

2017 LENTEN DEVOTIONS

A gift of prayer, prose and poems
written by the Luther Memorial
community



Luther Memorial Church

O God, where hearts are fearful and constricted, grant courage and hope. Where anxiety is infectious and widening, grant peace and reassurance. Where impossibilities close every door and window, grant imagination and resistance. Where distrust twists our thinking, grant healing and illumination. Where spirits are daunted and weakened, grant soaring wings and strengthened dreams. All these things we ask in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

*A prayer from Amandus J. Derr, senior pastor,
Saint Peter's Church, New York City. Used by
permission.*

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Introduction

Pastors Brad Pohlman and John Worzala Dumke

“I am not going to tell you my name, not yet at any rate.’ A queer half-knowing, half-humorous look came with a green flicker into his eyes. ‘For one thing it would take a long while: my name is growing all the time, and I’ve lived a very long, long time; so my name is like a story. Real names tell you the story of things they belong to in my language, in the Old Entish as you might say. It is a lovely language, but it takes a very long time saying anything in it, because we do not say anything in it, unless it is worth taking a long time to say, and to listen to.” (Spoken by Treebeard in J. R. R. Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings*)

During this season of Lent, we will re-hear the story of Jesus and the name of those who in baptism are called to follow him. And this name, *our* name, is a very long one; one that has been growing since the creation of the world. Our name is a very long story—of how we were made; of how God chose us from among all peoples; of how God freed us from slavery; of how God planted us in the promised land; of how we disobeyed, forgetting who we were and who created us; of how the incarnate God has come home to us—revealed for all time in the life, death and resurrection of Christ.

Lent, like the language of Old Entish, is slow and methodical, but is certainly worth taking the time to say and to listen to. This devotion book was designed that we might take time to speak and to listen. Listen again to scripture: a voice from the past that is also a voice from the future. And to listen to each other.

These daily devotions were written by you – friends and members of Luther Memorial. We encourage you to read them daily, at home, with family, while attending events and meetings at church. Be nurtured by the words of scripture and the thoughts, poems and prayers of your fellow sisters and brothers in Christ here at LM.

For some extra nourishment, we've included a soup and a bread recipe after each Wednesday's devotion, in honor of the many Lenten soup suppers held at LM over the years. These recipes are from our 2011 church cookbook.

In addition to this season of Lent, we as a congregation are about to embark upon a major capital campaign for facility and ministry renewal. It is a process that has taken us many years; not as long as the telling of Treebeard's name, surely, but it may feel like it. So as you ponder these devotions, please remember those who have gone before us; those who sacrificed for the mission and ministry in this place; those who saw this community a place of bold proclamation of the life, death and resurrection of Christ. Now, we in turn are called to do our part; to give and to sacrifice; to add to the ever growing story that began at creation and will be brought to its final and ultimate conclusion on the last day. Until then, let us walk together.

Wednesday, March 1

Asking God's Help and Guidance

Carl Anderson

1 John 5:14–15 *“And this is the boldness we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have obtained the requests made of him.”*

Peace of the Lord be with you always. When we have new members join our congregation, there is one phrase that comes to mind. “I do and I ask God to help and guide me.”

What a wonderful phrase. We should keep this phrase in mind on a daily basis. Asking God to remind us that we do have questions that we need to ask. God does hear us, whether spoken or unspoken requests. Some questions get answered and a few don’t. God is always there to help and guide us in our journey of life: 365 days a year, plus one for leap years.

Prayer: Thank you God for your constant help and guidance as we keep our journeys in life and faith. Amen.

Three Mushroom Soup

Sandy Bertics

1 oz dried shiitake mushrooms	1 c orzo
1 lb portabella mushrooms	2 Tbsp butter
1 lb white button mushrooms	2 Tbsp flour
32 oz beef broth	1 c sour cream
5 stalks celery, chopped	2 Tbsp parsley, chopped
5 carrots, chopped	2 Tbsp dill, chopped finely
2 large onions, chopped	pepper, to taste

Rinse dried mushrooms. Place mushrooms in 2 c warm water and soak for 30 minutes, or until hydrated.

In a large pot, simmer broth. Add celery, carrots and onions. Strain dried mushrooms, reserving liquid, and add liquid to the soup. Slice mushrooms into pieces and add to soup. Cover and simmer until vegetables are tender, about one hour. Bring soup to a boil. Add orzo, stirring constantly. Reduce heat to a gentle boil and stir occasionally to prevent pasta from sticking. Cook until orzo is cooked, about 6–8 minutes.

Make roux by melting butter in a small saucepan over medium heat. Add flour and cook 3 minutes until smooth, stirring constantly. Remove 1 c broth from soup and add to roux, whisking constantly until slightly thickened and free of lumps. Stir thickened liquid into soup. Add parsley and dill.

In a small bowl, mix $\frac{1}{4}$ c thickened soup and sour cream. Whisk until smooth. Add mixture to soup and whisk until well incorporated, about 3 minutes. Season with pepper to taste. Serves 8–10.

Wild Rice Bread

Gary Brown

4 c bread flour	$\frac{1}{2}$ Tbsp salt
1 c onion, diced	$\frac{1}{2}$ c cooked wild rice
$\frac{1}{4}$ c brown sugar	$\frac{1}{2}$ c buttermilk
3 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp instant yeast	

Mix all ingredients and knead until elastic. Let rise to double in volume, punch down and form into loaf. Use loaf pan or small pie plate for a round loaf. Let rise again, then bake at 350° for about 30 minutes, or until golden brown.

