

A Lenten JOURNEY

2024



A COLLECTION OF DEVOTIONS
VOLUME XXVII

Preface

Welcome to the 27th *Lenten Journey*! This treasured publication is born out of our lives as a community of faith.

Lent is a season of forty days, not counting Sundays, which begins on Ash Wednesday and ends on Holy Saturday. The English word “Lent” comes from the Anglo–Saxon word *lencten*, which means “lengthen” and refers to the lengthening days of “spring.”

The origins of Lent are Biblically-based. Matthew chapter 4 says that Jesus went out into the desert for 40 days and 40 nights before beginning his public ministry. He prayed, fasted and emptied himself completely of everything before the Father. Lenten practices are meant to mimic Jesus’s example. In a sense, we go out into the desert to pray, to fast and to reflect on our life. Additionally, we empty ourselves of that which does not belong to God or is hurting our relationship with God.

The submissions in this year’s Lenten Journey are offered by our residents, staff and community members in the hope that your life will be enriched through hearing the journey of others. The goal is that by the end of Lent we will be in a gentler and more impassioned place than when we started, allowing the Holy Spirit to shape us more into the people we were created to be.

Thank you to each and every contributor to this year’s Lenten Journey. Sharing your story helps others see how God has been active in your life, and it encourages us to see where God is active in ours.

– Rev. Dr. Lynn McClintock
DIRECTOR PASTORAL CARE

Introduction

Welcome to the 27th *Lenten Journey*! This collection of reflections, offered by residents, staff, and community members hopes to accompany you on your own journey through Lent.

The season of Lent is longer and quieter than the season of Advent. It lacks the secular distractions and frenzy. Lent provides space and time to take a long, quiet look at ourselves and reorient our priorities, our attention, and our prayers.

Some have considered Lent to be something to be endured rather than celebrated. We use words like sacrifice, self-denial and discipline. The Gospel writer Luke tells us that when life got busy for Jesus, he took time to withdraw to a deserted place to pray (Luke 5:15-16).

We know when we travel on airplanes that the flight attendants remind us to put our own oxygen masks on first and then assist others. Lent is a time to be mindful of your personal spiritual practices, things that draw you nearer to God, so that you can offer God's love and peace to the world around you.

The opportunities to practice these spiritual practices are as unique as each of you. Be creative and consider trying something new. As you journey through Lent ask yourself: *What am I learning about God through this practice? What am I learning about myself?*

Thanks to everyone who contributed by sharing some of their story. We are people rooted in God's story and welcomed into that story through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

May you discover yourself in this story in new ways this season.

– Rev. Leigh Anne Ring
PRESBYTER FOR RELATIONAL CARE
PRESBYTERY OF THE JAMES

Ash Wednesday

AMOS 5:6-15

PSALM 95

LUKE 18:9-14

REMEMBER THAT YOU ARE DUST,
AND TO DUST YOU SHALL RETURN.

In many churches, ashes are imposed on your forehead with these words. You may also hear them at burial services when the remains of a loved one are laid to rest.

It's a reminder of our mortality, that our bodies are frail and that we will someday die. As we begin our Lenten journey, we are called to remember that our time on earth is limited, and that we are to make the most of our days while we are able. It's a sobering thought, though we at Westminster Canterbury are more aware of this than most people, as we live together in what will be for most of us, our final years. When I first moved here, I had to adjust to the realization that I might speak to someone in the hall and then learn the next week that they had died.

Perhaps this is a good time to reflect on the blessings of family and friends, those who are part of your life. Take a few moments during this season of introspection and let them know how much they mean to you.

Let these words from a French writer be your inspiration:

*Life is short,
And we do not have much time
to gladden the hearts of those who
make the journey with us.
So... be swift to love,
and make haste to be kind.
And the blessing of God,
who made us,
who loves us,
and who travels with us
be with you now and forever.*

Henri Frederic Amiel (1821-1881)

WHAT WILL SAVE US; WHAT WILL NOT

Lent is a season to confront the hard stuff. You know what yours is, and I, mine.

The Common Lectionary's readings for Lent, Cycle B, give us ample opportunity to explore both our struggle and our salvation. The Old Testament lessons rehearse the history of God's covenant with humankind, beginning with Abraham and Sarah and continuing with God's promises to Noah and Moses, and to the entire house of Israel. These solid stories of relationship give us the ballast we need to survive the stormy blast of the gospel lessons. These stories begin with Jesus, immediately after baptism, being severely tested in the wilderness and then to his telling his disciples that great suffering and rejection was coming.

Lent is the season to confront such terrifying news, not by buckling before it, but by using its harsh light to examine the truth of our situation before God. It is a season to see through our illusions about what will save us and to know for certain what will not. To use Jonathan Edward's image, it is a time to abandon the twigs we have been using to keep us afloat and to reach out for the only raft that can bear our weight. Because the good news means to change us, we inevitably hear it as bad news first. God does not mean to improve us, but to save us, even if it scares us to death.

As the lectionary readings continue, we start to catch our breath and to see the faint image of the shoreline ahead. Jesus travels toward his death with a strong, prescient confidence. His life is not taken from him; he gives it willingly.

Once we are on dry land, saved by grace, the work of the resurrection begins.

— Rev. Dr. Lynn McClintock

DIRECTOR PASTORAL CARE

Friday after Ash Wednesday

EZEKIEL 18:1-4, 25-33

PSALM 95

JOHN 17:9-19

DESERT TIMES

Mark 1:9-12

In those days, Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved, with you I am well pleased."

And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness.

Why would the Spirit drive the beloved Son of God into the wilderness? It sounds like such a cruel thing to do. So often I have also questioned why God allowed me to experience the desert times in my own life, times when I watched a loved one suffer and die. Or times when I experienced devastating events in life, such as divorce or the loss of a job.

During the forty days that Jesus spent in the wilderness, he faced multiple temptations. His faith was sorely tested but it held strong. Job also experienced extreme testing as he suffered both physical and emotional pain. But as a result of those experiences, Job developed a stronger relationship with God.

As I reflect on my personal desert experiences, I realize that those were the times when my own spiritual life deepened. I cannot remember who said it but someone once pointed out that so often God can only enter a heart when it has been broken. As we enter this Lenten season, let us reflect upon the broken-hearted times in our lives. What did we learn? Did our relationship with God change; if so, in what respect? How can we allow God to use our experiences as a means of giving hope to others?

– Rachel Cobb, RESIDENT

Saturday after Ash Wednesday

EZEKIEL 39:21-29

PSALM 30

JOHN 17:20-26

ELUSIVE SPIRIT

My grown son attended a funeral recently at which the eulogist told of the departed's search for the Holy Spirit in his life. It was only a few weeks before the departed's death that the experience came, affirmed by unusually warm hands and face, a feeling of spiritual euphoria, and a sense of oneness with all the saints of God, past and present. "What do you think of that, dad?" my son asked.

I replied that the experience was very real to the now deceased person, but after living many decades, I have never personally had an encounter that I could affirm conclusively to be the presence of the Holy Spirit. "Does that concern you?" my son persisted.

