished, and I am saved. Amen.



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Holy Saturday: The Tomb

“Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting there opposite the tomb.”

Matthew 27:59-61

This is the longest day. The day of waiting, of silence, of absence. Jesus lies in the tomb, and the stone seals Him in. The women sit and watch, their hopes buried with Him. The disciples hide, scattered and afraid.

We don't spend much time in Holy Saturday. We rush from the tragedy of Friday to the triumph of Sunday, uncomfortable with the in-between. But Holy Saturday is where most of us live most of our lives—in the waiting, in the not-yet, in the silence of God.

The tomb feels like the end, but it is not. While His body rests, Christ descends to the dead, proclaiming victory even in the realm of death. Nothing—not even death itself—is outside the reach of His redemptive work.

Holy Saturday teaches us to wait in hope even when we see no evidence of resurrection. To trust in the darkness that God is at work beneath the surface. To believe that the tomb is not a final resting place but a chrysalis where something new is being formed.

The stone is there. The guards are posted. But the God who spoke light into darkness is not finished. Sunday is coming. But today, we wait. We sit with the women at the tomb. We rest in the Sabbath silence. We trust that the God who entered death will not be defeated by it.

Prayer

God of the waiting, on this silent Saturday I sit at the tomb of my own hopes and dreams. I confess that I struggle to wait, to trust when I cannot see what You are doing. Give me faith to believe in resurrection even when all I can see is stone. Remind me that You have descended even into death to bring life. Hold me in this in-between place until the dawn breaks and I see that You have been faithful all along. Amen.



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Prayer Journal Scripture Reading Meditate Other

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Initial _____ Date _____

Let The Church Say “Amen”

Andrae Crouch featuring Marvin Winans

*Let the church say amen
Let the church say amen (oh amen)
God has spoken
Let the church say amen*

*Make this your response (amen)
To whatever he says (amen)
To the healing of your body (amen)
To the raising of the dead (amen)
No matter how you feeling (amen)
Or how your world is reeling (amen)
Battle on through the night (amen)
Cause you're gonna win the fight (amen)
Even in the valley (amen)
Or standing at your red Sea (amen)
Continue to say (amen)
Cause your help is on the way (amen)
God has spoken. Let the church say Amen.*

REFLECTIONS

At the completion of this 40 Day Lenten Journey, describe the summary of lessons I learned about yourself.

How can I be a better servant of God in my life and journey at Ebenezer?

REFLECTIONS: RENEW, RESTORE & RESURRECT

CHRIST THE LORD IS RISEN TODAY

*Christ the Lord is risen today, Alleluia!
Sons of men and angels say, Alleluia!
Raise your joys and triumphs high, Alleluia!
Sing, ye heav'ns, and earth, reply, Alleluia!*

*Vain the stone, the watch, the seal, Alleluia!
Christ hath burst the gates of hell, Alleluia!
Death in vain forbids him rise, Alleluia!
Christ hath opened paradise, Alleluia!*

*Lives again our glorious King, Alleluia!
Where, O death, is now thy sting? Alleluia!
Once He died our souls to save, Alleluia!
Where thy victory, O grave? Alleluia!*

*Soar we now where Christ hath led, Alleluia!
Following our exalted Head, Alleluia!
Made like Him, like Him we rise, Alleluia!
Ours the cross, the grave, the skies, Alleluia!*

*Hail, the Lord of earth and heaven! Alleluia!
Praise to Thee by both be given, Alleluia!
Thee we greet triumphant now, Alleluia!
Hail, the Resurrection, thou! Alleluia!*

Easter Joy

*Jesus came to earth,
To show us how to live,
How to put others first,
How to love and how to give.*

*Then He set about His work,
That God sent Him to do;
He took our punishment on Himself;
He made us clean and new.*

*He could have saved Himself,
Calling angels from above,
But He chose to pay our price for sin;
He paid it out of love.*

*Our Lord died on Good Friday,
But the cross did not destroy
His resurrection on Easter morn
That fills our hearts with joy.*

*Now we know our earthly death,
Like His, is just a rest.
We'll be forever with Him
In heaven, where life is best*