Thursday, March 2

Faith

Eileen Hodge

Matthew 21:22 “*Whatever you ask for in prayer with faith, you will receive.*”

This is one of the more difficult scriptures that believers face. Appearing again and again in various passages, it promises us relief that very often we cannot recognize in our own lives or in the lives of those we love. Explanations are often unsatisfying. Dramatic examples of the power of prayer from scripture do little to relieve the physically abused wife praying that her husband will be sober on his return from work.

Where does that leave believing, prayerful Christians? We know that evil exists and will continue to exist. We know bad things happen to good people. We must consider that God’s answer to our prayers is not the relief of every injustice; but, rather through our faith, God’s answer is our ability to survive these evils, to lead the life that God asks of us despite these evils. We know the great force for good that God exerts on the world. It is our faith that will provide us the grace to deal with evil, and it is our faith that we must continue to nurture and grow.

Prayer: Dear Lord, Help me to appreciate the help you give me in dealing with life’s setbacks. Send me the grace to see your hand in difficult circumstances. We ask this in Jesus’ name.

Friday, March 3

Healing Touch

Jay Suthers

James 5:14–15 “*Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up; and anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven.*”

When we became sick as children, we were comforted by the loving touch of our parents. They gave us medication and anointed us with fragrant ointments to help us heal. The natural course of a virus meant we would suffer for a week or longer regardless of any treatments, but the love and care of a parent eased the suffering.

It comes as great comfort to know that our suffering is eased by our faith in Jesus and our connection to his church. Whether we are suffering from illness or the consequences of sin, the wisdom and faith of our church community heals us. This passage in James reminds us that our church community is our “go to” place for spiritual healing.

Prayer is a time of tuning into wisdom and finding answers to our questions. While we don’t have a regular practice of anointing with oil in our church, we frequently receive the healing touch of others through handshakes as we share God’s peace, personal conversation after the church service, and even in unified voices as we sing hymns. Our connection with each other and God is palpable at these times. It’s little wonder that we feel raised up after going to church.

Regardless of our infirmity or the depth of our errors, we are comforted by the grace and forgiveness of God. We come to the church to receive fullness in Him and ease from our suffering.

Gracious and forgiving God, we pray for the wisdom and healing power of our elders and all the members of your church. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Saturday, March 4

Community

Jonathan Woolums

Ephesians 1:16 “*I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers.*”

Paul's words here near the beginning of his letter to the Ephesians are a call to give thanks for our church community (among other things) when we pray. Jesus taught us that when two or three are gathered in his name, he is with us, so it is by gathering together in a community that our prayers are heard. It supports us and we support it in turn. When we need help, we turn to God and to the people in our community to meet us in our time of need. Without it, there can be no church, and so we give thanks for the people in our community.

Lord Jesus, we pray for our community of Luther Memorial Church, and all communities that we are a part of.

Sunday, March 5

Pray for Everyone

Mary Powell

1 Timothy 2:1–2 *“First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity.”*

Long ago, when I was about thirteen, our family visited some old friends of my father. Before bedtime we gathered for their customary evening prayer. It turned out to be the longest prayer I had ever suffered through. They prayed for everyone they knew by name. Now, so many years later, I realize how important it is to pray for others by name. In my practice I pray for different groups of people each day, by name. Some days it's the children I teach, or my neighbors, or my family, or the church staff. I also pray for those who are difficult for me to like. Those prayers work some changes in me. If I'm praying for that irritating person, suddenly he or she isn't so irritating.

Pray for those in high office. That's a tough one, given that I was not one of the voters who put them there. But I do pray for them by name. I pray that they will have wisdom, that they will be open-minded, that they will be just, that they will put aside their greed for power in the interest of the good of the people. I also pray for the leaders of other nations, “so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity.”

Several years ago I had a conversation with a distant cousin of my husband's at a wedding reception. I had met her only once or twice

before. She's not on our Christmas card list. Yet she asked after each of our children and grandchildren by name. She said she prays for each one of us by name every day. I was so touched! Prayer, indeed, is powerful.

Monday, March 6

Loving Our Enemies

Bonnie Gruber

Luke 6:27–28 *“But I say to you that listen: love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you.”*

Why should I love those who hate?

Why should I do good to gangs?

Why should I bless bigots?

Why should I pray for polluters?

They were created by God, just like I was.

They make mistakes, just like I do.

They can be forgiven, just like I am.

They can learn, just like I can.

How can I love those who hate?

How can I do good to gangs?

How can I bless bigots?

How can I pray for polluters?

God gives me love and forgiveness to share.

God gives me strength and protects me.

God will judge us all.

Tuesday, March 7

Prayer of Gratitude

Kelly Olson

Psalm 102:17 “*He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and will not despise their prayer.*”

Dear Lord,

Like the psalmist, I know you will hear my cry when I am at my lowest, when I feel the world has forgotten me, or worse, when others torment me or debase me. Your care is not bound by human concerns of social status or acceptance.

You will always be there to hear me.

And through the example of your son, I know that I also may help to answer the prayers of those more destitute than myself. For you work within us, through all our hands, to answer prayers.

And in gratitude for your care of me, I am happy to share in this work.

Amen.

Wednesday, March 8

Rescue

The Rev. David Berggren

2 Corinthians 1:10–11 “*He who rescued us from so deadly a peril will continue to rescue us; on him we have set our hope that he will rescue us again, as you also join in helping us by your prayers, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many.*”

A little over a year ago we lost our dog in a wilderness area near our home. For hours we searched for Dory and finally gave up as darkness closed in. We informed the police and went home for a fitful night.