In my daily reading, I had just completed the rereading of "The Acts of the Apostles" in which the Holy Spirit is mentioned 56 times. That Spirit enabled the disciples to act in many remarkable ways. Does it concern me that I have had nothing similar to transpire in my Christian life? My answer is "no." That does not mean that I am unaware of the illumination of my soul through the spirit of Christ.

Or as George Croly put it, "I ask no dream, no prophet ecstasies, no sudden rending of this veil of clay, no angel visitant, no opening skies, but take the dimness of my soul away."

Romans 5:5b: "...for God has poured out his love into our hearts by means of the Holy Spirit, who is God's gift to us."

— Bill Blake, RESIDENT

First Sunday in Lent

DEUTERONOMY 8:1-10

PSALM 63:1-8

MARK 2:18-22

A LENTEN REFLECTION

In the tradition of our Christian faiths, Lent is a season of prayer, fasting and almsgiving. As a child growing up in the 1940's and 50's, there was emphasis on giving up something as a means of sacrificial prayer and discipline. For us children, it was dessert or candy, and it is marginally possible that these little sacrifices were spiritually worthwhile.

Even today for myself, and I imagine many of my generation, the habit of self-denial continues, although possibly has morphed into giving up the martini before supper or late-night ice cream!

But I want to focus on what I think might be more beneficial and spiritually useful—and rewarding—this Lent.

I am writing this reflection right after the hearing Sunday's Gospel reading from Matthew and thinking how it might apply to my Lenten observance. In the Gospel, Matthew is describing Christ at the Last Judgment:

I was hungry and you gave me food,
I was thirsty and you gave me drink,
a stranger and you welcomed me,
naked and you clothed me,
ill and you cared for me,
in prison and you visited me.

Amen, I say to you, whatever you did
for one of the least brothers of mine, you did for me.

If these are the criteria for entering Heaven, then even with advancing age, I have some work ahead besides giving up that martini! Could I assist with my local food bank? Help resettle a refugee family? Visit someone sick and alone in our community? Contribute all of those old professional suits that I will never wear again to a veterans reentry program?

We know from the parable of the vineyard, that God is always ready to receive and forgive us, even late in the day—so I had better get going this Lent!

– William Sigler, RESIDENT

PRIDE

I came across a passage by C.S. Lewis from his book, *Mere Christianity*, in which he says, “According to Christian teachers, the essential vice, the utmost evil, is pride. Unchastity, anger, greed, drunkenness and all that, are mere fleabites in comparison. It was through pride that the devil became the devil: Pride leads to every other vice. It is the complete anti-God state of mind.”

Around the same time of reading this, I awoke from a dream one night, and as often happens, I was singing in my dream. In a half-awakened state, I was aware that the song was a solo I sang on Youth Sunday in my home church in Kentucky when I was about 15 years old. (Let me say by way of explanation, that I came from a musical family. My parents were professionally trained musicians, and I am not. My downfall, as those who know me will understand, is that I do not remember or retain WORDS). So back to my dream – as I lay there half-awake, I recognized that I knew all the words to my solo from 66 years ago. My conclusion is that the message in my solo must have been very important to me to have “come out” all these many years later.

My solo was as follows:

“Two men went up to the temple to pray, the one a Pharisee and the other a Publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus unto himself, ‘I thank thee Lord that I am not as other men, extortioners, unjust or even as this Publican – this Publican. I fast twice in the week, I make tithe of all that I possess.’ And the Publican standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, ‘Lord be merciful to me, Lord be merciful unto me. A sinner, a sinner, be merciful unto me a sinner. O Lord be merciful to me.’ I tell you, I tell you, this man went up to his house, justified, justified, rather than the other. For he who exalteth himself, shall be abased and he who humbleth himself will be exalted, exalted, exalted. Lord be merciful unto me!” *Written by Beardsley Van de Water*

– Cabell Chenault, RESIDENT

Tuesday First Week of Lent

GENESIS 37:12-24

PSALM 45

MARK 1:14-28

OPENING OUR EYES AND HEARTS

These past few years dealing with COVID, the war in Ukraine and now the war in Israel have been challenging to say the least. And now with all the angry, hateful demonstrations, I have found it nearly impossible to stay positive. However, the Bible tells us in Philippians 4:8 to “Think on these things; whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable. If anything is excellent or praiseworthy, think about such things.” The difficult battle is with my mind. With each new day that the Lord gives us, there is much to be grateful for. We here at Westminster Canterbury are not starving, freezing or in danger. We have plenty of food, shelter and friendships. As we welcome this Easter season, it is my prayer we can take the advice given in James 1:19 by being quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to be angry. We can be more positive if we just open our eyes and open our hearts to our daily blessings!

– Cooka Shaw, RESIDENT

WHAT I KNOW ABOUT GRIEF

This is what I know about grief:

It hits - and it hits hard. Other times, it silently enters the room and sits, patiently waiting for me to acknowledge its presence. Other times, it stands at a distance and waves, then walks away.

This is also what I know about grief:

It is the beautiful and costly price we pay for loving others. Grief can only enter when we make our hearts and lives open and vulnerable to others. Whether we like it or not, it is part of being human.

When grief comes (and it will), welcome it as a friend. Sit with it. Remember with it. Laugh with it and maybe cry with it. And then, like a good friend who has finished a visit, show it to the door because there is more life to live.

— David Curtis, CHAPLAIN

Thursday First Week of Lent

GENESIS 39:1-23

PSALM 50

MARK 2:1-12

CROSSING MALVERN, HEADING EAST

“Unless the Lord watches over the city
the watchman keeps vigil in vain.”
(epigraph in the chapel of Richmond Hill)

In leonine stride
Heading South then darting East
Cat moves - autos wait.

Eyes westward admired
Fearing green light cars must move.
Creature hearts unite.

Not one horn is pressed.
“Serengeti” travelers we
Pray, then release break.

Missions are unknown.
Lenten pause ...gives time to yield
Resurrected Hope.

– Glenna Bailey, RESIDENT

POWER OF PRAYER

As I observe the actions of human beings in the world on a daily basis, I am struck by the tensions of evil versus virtuous acts that force me to decide how to express my own feelings. I am aware that there are times when I must speak up when there is real injustice, but very often I am still learning to listen, to question, to reflect on the attitudes of others, and pray. An example of a serious subject is wars that are presently going on and the tragedies that are the outcome. Obviously, reading, studying information with pros and cons, and expressing my opinion are important. I've come to the realization that prayer is as important in decision making. Presently, we must pray for peace!

– Grace Swearingen, RESIDENT

Saturday First Week of Lent

GENESIS 41:1-13
PSALM 55
MARCH 2:23-3:6

AWARE

Moored,
Dismayed.
Venture beyond,
Eyes open to observe
Branches turning pale green,
Grass forms a fresh, inviting carpet,
Blossoms spanked to life, out of their pods,
Shadows creeping slowly closer to their origin.
Creation's orchestra is just tuning its instruments.
Place a foot, carefully, the melody is forming.
Underfoot buds burst through sod to life.
It cannot be made hostage to winter.
How else remind us life endures
Over the temporary death
From which emerges
Life prevailing.
Engage
With
It.