Around 3:30 in the morning, the police department called. A worker on his way to an early shift spotted Dory, scooped her into his car, and called the police. She was rescued. We were thankful.

The next day we took Dory for a vet check. She was fine. The vet asked if we thought the dog had learned anything in the adventure, and before we could answer he gave us emphatic “No.” She’ll do it again, he told us.

Surely we are no better when it comes to our relationship with God. We need to be rescued over and over again from our wandering away from that which is the solid rock. Thankfully, the Lord chooses to rescue us over and over again.

Dhal

Cindy Cameron-Fix

1 c red lentils	¼ tsp ground turmeric
3 Tbsp olive oil	2 ½ c chicken stock
2 onions, chopped	salt and pepper to taste
2 garlic cloves, sliced	fresh cilantro to garnish
2 tsp ground cumin	

Fry onions in olive oil until soft and golden. Add garlic, cumin and turmeric; fry for 3 minutes. Add lentils and stock. Bring to boil, reduce heat and simmer 30 minutes. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Garnish with cilantro. Serve with warm naan.

Naan

Cindy Cameron-Fix

2 tsp dried yeast	2 tsp canola oil
1 tsp sugar	2 tsp salt
1 ½ c warm water	½ c butter, melted
4 c flour	

Dissolve sugar and yeast in warm water. Proof 5–10 minutes. Add flour, oil and salt to yeast. Mix to form dough. Knead. Let dough rise in warm place until double in bulk, about 80 minutes. Knead again, then divide into 8 pieces. Roll or form with hands into teardrop shapes about 6 inches long. Place on greased cookie sheets. Bake at 425° for 6–8 minutes per side, turning twice to brush with melted butter. Serve immediately.

Thursday, March 9

It's Not About Us

Phyllis Pleuss

Matthew 6:8–10 *“Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. Pray then in this way: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”*

I've always had a hard time with prayer. I don't understand it. I don't know what it's for. I can't ever seem to find the right words to say. It doesn't especially make me feel closer to God—it just makes me feel inadequate. “Prayer warrior”? “Prayer works”? These slogans confuse and annoy me. Prayer—I'm just not good at it.

That's why when I read “your Father knows what you need before you ask him,” it's like a breath of fresh air. Whew! What a relief! Of course. I should have remembered. Just like grace, it's not up to us—it's not dependent on our effort. As I struggle and fidget, God already knows what's in my heart and what I want to say and mean to say but can't. It's not so much about me—it's all about him. And it follows that the first petition in the Lord's prayer is about praising God and wanting what he wants. I love the quote “if we don't know what to say, ‘Thank you’ is enough.” Thank you indeed, God, for accepting my feeble attempts and knowing before I do what's in my heart.

Friday, March 10

Watch and Pray

Randy Raasch

Matthew 26:41 *“Stay awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”*

There are so many demands put on us by daily life that draw us away from our relationship with God. It is so easy to give into the temptation of focusing solely on our immediate needs and pleasures rather than concentrating on things eternal, such as the meaning of our lives, our relationship to God and others and the promise of eternal life.

We need to step back from our daily routines to focus on God’s presence in our world and to find greater purpose in how we live. To that end, we rely on the Holy Spirit to draw us into God’s presence and to recognize God’s purposes for us. We must be alert to God’s will and ask that we be led to a deeper, more meaningful prayer life. Watch and pray!

“Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.” [Psalm 51:11–12, English Standard Version]

Saturday, March 11

Alone with the Lord

Lewis Bosworth

Matthew 6:5–6 *“And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”*

The solitude of the nave or the quiet of your room—there lies the bond between you and the LORD.

Public displays are for the stage and the applause-mongering sanctimonious among you.

Heed the words of Jesus who told you not to disfigure your faces when you walk out in public.

If you succumb to vanity and wear a mask of piety unsuited to a meeting with Him, wash your soul as He does your tears.

Do not be afraid to be alone with Him, to ask for what is needed for your sisters and brothers—and yourself.

Decorate your room as you do your heart—
with sunlight and the silent glow of love
which has been given to you.

Stand tall if it suits you, and look out—
kneel if it comforts you, and look up,
speak words that are familiar.

If you confess, do it with sincerity—if
you are truthful, your secrets will be heard
and kept.

The end is as important as the beginning—
give thanks, smile with Him, the LORD
hears all, sees all, forgives all.

Sunday, March 12

God is Attentive

Jon Dahl

1 Peter 3:12 “*For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.*”

As we experience the mystery of faith in the Eucharist, God also invites us as Christian followers to experience the mystery of prayer. For me, prayer has always been a time for deep self reflection to build on my relationship with God, to proclaim praise and ask for forgiveness of sins.

We realize that God’s eyes are indeed on all his people, but the scripture is describing a more continual guardianship and care we are receiving from God. The reassurance to know that I have the liberty to go to him at all times in all places, and know his ears are attentive to my deepest thoughts is one of the most comforting elements I have experienced in my life. However, the face of God turns against those who disobey him and participate in evil, for that is not the path God walks. I have to be reminded of this in my life, to understand that if we get on the path of evil and disobedience, God’s face turns away from us and his open arms of love and mercy close. Turning back down the path of God brings a sense of solace unto me when I show my Christian heart and beliefs to my sisters and brothers around me, for then the Lord’s gaze and his hearing is on me. God invites us to do his will everyday unto others as he has shown unto us, so we can live with him in his enduring peace and love for eternity. Amen.