– Harlan McMurray, RESIDENT

Second Sunday in Lent

GENESIS 41:14-45

PSALM 24

JOHN 5:19-24

MINDS IN MOTION ACROSS BORDERS

Several years ago, I was fortunate enough to take a trip to Israel and Jordan. It was much safer to travel there then, even into Palestine, the West Bank and Bethlehem. As a side trip into the West Bank, we were amazed to see Minds in Motion from our Richmond Ballet working with Jewish and Palestinian fourth graders to present a performance. It was much like the programs with fourth graders from schools across Richmond that we see here in our own Sara Belle November Theater. After dancing and singing together and separately, the students were asked to shake hands with each other. I can't help but wonder that if Hamas, Palestinians, and Israelis could sing and dance together instead of shooting each other, might they then be able to shake hands?

— Jan Orgain, RESIDENT

A TESTIMONY FOR MY SON

At the age of four, my son was at the Child Development Center here. I received a call that he was very sick and needed to be picked up. We took him to the hospital where he had his first seizure. Doctors told us that it was only a febrile seizure and that it was most likely an isolated incident. After taking him home, we noticed that something just was not quite right.

We took him back to the emergency room where he was continuing to have seizures. He was diagnosed with epilepsy. As he continued to grow, we noticed things were getting worse. We took him to MCV and he was there for a week doing continuous testing. Our son was having forty to fifty seizures a day.

Once we got home and got his medicine squared away and got him settled in, I remember going out into my front yard and praying to God asking, "Why him? He is just a little boy. I have big shoulders. Give it to me. I will carry this burden for him." Little did I know that God had a larger plan for him.

Ryan became a superstar and was one of the first children of his age to have a Vagus nerve stimulator implanted to control seizures. He became a staple at the Children's Hospital and would light up when he saw all the nurses and doctors when he came through the door for check-ups and testing. He never once complained or had a bad outlook.

The doctors told us that he would regress and have disabilities for the rest of his life. I prayed and knew that God was on his side. After years of struggle, I received a call that after another round of testing that it was determined Ryan was seizure-free.

The doctors could not explain how this could be, but I could. I knew that after all of the prayer from friends, family and colleagues that God's plan had come through for Ryan. It has been several years since Ryan had a seizure. He still suffers some small issues, but nothing like anyone ever thought.

Faith in God can accomplish anything. Prayers are answered and I believe that God has a plan for every one of us.

EQUIPPED WITH LOVE

Hosea II:3-4

Matthew I:4-II

I John 4

My wife, Becca, gave birth to our first child, Phoebe Anne Morgan, on October 20, 2023. Before she was born, I imagined that parenting was something we would *do* simply as the two people we were before the birth. I had an abstract sense that love would be a powerful driver but mostly I thought that we would read and listen to advice – and those things would equip us to be parents. When we *became* parents, the love we immediately knew for Phoebe was too powerful to describe with words.

I believe that God's love meets us through our own lived experiences and so the metaphor of God as father takes on fresh meaning for me now, not to mention the metaphor of God as mother. While the love of parents and caregivers is never perfect, the love that we share sets a foundation for children to know themselves as God's beloved, and for parents and caregivers to know they have been powerfully equipped to love. There can be no book or advice so powerful as this love.

When Jesus is tempted in the desert, I believe that he is utterly sustained by his understanding of God's love. And when we feel alone in the deserts of life that Lent commemorates, may we also remember that God's love will sustain us. My prayer for Phoebe is that when she grows up and finds herself feeling alone in difficulty, pain and fear, she can sense the love that we have had for her since the moment of her birth. And may she know that this love we have for her, however imperfect, is an aspect of God's love.

–Rev. Jay Morgan, CHAPLAIN

CREATING STILL

The first tiny green buds on long bare branches, the first jonquils breaking through the soil, the first signs of new life. I search for daily as winter turns to spring. These are also the anchoring of hope I need to once again endure bearing witness to the suffering of Holy Week. Good Friday is one of the most powerful, meaningful and hardest days of the year. I'm not sure how Mary and the disciples survived it without knowing what was to come. Even knowing how it ends does not negate the suffering, the violence, the darkness of that day over 2,000 years ago.

That is why I need to see the signs of new life in creation that anchor me in the hope of joy to come. The comingling of Winter to Spring and Death to Resurrection all point to the Creator who is creating still. The Creator who has called us each by name and surrounded us with reminders of the love that always surrounds us. That at the end of a cold, bleak, gray winter, there is sunlight and warmth in a world pregnant with possibilities. The hope that anchors us through the cross, through the tomb and through our own sufferings. The hope that becomes visible through the small offerings of creative and created wonder that surround us.

“for this lovely day” by Kate Bowler

Refresh me, oh God.

Remind me of the loveliness found in today.

Surprise me with the details I have lost
the eyes to see...

This world you made. It is irreducibly sublime.

Blessed are we who ask,
for hearts that are soft,
for eyes that are awake,
for ears that are open,
for hands to hold
the wonder that is here,

now.

— Rev. Jenny te Velde, CHAPLAIN

DAILY GRATITUDE

“Instructions for living a life:

Pay attention.

Be astonished.

Tell about it.”

– Mary Oliver

A dear member of my church family shared the poem above with me and I have truly fallen in love with both its simplicity and depth. What a beautiful daily reminder of gratitude it is for us.

Each day we wake, we have the opportunity to experience the wonderful works of our faithful God. It is our responsibility to allow ourselves to be inspired as we encounter the world around us. We see God’s beauty in the people we see and meet each day. We see beauty in the wind moving through the trees and in the flowers peeking through the ground. Take time to notice the world with curiosity and wonder. Be amazed by the world God has created for us and share the amazement with others.

During this Lenten season, I pray that each of us will take time to breathe and allow ourselves to fully appreciate God’s creation.

– Jessica Corbitt, WESTMINSTER CANTERBURY FOUNDATION

RESPOND TO THE TAPPING

We spend a lot of time and energy trying to sidestep, ignore, and filter the problems, troubles, disaster and all the rest of life's slings and arrows out of our minds. But it rarely works. Even if we cancel the newspaper, turn off the TV, sever our social media links or even move into a bunker and seal the door, the world's woes still remain with us, unless we somehow turn off our memory, delude our minds and anesthetize ourselves into oblivion.

So, of course, we try diversions of every sort to still our angst: alcohol, drugs, vast conspiracy theories, sex, hoarding, travel, gluttony and even religion. But reality keeps tapping us on the shoulder. Perhaps Lent is a good time to respond to the tapping.

When Jesus spent his 40 days in a wilderness just as insane, cruel and appalling as ours, it is said that Satan tempted him with distraction after distraction to turn him away from constructively engaging real issues. But Jesus fended off the temptations of power and glory, setting his eye on problem-*solving* rather than problem-*avoiding*. And he carried that over into what he told his disciples (and us) later. He didn't say, "Fantasize over sitting at God's right hand." Instead, he said, "Feed my sheep." He didn't say, "Blame everything on the [insert race or religion]." He said, "Love your neighbor." He didn't quote what Job's wife told Job ("Curse God and die") when their livestock died. He said that we should heal the sick. Of course, since he didn't say just how to do that, we have to figure out what's causing the sickness and how to block it. So, it is pretty clear that Jesus preferred responses to slings and arrows are prevention and repair, *not* shrugging and turning a blind eye. Assurances of pie in the sky by and by are never enough when a helping hand is needed and we have one to offer. So, Lent's lesson in a troubled world is *not*, "Close your eyes and walk on by." No, it's "Do something about it right now!"

— James Hall, RESIDENT

IF WE LISTEN

As I approach this Lenten season, I think of Howard Thurman's words, "In the stillness of the quiet, if we listen, we can hear the whisper of the heart giving strength to weakness, courage to fear, hope to despair." *If we listen*, that is a choice we have. It should be an easy choice because there is one gift we are given in our older age. We are given time and space. How lucky we are that we can pay more attention to the world around us. Jesus set an example for us for he would often retreat to a quiet place, be still and pray to God.

In our community, there are many voices trying to attract our attention. Some voices are soft, some are loud, some joyful, some sad, some hurt, some angry, some filled with love. If we listen with care and patience, we are rewarded with an opportunity to be present in someone else's life but if we are talking at each other and over each other we will miss a moment of meaning.

If we listen carefully to the other rather than rushing to spill out our own thoughts, we may discover a story that changes us in some special way. Our world is adrift with violent wars, raging storms, and angry, hungry, lost people. How can we who have time and space not stop to hear another's story. Our stories are our lives lived – our experiences. We owe it to ourselves during Lent to practice making ourselves available to others. So how do we do this? We can't hang around our safe place. We have to move out from the center to the edges. We have to move from the predictable to the uncertain. Jesus showed us how by talking and eating with the poor, the sinners, the disenfranchised, the sick. He listened.

If we are to listen well, we must pray in the stillness and quiet to pass on the love given to us. Maybe, if we listen more, we will begin to understand the other person. Maybe, if we listen with love, something new may happen. Lent invites us to focus close into Jesus. This is a perfect time to say that I, too, can be an instrument of peace and love. I can listen.

– Kay Remick, RESIDENT

HIDDEN INSPIRATION

At some point we each go through a tough time, often feeling disconnected and lost. Imagine finding hidden inspiration in an unlikely place just when you need it the most.

During one of my lonely-in-the-desert moments, I heard God's inspiration while listening to the rock band, Journey. It was a line from the song, Don't Stop Believin'. "Some will win, some will lose, some were born to sing the blues."

These lyrics spoke to my soul. Yes, everyone goes through tough times; it is those times that help make the richness of the ordinary become precious. Yes, we will lose and want to sing the blues; but it's important to keep pushing forward and never give up hope. Since that moment, I seek out spiritual inspiration through music lyrics, especially when I'm going through tough times or want to help someone find comfort in the words.

As I build my relationship with God, I realize he knows what I need, when I need it, and how I need it. He knows the best way to speak to me, just like he knows the best way to speak to you. Some of you may hear God's voice in nature or while sitting quietly in a church pew. That is your space and time with our Father. Mine is in the music.

During Lent, I hope to spend more time seeking God's voice and responding to it. I hope you will do the same. I pray you find his grace and inspiration when and where you need them the most.

Playlist:

As – George Michael & Mary J. Blige

Give a Little Bit – Supertramp

Let It Be – The Beatles

The Way it Is – Bruce Hornsby

The World I Know and Shine – Collective Soul

Underdog – Alicia Keys

Wake Up Everybody – Harold Melvin & The Blue Notes

– Leota Parandeh, WESTMINSTER CANTERBURY FOUNDATION

SING TO THE LORD

My favorite song when I was little was “Jesus Loves Me.” I sang it with delight, seated by my father on our piano bench. That song was my introduction to Christian faith. I grew up in a church that had an organist-choirmaster who inspired many of us in youth choirs. The high point when high school age was singing Handel’s Hallelujah Chorus with the adult choir for Christmas and Easter. Music has sustained me through life’s twists and turns, as questions as faith deepened. Hymns expressed beliefs for me better than spoken words, stirring feelings in heart and prayer. In recent years, the sound of violin, cello, oboe and flute have helped integrate happenings in daily life.

Handel’s Messiah has fed my soul through the decades, though often I forget to play recordings when life is hurried and complex. By taking time to sit quietly and listen, I am fed spiritually by the tenor’s solo that opens this oratorio: “Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak comfortably to Jerusalem and cry unto her, that her that her warfare is over.”

On numerous occasions, however, I am reminded by Messiah’s chorus singing, “All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned, every one to his own way.” These words are haunting. Note that Isaiah says we ALL stray. Handel’s music comes in strong bursts, disconnected, broken as life can be and often is for us all. But then follow words of comfort by a soprano singing, “He shall feed his flock like a shepherd, gather the lambs in his arms and carry them in his bosom.” Our Redeemer lives and shall reign forever. Hallelujah.

– Maria Wornom Rippe, RESIDENT

I BELIEVE IN PRAYER!

A few years ago, I gave a talk about what aging had been like for me. I remember saying that my body had surprises for me. I'd anticipated the graying hair, of course, but there had been the new knees, rather unpleasant dental adventures, not to mention making the acquaintance of a very nice cardiologist. But in the years since that talk, my back decided to do something that reminded me of an accordion, and the word "surprise" in no way describes what the pain of that was like.

Recently, in a group in my church, I met a woman who was disturbed by my use of a cane. I assured her that it helped me get about easier, that it was a good thing and I liked it. She was not happy with the explanation and she kept saying "I want to see you walk without that thing, and I'm going to pray for you!" Every time I saw her, she asked if I were better, and she would assure me that she was praying for me. Eventually I dreaded running into her because I anticipated the question, and then she'd seem disappointed, and she'd assure me again- that she was praying. I felt like a failure.

About that time, my physician prescribed a back brace and when I wore it for the first time there was an obvious lessening of the pain. I could stand up straighter, and my balance was better. It was a miracle! And I had to seek out my praying friend to say that her prayers were being answered, and to thank her profusely. She didn't give up. She kept on praying. She is a model for me this Lenten season.

Never give up on prayer!

— Martha Jenkins, RESIDENT

Wednesday Third Week of Lent

GENESIS 50:15-26

PSALM 10

MARK 8:11-26

MY VIEW

Fresh and new every day
Always changing.
Out my window from high above
Seeing and listening to progress of 'Vitality' below
Looking down on treetops changing with each season
While birds fly below me rather than up above me
My view is new every day, always changing
It is my own POINT of view that changes with the new day
Looking for beauty, hope and grace in what is seen and unseen.

—Mary Williams, RESIDENT

GIVE 'TIL YOU REJOICE!

Psalm 116: 12, 18-19 (The Message Bible)

What can I give back to God
for the blessings he's poured out on me?
I'll complete what I promised God I'd do,
and I'll do it in company with his people,
In the place of worship, in God's house,
in Jerusalem, God's city. Hallelujah!