Monday, March 13

Everyday Prayer

The Rev. David Berggren

Matthew 7:7 *“Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you.”*

In the middle of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount he strings together a string of pearls of wisdom that are more or less unrelated. The little section above goes on for another verse or two, but the nugget is there. In it, Jesus gives us mortals permission to address God, and to address God any way we can. Ask. Search. Knock. Then receive, find, open. This is prayer in the sandlot, not Miller Park.

There's a place and time for prayers well thought out and borne of words succinct and beautiful, and I truly appreciate such prayers. Everyday prayer, that common minute-by-minute conversation with the Lord, paints a homelier, messier, rambling picture. Jesus takes God out of the temple where you need an appointment to have five minutes with the Lord. Jesus puts God in our everyday lives and encourages us to plead, beg, demand, threaten, scream, whimper, swear, and do pretty much whatever comes to mind, whenever it comes to mind, and wherever it comes to mind. And God will listen.

Tuesday, March 14

Pray Unceasingly

Michele Moede

Luke 6:12 “Now during those days he went out to the mountain to pray; and he spent the night in prayer to God.”

In this verse, Jesus prayed for guidance to deal with scheming Pharisees, to prepare the Sermon on the Mount, to name and choose his apostles, and to conduct miracles of healing.

Many people pray before falling asleep. It is an opportunity to thank God for the completed day, and to appeal to God for strength and peace for the morrow. Prayer can be a prelude to sleep. But prayer all night?

We might pray all night if we were keeping vigil over a sick family member, contemplating taking a new job or making a major life change.

Prayer does not have to be protracted; it can be an instantaneous appeal to God. It can and should occur throughout our day.

Jesus prayed all night because Jesus was beyond human. Jesus was also in direct dialogue with God; our prayers are more one-sided.

Jesus set the example. In all things, go to God. Pray unceasingly: for strength, for guidance, for thanks, for healing, for forgiveness, for peace. Pray unceasingly throughout your day or night.

Wednesday, March 15

Drawn to Pray

Judy Braham

Luke 5:16 “*But he would withdraw to deserted places and pray.*”

Most of us do not like lonely places, wilderness and deserted places, at least not on a daily basis. Perhaps for a retreat, perhaps after a long extended period of pressure to succeed, perhaps to escape; to purposely rejuvenate in order to continue our self driven, self excelling, self controlled lives. We use such experiences as a method to be successful.

In many ways, Jesus does not appear to be a model of success. Jesus does not turn inward, does not see himself as responsible for his success. Rather, he keeps his eyes, his ears, his feet, his mouth, his hands focused on doing the will of God, of shining a light to God, even in his darkest moments.

So when Jesus often withdraws to lonely places, deserted places, to pray, it is not a time for Jesus to reflect on his life, his exhaustion, his difficulties.

It seems not to be the withdrawing, the leaving, that Jesus seeks, but rather he is drawn to pray, to know that not only success, control, wealth, but also pain, depression and agony are not reasons to withdraw to pray, but prayer is the call, praying is the very breath of life. Amen.

Leek and Potato Soup

Janet Streiff

3–4 medium leeks	6 Tbsp creme fraiche or heavy cream
3 Tbsp unsalted butter	
1 lb potatoes, peeled and sliced	1 bunch fresh chervil
1 ½ qt chicken stock	salt and pepper, to taste

Wash and thinly slice leeks. Melt butter in a pan and saute the leeks. Season with salt. Add potatoes. Add stock, then boil over high heat for 25 minutes. Lower heat, add creme fraiche and sprigs of chervil. Adjust the seasoning and serve immediately. Serves 4.

Easy French Bread

Amy Grunewald Mattison

2 pkgs dry yeast	2 c boiling water
½ c warm water	7–8 c flour
½ tsp sugar	1 egg, beaten (opt.)
2 Tbsp sugar	2 Tbsp milk (opt.)
2 Tbsp canola oil	poppy or sesame seeds (opt.)
2 tsp salt	

Dissolve sugar and yeast in warm water. Combine the sugar, oil, salt and boiling water. Cool mixture to lukewarm, then add the yeast mixture (*this takes some time, so plan ahead*). Stir in the flour.

Knead 10 minutes or until smooth and elastic. Place in greased bowl, turning once. Let rise until doubled. Punch down and let rest 15 minutes. Divide dough in half. On floured surface, roll each half to a 12" x 15" rectangle. Roll up, starting at 15" edge. Place loaves on greased cookie sheets and make 4 slashes diagonally across the tops. Let rise until doubled. Optional: mix the egg and milk and brush on top of bread. Sprinkle with seeds. Bake at 400° for 20 minutes. Makes 2 loaves.

Thursday, March 16

What Is Prayer?

Jan Moore

Acts 6:4 “*While we, for our part, will devote ourselves to prayer and to serving the word.*”

What is prayer?

A dialogue with God, who already knows our thoughts before we utter them.

Praise and adoration for God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

A cry for help when all may seem hopeless.

Gratitude for the simple things in life.

Thankfulness for our loved ones and all sisters and brothers of spiritual faith.

Petitions for the needs of all God’s creation and the world community.

An opportunity to turn our worries, fears and hopes over to God.

A plea for strength to curb sinful urges and our human nature.

A call for help to love one another as God has loved us.

A question: What would Jesus have us do?

The singing of songs of faith.

A quiet, mindful time of reflection.

An acceptance of the will of God.