It's said that poor folks are often more ready to give than the wealthy. A rich friend recently bragged that he kept a stash of \$1 bills handy to give to beggars. When challenged, he responded "*Oh, I give more than one.*" Coincidentally, a friend posted on Facebook that she kept gallon-sized, zip-lock bags in her car full of personal items including gloves, socks plus a \$5 bill to hand out to the homeless. Who gave the most?

It's not how wealthy we are, rather it's our NEED TO GIVE flowing like a stream out of our sense of being blessed; individually, in our families, and even within the grandeur of this universe. Do we give out of a miserly spirit or proportionate to the blessings God pours into our lives? This psalm and the Lenten season remind us to give sacrificially out of our joy!

David asks God to unleash in him a new ability to give, as God gives, in love, through the abundance of grace, and without reservation. He closes with a grand, "HALLELUJAH!" promising to proclaim it with worshippers in the house of our Lord.

Some are told to, "*give till it hurts!*" But this psalm says give till you rejoice! That's our Lenten message as we move towards celebrating the grandest gift of all: Salvation in Christ Jesus our Lord.

– Rev. Dr. Paige Lanier Chargois, RESIDENT

MERCY MAKES US HUMAN

Psalm 86

Luke 10:25-37

Matthew 25:31-46

I heard a story that's been hard for me to verify, but it's nonetheless interesting. A student of anthropologist Margaret Mead asked her to identify when civilization began. Expecting to hear about tools or clay pots, she mentioned fossil evidence of a human femur that was broken and mended. Despite the injured person's inability to hunt or forage, the tribe valued this human life for its own sake and not simply for the sake of what the person could return to the tribe. This marks the beginning of human civilization, so the story goes.

Even if Mead didn't say this, and even if it was in fact human violence that broke this person's femur in the first place, I believe that our human beginnings are marked by our sensitivity and drive to tend to one another's needs. Looking at other creatures, we can see that mercy is quite hard to come by in the animal kingdom. Therefore, I understand that it is in large part what makes us human.

Scripture suggests time and again that God is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. Jesus tells us to, "Be merciful, just as your father is merciful" (Luke 6:36). We are to honor widows, welcome strangers and care for orphans. We are to tend to the injured on the roads we walk. We are to visit the prisoner, clothe the naked, and feed the hungry. Mercy is where we find our humanity.

Mercy has no point aside from the well-being of another. It isn't goal directed; it isn't based on extrinsic motivators like wealth or productivity or status. Mercy is our God-given capacity to kneel and notice the eyes of our suffering neighbors and to help them for their own sake.

How can we show mercy today?

— Jay Morgan, CHAPLAIN

THE OPPORTUNITY OF LENT

Growing up in a Protestant Church, I did not know about Lent or Lenten disciplines until I began attending the Episcopal Church my junior year in high school. With teenage gusto, I threw myself into Lenten practices, attended various Lenten offerings, and even a weeklong evening series led by a monk (a new thing for this Protestant girl!). Perhaps in those years, I tried to bite off more than I could “chew!” Setting high expectations for my teenage self, I discovered that I was not always able to follow through on my various intentions for prayer, study and worship. No matter how hard I tried, it was difficult to do. Even today, I still struggle.

Lent, this quiet season of the church year, offers each of us an opportunity to reflect on our lives and God’s presence in them. It is not a time to beat ourselves up for our failures or the inability to stick to a New Year’s Resolution or a Lenten rule of life. Instead, it is an opportunity to examine our lives, to be grateful for life, to cherish the love of family, friends, and neighbors and to have hope for what is yet to come.

I sometimes think of Tom A. in his late nineties, a widower and parishioner, who lived with mild cerebral palsy. In my mind’s eye, I still see him on a snowy Ohio, Sunday morning before the 8 a.m. service, bundled up, snow shovel in hand, scraping the ice and snow off the ten steps leading to main door of the sanctuary. Tom’s outlook on life was simple “keep living.” Each night before sleep, he prayed “Lord, just one more day!” With Tom, may we too share this hope and trust in God.

– Ruth Partlow, RESIDENT

Fourth Sunday in Lent

GENESIS 48:8-22

PSALM 66

JOHN 6:27-40

CONFIRMING GOD'S PRESENCE IN NATURE

I enjoy being in nature: walking, observing, noticing the little creations that others may not pay attention to. I walk slowly with my head down, hoping to find treasures. I usually don't disturb the found beauties unless I have an art project in mind. I witness the different greens in the mosses, the fall-colored leaves lying in a chaotic pattern (yes, there is such a thing!), the rocks of all sizes and shapes begging to be taken home but usually left for others to enjoy, the acorns with their green sprout reaching for a new life, and, best of all, tiny ferns uncurling toward the light. Staring into the delicate beauty of nature's carpet reminds me that God has to be present; such beauty can't just be random.

— Sarah Abernathie, VISUAL ARTS

THERE IS A PURPOSE IN STRUGGLE

I have found that life presents us with many lessons that come in different shapes and sizes. Some are amusing, some are even fun, but some are really difficult, and others are just plain hard. How do we cope? We are not born with a book of instructions or guidelines for solving these problems. We must each find our own way. We can get suggestions from others who write or speak about their experiences in solving life's problems. Through their kindness and empathy, our burdens are often made lighter, but mostly we struggle.

Perhaps nature offers us some divine examples and insights if only we are able to notice and comprehend them while in the depths of our struggles. Consider a butterfly emerging from its cocoon. I recall a story about a man who was watching a butterfly struggling its way out of the cocoon that had incubated it from a larva. Its thin, dainty legs were beating and pushing against the tough papery material of the cocoon that was now impeding its freedom. As he watched it struggle, the man thought he could help. So he reached out and tore the cocoon open, freeing the poor insect. What emerged was a deformed creature still alive but barely able to walk – let alone fly. You see, it was necessary for the butterfly to struggle its way out of that cocoon in order to force bodily fluids through that little body inflating its magnificent wings so it would be able to fly.

Yes, as humans we must all find our way in life through the tasks that have been set before us. Struggle isn't a punishment, it's a mechanism to help us reach higher. To avoid it or to let someone else do it for us is in essence crippling ourselves to what we are meant to achieve. Through reading and study we can internalize concepts that validate our journey, but it is through the "doing" of struggle that we are truly able to spread our wings and FLY!

– Sharon Botts, RESIDENT

WALK TOWARD THE LIGHT

The distinguished Virginia scientist, Francis Collins, has opined that there exists divine wisdom in our austere artistic and scientific knowledge. For example, the aspiring dancer learns to focus on a single, fixed reference point in order to maintain composure and equilibrium amidst a confusing, wildly gyrating corps de ballet. Consequently, within the madness of the post COVID pandemic period and its social disruptions, the internal became a place where unhappy people took out their frustrations on others. The only path to emotional well-being has been to fix one's connection on our one unchanging advocate, just as ancient mariners and desert travelers followed the one reliable lodestar Polaris.

Self-sufficiency is a myth perpetrated by pride. Fear of displeasing others puts one in bondage to them and they become one's primary focus and taskmaster. But, if pleasing certain people is one's goal, one will be enslaved to them. We were not meant to be like Pharisees who created their own form of godliness. Even today, humanistic rules about the Christian life enslave many people. Their focus is on their performance rather than on the Divine.

Adam and Eve walked with him in the garden. He wants us to walk with him in the garden of our hearts. There is no fear or revenge in his love. Faith is the conformation of things we do not see and the conviction of their reality, perceiving as real fact what is not revealed to the senses. His word is a lamp to our feet; his presence is a light for our path.

– Stan Higgins, RESIDENT

LENT: A TIME OF REFLECTION

LENT - 40 days before Easter - a time of reflection at the end of dark winter as I await the new life that comes with the spring.

I take this time to look inward and ask myself,

When have I behaved in an unloving way? How could I have acted in love?

Have I been thankful for the countless and unending gifts that I have received?

What have I stubbornly held onto long past the time of letting go?

What are the things that I am still afraid of?

What has brought me joy?

Am I ready for what comes next?

I think back to the seasons of this past year, but I also think of the seasons of my life that lasted for many years:

That wild season that I lived before my children were born,
Those years that were full of the responsibilities of caring for and protecting children,

The years of trying to figure out how to share life with a husband,

The years it took to stop being afraid of a chronic disease,

The seasons of grief and suffering that came from the loss of loved ones,

The surprising season of joy that has come with meeting and spending time with my grandchildren,

And now, these years, learning to let go of the spontaneity and choices that I used to have.

I do not look back with longing or judgment, but with thankfulness and peace. Taking this time during Lent each year is my way of asking for God's help to see life clearly and to boldly meet what is to come.

Prayer: Let me daily walk in peace and love so that I can meet the new with respect and joy.

“SAVE, O LORD . . .” PSALM 12:1a

Christmas 1952. Not only did my older sibling and I welcome a baby sister, our father gave us a new Motorola television set. We were ecstatic and soon became fixated on the snowy black and white images appearing daily on three channels from 8:00 a.m. until midnight.

In the early 1960s, Santa delivered a hi-fi record player and transistor radios. I distinctly recall a day when I was simultaneously watching television, listening to the radio, and talking to a friend on the telephone about going to see a movie, while my sister played a Beatles record in the background. Fed up, our mother in a not so soft voice said: “Turn it off, turn all the noise off!” She went on to *suggest* some no-nonsense ways that we *would* be spending our time from then on.

Fast forward to retirement in 2013. The absence of professional activities left a vacuum, which I filled by tapping into numerous media sources for news and entertainment. Soon I became irritable, anxious and even sad about world events.

The Lenten season was approaching, and my mother’s voice returned, “Turn it off, turn all the noise off!” So, I began a six-week journey of replacing constant media with prayer and meditation on God’s word for one hour in the morning and another hour in the evening. While the withdrawal from media was challenging, by Easter I had fallen in love with a quiet home and the Psalms, particularly the brevity and richness of Chapter 12, verse 1 when David cried out to the Creator: “Save, O Lord.” I have since prayed a personal variation of this verse, especially during news broadcasts: “Save us, Lord, from ourselves and the noise.” Peace usually follows with gratitude for a wise and loving mother.

— Susie Frazer, RESIDENT

STEPPING STONES OF KINDNESS

I have been fortunate that the stepping stones along the path of my life have been supportive including my loving parents. Growing up in Petersburg, my family attended St. Paul's Episcopal Church. I was blessed to have a Sunday school teacher who was very knowledgeable about the Bible as well as being kind, gentle, and loving. She began each class with Matthew 6:33, King James Version: "But seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." Unfortunately, Mrs. Campbell's husband was transferred to Washington, D.C. She had a profound influence on my life and led me to begin a deeper relationship with God at an early stage. I wanted to reflect the love of God in Mrs. Campbell's kind heart. Her face shined like the love of God, and I will always remember her. Once married, I made many moves with the DuPont company, and the first thing I did was locate an Episcopal Church, a Bible study, and an exercise class. It was always amazing how welcoming and kind complete strangers were. New friends and support moved me along the stepping stones in my life.

An interim minister before COVID led an excellent study on the Gospel of Mark. He had a startling influence on me with his opening statement, "By our iniquities and kindnesses our futures are born." My eyes were opened in a way that led me to "hear, mark, learn and inwardly digest" what kindness truly is. Each unkind thought, word or deed leads us farther from God and his eternal kingdom which he longs for us to have. A day doesn't go by without my knowing that I could have done a better job of expressing kindness. It's a tough job, but it's serious business. Thanks be to God that his mercy is great!

– Virginia Lee Smith, RESIDENT

MIRACLES

During this time, we must engulf ourselves in the book of Mark, especially chapter eighteen. In this chapter we are thankful for all of God's blessings which we receive with great humility.

He also grants miracles in Jesus's day as well as today. I was struck by COVID. There was supposed to be no serum in the state of Virginia but out walks one of our fine nurses who administered it. I looked up and saw an angel glowing all around her. This nurse was Sharon. I had had a near death experience. For months the staff talked about how they almost lost me. Dr. Reed and the rest of our fine staff looked after me every morning. Dr. Reed was at the foot of my bed in the COVID unit until I returned home. Thank you, Lord Jesus Christ.

– Winifred Hazelton, RESIDENT

Fifth Sunday in Lent

EXODUS 3:16- 4:12

PSALM 118

JOHN 8:46-59

THANKFUL AND BLESSED

I am thankful and blessed for my family,
co-workers and all of the supervisors.

I am blessed to be working here, where I know mostly all of the
residents who I have come to know and love.

Every time I think about what I have learned here, I always say,
“Thank you Lord for being my guide and showing me the right
way to go.”

Lord, I am blessed to be in your presence.

I love the Lord with all my heart and mind.

I am thankful for my church family
and I am blessed to have a place to go to work
and a house to call home.

– Yovandel Perkins, DINING

Monday Fifth Week of Lent

EXODUS 4:10-20, 27-31

PSALM 31

MARK 9:30-41

IMMANUEL

Matthew 28:18-20

Someone has said that the most frequent promise in the Bible is, “I will be with you.” This is reflected in the Sistine Chapel where Michaelangelo painted God’s reaching out to Adam, coming as close as he can, allowing a small gap between God and man so Adam can choose his response to God. Immanuel means “God with us,” and Jesus’s promise was to send the Holy Spirit so that he is with us always.

John Ortberg said, “Spiritual growth is a sense of simply increasing our capacity to experience the presence of God.” For me, one way of doing this is meditation, seeking to be silent and listen for God to speak to me. This isn’t easy for me. I want to do the talking, but God is constantly saying to me, “Be quiet; just listen.” And when I do, God reveals his presence in different ways, as the Creator, the Sustainer of life, the Comforter, the Redeemer. Meditation helps me realize his presence in my rainbow moments and my down days. When have you felt God’s presence in this day – through meditation, friends, strangers, a book, nature, or the Bible? IMMANUEL.

– Dot Apperson, RESIDENT

AN OLD SAYING REVISITED

I've often heard the phrase "walk a mile in another's shoes." Usually, the context of this saying is to calm the immediate response to another's actions.