Prayer and serving God’s word nurtures our spiritual well being.

Our prayers rise up to the heavens as a burnt offering of incense.

Jesus’ words tell us prayer is not achieved by repetition. “*Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.*”
[Matthew 7:21]

Friday, March 17

God in the Mundane

Campus Pastor Emily Tveite

Acts 2:42–43 “*They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles.*”

Where do we meet God? At Luther Memorial, we often find God in the beauty of the liturgy, the sacredness of worship, the soaring sound of organ and congregational song.

But our ancestors in faith met God in their homes, where they gathered as communities of faith to do simple things: to break bread and pray. The simple surroundings did not limit the presence of God, however. The author of Luke tells us of awe and signs and wonders being done in their midst.

Spanish mystic, Saint Teresa of Avila once said, “The Lord walks among the pots and pans.” It is a blessing of discipleship that we meet God not only in the extraordinary, but in the mundane.

God is no less present at home around our dinner tables than when we gather around the altar in the nave. God's wonders and signs extend far beyond sacred word and soaring music and into the routine that so often we overlook.

Magnificent God, open our eyes to the ordinary wonders of the world: to lengthening of days and new life emerging from the death of winter, to the steady joy of family and friendship, to the sacredness of meaningful work. Reveal yourself to us among the pots and pans of life. Amen.

Saturday, March 18

Hearts Enlightened

Pastor John Worzala Dumke

Ephesians 1:18 “*So that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints...*”

Here in Ephesians we encounter St. Paul in prayer for the church of Ephesus. This prayer is not one asking for some special insider's revelation, but more so an appropriation of gentile thought—reframing the gnostic ideas of *gnosis* (knowledge), *sophia* (wisdom), and *apokalypsis* (revelation). It is a hopeful prayer that the people of the church may know, for it seems they do not yet know, the hope of the resurrection that is promised them.

St. Paul prays that we, as well as the first century church, may know full well the boundless benefits of Christ Jesus. These benefits are not just prevalent in some eschatological future, but also in the here and now. The hope of the resurrection and the riches of Christ are with us as we wander through the wilderness of Lent. Paul prays this way with the understanding that currently “we see in a mirror, dimly,” and rather than have us just dwell in the mystery, awaiting some future reality, he prays that we may be illumined by the Holy Spirit now. This is my prayer for us as well, that we may have our hearts enlightened with the knowledge of God, embracing the revelation that Christ is at work in us, here, now, called and empowered to the work of his kingdom.

Sunday, March 19

Do Not Be Anxious

Katie Branscomb

Philippians 4:6 “*Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.*”

This verse is easy to feel inspired by when you’re relaxed, but much harder to believe when you’re weak. Yet God calls us to be Christ-like—in love, kindness, humility, sacrifice, forgiveness, and suffering—all the time, even when we don’t feel like it; even when we’re stressed. Today give thanks to our Lord who promises us that he will take care of us. Pray that God will help you let go of these anxious burdens that you may be free to carry the cross and follow Jesus.

Dear God,

Please quiet the noise in my mind that I may hear your voice and follow your call in my life. The worries in my heart take up too much space that would be better used loving, serving, and healing your people. Thank you for the abundant blessings you have given me in this life. May I use them all to further glorify you. Help me to let go of my earthly worries, trusting that you will provide for me. Help me to have the strength and courage to pour out myself to others as a blessing. Wherever I go today, God, thank you for going with me.

Amen.

Monday, March 20

Silence

Caroline Oldershaw

Matthew 6:7 “*When you are praying, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard because of their many words.*”

What if the most powerful prayer contained no words? I had such an experience. I was 29 and living in Portland, Oregon. It was a time in my life that was most difficult. I had, in retrospect, run away from my Midwest home. My family was in deep distress. To cope I had estranged myself from my parents.

In nearby Yamhill County there was a Trappist monastery. My father had told me about it. So one Saturday in January I went. I entered the porter’s lodge in time for the midday meal. I ate alone. It was very quiet. A monk walked by. “Is it OK to speak here?” I asked. “Yes,” he said. “Would you like to talk with me?”

We entered a small library. It was dusk. The monk, Brother Mark, switched on the lamp. He was tall and gaunt, wearing a Trappist tunic and worn leather shoes. No socks. He sat in a chair opposite me, not saying a word. It was quiet for some minutes. “I’m not sure what I want to say,” I choked out. He gazed at me, saying nothing yet saying everything.

“This place reminds me of my dad,” I said. I started to cry and could not stop. “These same books—C. S. Lewis, Thomas Merton, Teilhard de Chardin—were in our house. I feel his presence here,” I said.

Brother Mark continued to look at me without judgment. I like to think that God is rather like that monk. Unhurried. Fully present. I could pray to a God like that.

Tuesday, March 21

Confidence

Leah Holloway

Hebrews 4:16 “*Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.*” [New International Version]

“Confidence” is not a word we think of when we think about approaching God. More common words and phrases are “humbly,” “with adoration,” “awe,” and so forth. Approaching the throne of God with “confidence” seems almost counterintuitive—what have we done that we can confidently approach God? We have done nothing, but Jesus has done everything, and it is because of this, along with our faith and confidence in him, that grants us this freedom to confidently come before God. Because of Jesus, you can be confident that God’s audience chamber is open to everyone. Because of Jesus, you can be confident that God not only hears your prayers, but intercedes on your behalf. Because of Jesus, you can be confident that God’s answers to your prayers are shrouded in mercy and grace and love that is abounding for every petition you have.

Yes, God’s power and beauty should enchant us, but God is also Abba, Father. Who longs for his children to be engaged in prayerful conversation with him. Who gave his Son so that we can approach his throne, confident that he will bestow upon us all that we could ever need.

Wednesday, March 22

Always

The Rev. David Berggren

1 Thessalonians 5:16–18 “*Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*”

Ah, the verbs sound easy. Right out of Sunday school. Rejoice. Pray. Give thanks. Easy peasy. Give me an hour on a Sunday morning and I will Hank Aaron those three right out of the park.

It’s those damn modifiers. Always. Without ceasing. In all circumstances. What are we supposed to do? Take those three verbs home with us? To work? To the grocery store? To the gym? Are you kidding?

When the idiot cuts into my lane, I’m supposed to rejoice? Always!

When life turns to a dumpster of despair and God doesn’t seem to be doing a thing to make it better, I’m still supposed to pray? Without ceasing!

Wars rage, famine strangles, refugees escape, disasters threaten, racism roars, and I’m supposed to give thanks? In all circumstances.

This may not be as easy as I thought.

Boulder Black Bean Soup

Phyllis Pleuss

2 tsp olive oil	3 c canned black beans, rinsed and drained
1 med onion, chopped	3 c chicken broth, fat removed
3 cloves garlic, minced	2 tomatoes, chopped
1 tsp dried oregano	$\frac{1}{2}$ c onion, chopped (opt.)
$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp dried thyme	$\frac{1}{2}$ c Monterey Jack cheese, shredded (opt.)
$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp ground cumin	
$\frac{1}{4}$ tsp cayenne pepper	

Heat oil in large saucepan over medium heat. Sauté onion and garlic until tender, about 5 minutes. Stir in spices. Cook 1 minute longer. Place half the beans in a blender and puree until smooth, adding chicken broth as needed. Add puree, remaining whole beans, and broth to saucepan. Bring to boil over medium heat. Reduce heat and simmer uncovered for 20–30 minutes. Garnish with tomatoes, onion and cheese, if desired. Serves 8.

Quick Italian Bread

The Rev. Franklin Wilson

2 Tbsp butter	2 Tbsp or 2 pkgs yeast
2 tsp salt	5 c bread flour
2 Tbsp sugar	egg white (opt.)
1 $\frac{3}{4}$ c warm water	

In a large bowl, mix butter, salt, sugar and warm water. Stir, then add yeast. Wire whip all ingredients except flour. Add 5 c bread flour. Switch to wooden spoon to stir about halfway through. Add more flour if needed. Turn out on floured surface and knead for 10 minutes. Roll out with rolling pin and then divide dough in half. Roll up like a jelly roll and pinch the crease. Put seam side down on greased pan. Cover and let sit for 20 minutes. Brush with oil and bake at 350° for 25 minutes. Glaze with egg white, if desired—beat one egg white into froth and brush on top of loaves with a pastry brush.

Thursday, March 23

Wrestling

Amy Grunewald Mattison

Colossians 4:12 “*Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you. He is always wrestling in his prayers on your behalf, so that you may stand mature and fully assured in everything that God wills.*”

I do not like to wrestle. Thankfully, only one of my three sons does and seems to get his fix with his friends. My brother and I engaged in enough wrestling during childhood, and it was fun at the time, but I prefer to stand on my two feet. I do not like anticipating a fall to the ground or being pinned down. I do not like to wrestle in prayer either. I prefer an order of ancient time-tested words offered again and again to God in faith that God’s will *will* be done.

But maybe I should be more like Epaphras. He stands on the edge with God and bears the burdens of the young church to the creator of the universe. He has no ancient words. God might knock his requests to the ground. But Epaphras considers what is at stake: this new church has few stories of God’s faithfulness. When it gets difficult, they could easily turn away to something else. He’s unwilling to stand by and watch. Instead, he prays that they will grow strong and sure in their faith in God.

Maybe someone struggled in prayer for me or for you. Who are the young in faith today who need us to wrestle in prayer?

Friday, March 24

Incarnate Compassion

Judy Braham

Luke 18:1 “*Then Jesus told them a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart.*”

Pray—always, constantly, continuously, at all times, all the time, relentlessly, persistently, incessantly...

Pray—always, forever, for all time, for eternity, until the end of time, for ever and a day, time without end...

Pray—always, each time, every time...

Do not lose heart—become despondent, become demoralized, give up, give in, lose motivation, falter...

Jesus tells us a parable, a story; Jesus knows in mortal life there is difficulty.

Incarnate compassion.

Saturday, March 25

Hope

Norm Lorenz

John 14:13–14 “*I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.*”

Can we really change the world? In these two verses, Jesus seems to tell us that we can. But do we have the faith to move mountains when we pray? Are we ready for God’s answer to our prayer?

So many times when I have prayed for answers in the past, it felt like the answer I got was more stumbling blocks strewn in my way. Sometimes it took a while, sometimes years, to see that the stumbling blocks made me stronger and that I was being prepared to face even greater challenges.

My late brother was a man of simple but powerful faith. He volunteered constantly at church, in projects big and small, whether he had the time or not. He knew the power of prayer. He looked to his friends to guide him on his spiritual path. But when he died, his friends shared how he had been their example.

There are days when both hope and despair follow me into prayer. But if we truly believe, only hope survives the journey. And now when I pray, I remember the faith of my younger brother.