But recently, I reread the origins of that saying and was reminded of the first half: "Before you judge someone, walk a mile in their shoes." To me, that first phrase is important and shouldn't be left off.

That idiom subtly reminds us that we are human and that we are going to judge others. It's part of human nature. But rather than jumping to an immediate reaction, and before we cast judgment, we should wait, pause, think and be empathetic.

It may be that our judgment is valid or it may be off base. In either case, this saying allows us to be human and make judgments on others. But before we do: wait, pause, think and be empathetic.

A former colleague of mine has a saying when it came to customer service: "Give grace, because we don't know what baggage someone is carrying." I think this is a perfect partner to the "walk a mile" advice. Life happens to us all. Some days, our baggage is light with joy, happiness, peace, love. Other days, our baggage is weighed down with grief, sorrow, pain, frustration, worry. In either case, we as humans don't know the weight that others carry and others don't know what weight we carry ourselves.

What seems to be the most logical solution then is to acknowledge our human nature to judge. But as we do, wait, pause, think and be empathetic. And perhaps we can modify this old saying with an updated version:

"Before you judge someone, walk a mile in their shoes – or at least offer to help carry their bags."

– Clay Mottley, PUBLIC RELATIONS

Wednesday Fifth Week of Lent

EXODUS 7:8-24
PSALM 119:145-176
MARK 10:1-16

I'LL BE SEEING YOU

My two older sisters were young pre-teens when I was born. All through my life, they were my teachers, my heroes, my influencers and even my wardrobe helpers. Janet, the oldest, died this past July and Jeannie three months later. It felt (to me) that I had died also because I was all that they instilled in me.

My heart ached every day and my tears never stopped. I prayed to God for some relief to my pain so I might enjoy the life ahead of me.

He answered me when I heard an old song on my car radio and listened to the words which told me, "I'll be seeing you in all the old familiar places that this heart of mine embraces. I'll be seeing you in every summer day and everything that's light and gay."

The last line reads, "I'll find you in the morning sun and when the day is new, I'll be looking at the moon and I'll be seeing you." Thank you for answering my prayers. They are still here, beside me with their humor, their advice, and their love. I can go on.

— Joan Dyer, RESIDENT

GOING HOME

My family lives in western Virginia, in Alleghany County. Going home involves crossing North Mountain that separates Lexington from my hometown. As I cross that mountain, there is one specific spot on the highway where I can see for miles. I see the valley lying below and I know that home is just around the bend. More than that, I know that I am home.

Home has many meanings for us. Home can be a place, or a state of mind, or a beloved memory. It can be the people around whom we feel safe. It can be the house filled with the smells of dinner cooking or bread baking. It can be the hand that holds my hand.

As you walk this Lenten journey, may you know where your home is. May you have a place to which you may return. And may you know that where you reside, God also resides with you.

— David Curtis, CHAPLAIN

SHARING TALENTS

When I was asked to write a story for the Lenten Journey, I immediately thought of the wonderful volunteers that give their time and talents to make Westminster Canterbury a better place to live and work. Our volunteers work tirelessly across our campus by preparing flower arrangements for all areas of living, serving the Pastoral Care team at Memorial Services and prayer services, assisting in the Galleria and the Shops on Main, transporting residents to the Sara Belle November Theater or the McGue-Millhiser Arts Studio, serving students at The New Community School, knitting or crocheting for the Salvation Army and the list goes on and on with many worthwhile endeavors.

It will be bittersweet to retire after 40 years of working in Human Resources and the Volunteer Resource Development office! I will miss the volunteers and the staff at this outstanding continuing care retirement facility but look forward to beginning a new journey. I will continue to come to Westminster Canterbury Richmond because my twin sister lives in Assisted Living. Who knows, I may become a volunteer.

There is always a need for volunteers and I encourage you to find somewhere at Westminster Canterbury that brings you joy while you make a difference in your life and the life of others.

– Kathy Morton, VOLUNTEER SERVICES

Saturday Fifth Week of Lent

EXODUS 10:21-11:8

PSALM 137:1-6

MARK 10:46-52

AS IRON SHARPENS IRON

Proverbs 27:17

I am writing this as 2023 is ending. The one thing that has kept me afloat is this scripture: As iron sharpens iron so one person sharpens another.

Each obstacle, each trial, each tribulation, and each joyful moment has been instrumental and always leads me back to this scripture.

It reminds you that the Lord intended to make each of us different and unique, so that we can help each other in any time or need.

Share your knowledge, gifts and uniqueness with each other, for it will sharpen someone else.

— Joyce Johnson, RESIDENT SERVICES

ESSENTIAL WORKERS FOR GOD

Do you consider yourself essential or nonessential? I recently listened to a sermon on essential workers for God and it made me think about my role as an essential worker. We are all essential workers and God tells us that we were designed for a specific purpose. We were put here by him to love, serve and be a living example of his love to everyone. During this Lenten season, I think of how much Jesus sacrificed for me. He suffered, bled and died for me. He went through pain and humiliation just for me, so that I can show unconditional love to others, no matter what the circumstances. Sometimes I don't accomplish all the goals I have set out for myself, but that is okay. I know that I have done the best that I could and that tomorrow is another opportunity to show love.

When others don't seem to value your worth, God values you. When others don't seem to understand you, God understands you. When you try and try again to do your best to be recognized, or if you never hear someone say, "Good job today," God recognizes you.

I believe the world places a lot of labels on us but the most important label comes from God. He sees us on the inside and knows our hearts. He is smiling down on us with love and compassion, because he knows our purpose and is happy when we are living in that purpose.

So, when others seemingly label you as nonessential, just know there is someone greater who knows how essential you truly are.

— Vanessa Perry, PASTORAL CARE

MY BROTHER

My older brother had early Alzheimer's, as well as lung problems. It was just before Christmas, and he drove from his home in Atlanta to Memphis to visit his daughter for the holiday. He ran out of gas on the way there and had to walk a long way to a gas station that could help him. Eventually, he arrived at his daughter's house, drenched, cold and tired. In a few days, he developed fever, cough and difficulty breathing. He ended up in the hospital in Memphis with respiratory failure from pneumonia and quit breathing. He was placed on a ventilator and then went into kidney failure. Miraculously, he was brought back to life. During his recovery, I asked him if he had gone to heaven during his death. He said he did and he met Jesus there. He told me about a number of conversations they had, and eventually, I asked him, "If you were in heaven, why on earth would you come back?" He said he wanted to stay but Jesus told him his job here on earth was not finished.

"What's your job?" I asked.

"I don't know" he answered.

My brother had been a salesman extraordinaire and was very much a "people person." After another hospitalization which included another death and recovery, he went to a continuing care facility. Every time I visited him, I would find him in one public space or another, entertaining one, two or three people with his funny stories or heartwarming adventures.

He lived for seven more years with progressive Alzheimer's and was known and loved by everyone he came into contact with. Every time I visited, I couldn't help but think of the second great commandment: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. For my brother, everyone was a neighbor.