Sunday, March 26

Never Give Up

The Rev. David Berggren

Romans 12:12 “*Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer.*”

Maybe you've seen this cartoon. A heron wading along the shoreline has snatched up a frog. Before the bird can gulp down the frog, however, the amphibian has reached out its arms and has the heron by the throat so it cannot swallow. Above is the caption, “Never Give Up!”

Paul knows that carrying the faith of Christ can be heavy baggage, even dangerous in certain times and places.

Sometimes it feels like the world is about to swallow you whole. You get tired and just want to give up and give in. Prayer seems like a waste of words and time. The temptation sets in to just give up.

Surely, Paul saw that handwriting on the wall when, in a list of things that mark the church of Christ, he admonishes us to persevere in prayer. Never give up! I have a hunch the evangelist knew that those who persevere in prayer eventually come to know that prayer is much more than getting results. It is about living in the heart of the Lord.

Monday, March 27

I Am Prayer

Lewis Bosworth

Psalm 141:2 “*Let my prayer be counted as incense before you, and the lifting up of my hands as an evening sacrifice.*”

I am prayer,
I am a room without walls,
a Rubik's Cube,
the Rubicon.

I am the parting of the
Red Sea,
the brass ring,
the gold at the
end of the rainbow.

I am prayer,
I am mysterious,
the five senses
without sight.

I am a broken relationship
repaired,
loneliness
beyond tears.

I am prayer,
the upper room,
*Do this for the
the remembrance
of me.*

I am a child with
Down Syndrome,
I am cared for,
loved, nurtured,
and I can sing.

I am prayer,
the road less traveled,
the road home,
this is the way
the night passes.

My hands are folded,
lifted up and away
there is light,
music, hope
and grace.

I am prayer,
I am a room without walls,
the five senses,
especially touch.

My words are gentle,
I can be whispered
or sung,
or shouted
from the rooftops.

Tuesday, March 28

Song

Caroline Oldershaw

James 5:13 “*Are any among you suffering? They should pray. Are any cheerful? They should sing songs of praise.*”

The red book we touch every Sunday is our gateway to song, and entry to prayer. *Worship* is its title, and copies are scattered throughout every pew. The next time you gaze upon it, you might riffle through the pages to song 763.

“My life flows on in endless song,” it begins, which sounds rather joyful, does it not?

Yet in the index of songs, here is its category: Grief, Sorrow (see also Lament; Trust, Guidance). Did not the great spirituals derive from suffering?

Song might be our soul’s conversation with God. A dialogue of pain, delight, gratitude, and in the end, humility.

“No storm can shake my inmost calm while to that Rock I’m clinging. Since Christ is Lord of heaven and earth, how can I keep from singing?”

Wednesday, March 29

Devoted

Pastor John Worzala Dumke

Colossians 4:2–3 “*Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with thanksgiving. At the same time pray for us as well that God will open to us a door for the word, that we may declare the mystery of Christ, for which I am in prison...*”

The point of the matter at hand is that prayer, in the lives of the faithful, is a central thing in our relationship with God and it is something that we are to be diligent in. In our prayer life we are to remember all the mercies that we have been shown by God as we pray for future mercies to be shown to those we pray for, including ourselves.

I think it is important to remember the words of St. Augustine regarding prayer, that we are to “pray as though everything depended on God. Work as though everything depended on you.” It seems to me that prayer is more than just saying the words, but also working toward what we pray for—devoting ourselves to what we ask of God. Did you pray for mercy? Then show mercy to your neighbor. Did you pray for the hungry to be fed? Then go and feed the hungry. Prayer isn’t supposed to be passive—that is why St. Paul calls us to continue diligently in it and to give thanks to God, the one who hears the cries of his people.

Lent is the perfect time to re-devote yourself to the act of prayer, to give of yourself to the things for which you pray, and to give thanks to God for all the mercies you have been shown through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Smoked Turkey Chowder

Donna & Al Larson

4 slices bacon, cut crosswise to ½" slices	¼ tsp dried thyme
2 tsp olive oil	¾ tsp dried sage, crushed
1 med yellow onion, finely chopped	½ tsp salt
2 cloves garlic, minced	32 oz low sodium chicken broth
2 stalks celery, finely chopped	2 c cooked, smoked (or plain)
1 carrot, finely chopped	turkey (I get it from the grocery deli)
1 ½ lb (about 5 med) Yukon gold potatoes, diced to ½" cubes	½ c fat-free half & half
	½ tsp ground black pepper

In a 4–6 qt heavy pot over medium heat, cook the bacon until crisp and golden. Transfer bacon to paper towel-lined plate.

Turn heat to medium low. Put olive oil in pan. Add onion; cook 10 minutes, stirring often. Add garlic, celery and carrot; cook 5 minutes. Add bacon, potatoes, thyme, sage, salt and broth. Bring to a boil. Cover and reduce heat to simmer. Cook 25 minutes, stirring occasionally.

With a large spoon, mash some of the potatoes against the side of the pan to lightly thicken the soup. Stir in the turkey. Simmer uncovered for 10 minutes.

Remove the soup from heat. Add a couple ladles of the soup to the half & half. Pour back into the pot. Season with pepper and serve. Serves 6.

Sweet Poppy Seed Bread or Muffins

Sandy Bertics

3 c all purpose flour	3 eggs
2 ¼ c sugar	1 ½ c milk
4 ½ tsp poppy seeds	1 c cooking oil
1 ½ tsp baking powder	1 ½ tsp vanilla
½ tsp salt	1 tsp almond extract

In a large mixing bowl, stir together flour, sugar, poppy seeds, baking powder and salt.