— Sam Fuller, RESIDENT

GIFT FROM GOD

November 23, 2022, is a day that changed me forever. It's the day that I began the greatest journey of my life. It's when I became a mother. It's when suddenly, and in a quick instant, all my priorities shifted. My life was no longer about me, but about this beautiful, tiny, little baby boy that we had just brought into the world. I was overcome with so many emotions. I was so elated and at the same time, I was quite fearful. I was worried that my precious baby was scared in his new surroundings. I was worried that I may not be equipped to give him everything that he needed and deserved or that I would not be able to teach him all that he needed to know. I was so worried about so much that I unintentionally overlooked the fact that I was holding the most beautiful gift that I would ever receive.

This last year as a mother has been filled with just as many emotions as that very first hour of my son's life, but I've done my best to appreciate each moment and hold on tightly to the simple things: his smiles, his giggles, his teeny tiny hands and feet, his innocence and his trust. Here I was worried about teaching him, and he, in fact, has taught me so much about love and so much about my faith. Babies really are gifts from God.

– Whitney Woodruff, LIFE ENRICHMENT

Wednesday in Holy Week

LAMENTATIONS 2:1-9

PSALM 55

MARK 12:1-11

HIS LIGHT

God, may your light guide my day, and your spirit bring me peace. Amen.

In the wee chilly hours of the morning, as I begin my daily commute to work, I see the light of God (dawn) begin to rise. The horizon shows shapely silhouettes of trees backed by a tinge of yellow, pink, and orange, peeking through the uppermost branches.

Mile after mile, the sky is brightening to embrace the waking of a new and glorious day and I thank God for his light that fills me with hope, love and acceptance. This quiet moment inspires me to think about all Jesus sacrificed and his love for us.

This is my favorite time to reflect on the meaning of Lent and to pray for guidance. I am thankful for his light and love that fills my spirit every day.

— Susan Fletcher, HUMAN RESOURCES

MAUNDY THURSDAY MEMORIES

Maundy Thursday was an evening highly anticipated by the parishioners of the small church I attended in Hampton, Va. It began with a communal meal in the Fellowship Hall, mirroring the Passover meal shared by Jesus and his disciples in the Upper Room. All brought their finest culinary creations and platters of roasted lamb were passed around. The room was bright with light and lively conversations.

After the meal, we proceeded to the Sanctuary and the mood of the evening took on a more somber tone. Lights were dimmed, and a quietness fell over the assembled, as we revisited the events that transpired so many years ago with Jesus and his disciples in that Upper Room in Jerusalem: the washing of the feet, the words of Jesus to his disciples, the sharing of the bread and wine. We followed Jesus to the Garden of Gethsemane and witnessed his arrest. We joined together for the Eucharist in our own space.

The lights dimmed again to almost blackness. All music and words ceased, as the solemn task of baring the altar took place. All white cassocks were removed, leaving clergy and choir garbed in black. In the darkness, in the silence, we once more approached the altar and knelt with hands outstretched as before when we had received the bread of the Eucharist. Now, however, heavy iron nails were deposited in our hands, as we were asked, "Was it you?"

Rising from the altar, we exited the sanctuary with heads bent and lips silent to return to our homes where we would begin the long ascent to the joy of Easter morning.

– Camilla Davis, RESIDENT

WERE YOU THERE
WHEN THEY CRUCIFIED MY LORD?

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
O! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Were you there when they nailed him to the tree?
Were you there when they nailed him to the tree?
O! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when they nailed him to the tree?

Were you there when they pierced him in the side?
Were you there when they pierced him in the side?
O! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when they pierced him in the side?

Were you there when the sun refused to shine?
Were you there when the sun refused to shine?
O! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when the sun refused to shine?

Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?
Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?
O! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?

— AFRICAN AMERICAN SPIRITUAL

THE ANGEL ARMIES OF THE SKY AND LENT

“The angel armies of the sky look down with sad and wondering eyes to see the approaching sacrifice.” These words from the 1982 Episcopal hymnal, *Ride on! Ride on in Majesty*, authored by Henry Hart Milman, paint the picture of heavenly hosts restrained from intervening as Jesus struggles with his cross on the road to Calvary toward his crucifixion. I see the angels as amazed and brought to tears, as the beloved Son of God seeks to follow the will of his Father to rescue his children whom he so dearly loves.

Lent is an exceptional period positioned in the Christian calendar to help us set aside time to prayerfully focus on the sheer magnitude of God’s love so evident in his preparing the means by which Adam’s descendants may find the way home. Surely God’s angels were awestruck primarily by God’s uncompromising love for us, so great that God is willing to pay an unspeakable ransom through the death of his only Son for our sake.

In addition to other acts of selflessness, or other resolves, to take on meaningful pursuits of penitential acts. Let us resolve to each day prayerfully reflect on the picture the marshaled angels present, as they are told to hold back on destroying those who on earth are now so fixed on destroying God’s only Son, and our Lord and Savior. As we keep those loving and worshipping angels pictured in our minds, let us look with them in absolute awe and amazement at what happened for our sake. When you consider how even the powers of heaven were checked so that we could be redeemed, you’ve got to want to exclaim, “Hallelujah! All glory, laud, praise and honor be to thee, our Redeemer King.”

– Harry Edwards, RESIDENT

PASSOVER NOW FULFILLED

God provided our Passover lamb,
Perfect, without blemish of sin,
His only begotten firstborn Son,
Sacrificed for the salvation of man.

His blood, my stain upon that cross,
Defeated forever the threat of death
Redeeming those enslaved by sin,
Forgiving mankind with his last breath.

On a night different than other nights,
Disciples gathered for the Seder feast.
The Master, with towel and bowl knelt,
Jesus, Messiah, beloved Son
Humbly washed the feet of the twelve,
The ultimate portrayal of heaven's love.
"A new covenant," sealed with His blood
"Love one another as I have loved you."

Feet now washed, he shared in the feast,
Dipping his bread,— Judas the least.
Jesus knew the betrayal was amiss —
Did he know 'twas sealed with a kiss?

Three times a day we offer thanks
Gratefully covered by God's sweet grace.
Take body and blood, bread and cup
"In remembrance of me, when you sup."

Through curtain torn, now open to all,
Left not to wander, disciples this day
Follow in faith, experiencing His call,
"I am the truth, the life, and the way."

— Ann Neidow, RESIDENT

Acknowledgments

Cabell Chenault, Nikki Morris and Sandi Shirey
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*The views expressed in this publication are not necessarily
the views of Westminster Canterbury Richmond.*



WESTMINSTER CANTERBURY RICHMOND

was founded in 1971 by the Episcopal and Presbyterian churches and opened in 1975. As a fully-accredited continuing care retirement community, Westminster Canterbury ensures the best life possible for more than 800 residents. Vibrant Pastoral Care programming has always been part of our community and continues through worship, education and spiritual

exploration that is respectful of many faith traditions. Residents also enjoy a wide variety of cultural programs in our Sara Belle November Theater, Spiritual Center and Center for Creative Living. Each year, thanks to generous donors to Westminster Canterbury Foundation's Fellowship Program, around 100 seniors-in-need receive life care – housing, meals, medical expenses and all the vital living Westminster Canterbury has to offer. We welcome all.



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