In another bowl, combine eggs, milk, oil, vanilla and almond extract. Add to dry ingredients and stir until just moistened.

Grease and flour two 8" x 4" x 2" loaf pans or grease 1 ¾" muffin pans. Turn batter into loaf pans or fill muffin cups 3/4 full. Bake at 350° for about 1 ¼ hours, or until done. Cover with foil the last 15 minutes to prevent over-browning. Cool on wire racks for 10 minutes, then remove from pans. (Bake mini-muffins at 400° for 12–15 minutes or until tops begin to brown. Cool for 5 minutes, then remove from pans.) If desired, spoon almond glaze over warm bread. Cool completely. Makes 2 loaves or 96 mini-muffins.

Almond Glaze

1 c sifted powdered sugar	½ tsp almond extract
½ c orange juice	½ tsp vanilla

In a small bowl, combine all ingredients. Makes 1/2 c glaze.

Thursday, March 30

Praying for All the Saints

Bill Braham

Ephesians 6:18 *“Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints.”*

During Lent, we are often called on to examine ourselves and attempt, with God’s help, to do a better job of being a Christian. One thing the author of this letter to the Ephesians knew is that we would need lots of help with this and with anything we undertake. So, he advises that we pray for all the saints—for each other—at all times.

But how do we do that, and what do we pray? Praying for all the saints seems to require our knowing something about each other. It’s hard to pray for someone when you don’t know anything about their circumstances, what they need, or what they are facing. The strong words chosen by the writer (supplication, keep alert, persevere) imply a call to be serious and earnest in our care and prayer for one another. Praying for each other implies getting to know each other better, being kind, curious, and accepting. Maybe this Lenten perseverance is not only about being better Christians, but also about being better friends.

Friday, March 31

The Holy Spirit

Ryan Mattison

Acts 8:15 “*The two went down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit...”*

“The two” in this story are the apostles Peter and John, summoned from Jerusalem to minister to new believers in Samaria. This is a remarkable act in the history of the early church, given the longstanding feud between Jews and Samaritans. When you read the whole passage found in Acts 8:4–25, a story of the church emerges. Philip proclaims the gospel. New believers are baptized into Jesus’ name. The Holy Spirit, God himself, becomes present and active in this new community. Simon misunderstands the free gift of grace and soon repents.

During this Lenten season, and in all seasons, make room to listen for the Spirit. Sometimes the Holy Spirit works in dramatic and visible ways, healing rifts and repairing brokenness. Other times the Spirit works quietly, guiding our minds and teaching us to love more fully. Who is praying for you? For whom do you pray? How is the Spirit working in your life as you are reading this now?

Prayer: Lord, thank you for sending the Holy Spirit into your creation and to your church. Give me the persistence to set aside all that can distract from loving you and loving my neighbor as myself. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Saturday, April 1

Guttural Cry

Luis Reynaldo

Romans 8:26 “*Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words.*”

In Romans 8, Paul is writing to his fellow Christians who, like he, were enduring suffering and hardship. He writes not to cheer them on as someone who did not know the costs of discipleship in the early church, but as one who has endured so much for the sake of the Gospel and who understands their suffering. This letter is not one of the kinship that comes from shared suffering. It is a message of encouragement and hope, that we are now much more than our earthly lives, we are now “in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in [us].” [Romans 8:9]

But sometimes, the only prayer we can offer is the guttural cry of “O Lord!” and even that is proffered almost breathlessly, as a sigh. We want to say more, but we cannot—we are simply too weak. Yet it is so profound, because in our weakness the Spirit dwelling within us is acting, interceding on our behalf, and bearing our cries and the witness “that we are children of God.” [Romans 8:16]

Sunday, April 2

Pray for the Proclaimers

The Rev. David Berggren

2 Thessalonians 3:1 “*Finally, brothers and sisters, pray for us, so that the word of the Lord may spread rapidly and be glorified everywhere, just as it is among you...*”

A little over a year ago, my good friend and seminary classmate, Karl Lunder, died. I was privileged to preach at his memorial service, and I began my message by telling folks what I'd never told anyone before. Karl was my hero. Rough and tumble around the edges, God gave Karl the heart and desire to spread the word of Christ and grow the church. For several years he did missionary work in Malaysia where he had to work around the laws where freedom to worship was mostly on paper and not a reality. Wherever Karl served, he was never afraid to clearly proclaim Christ as Lord to anyone who wanted to hear.

We are not all blessed with the spiritual gifts needed to be such clear speakers of our faith in the midst of a pluralistic world. So let us pray for those who courageously take the good news to places who may fear the grace of God. And let us pray that those who do hear of Jesus' love will have hearts that can accept and grow in the Word.

Monday, April 3

Believe That You Have Received It

Judy Braham

Mark 11:24 “*So I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.*”

“Receive”—is it to obtain, to grasp, or is it to welcome, greet? So when one “asks”—is it to obtain something, to grasp something, or to welcome it, to greet it?

This verse is amidst verses that tell us of withered fig trees and mountains throwing themselves into the sea. Jesus and his bewildered disciples are in Jerusalem, fear abounds, and Jesus tells them of receiving through belief in prayer. Prayer is difficult to define—is it merely saying memorized words? Is it erupting with emotional words aimed at God? Is it sitting quietly, or even impatiently, listening, or trying to listen to God? Is it a heart filled with thanksgiving, praise, longing? Is it trying to discern what you are trying to say, or what God is trying to say, or both, or neither? Well, there you have it. Praying is the language of creature and Creator, turbulent, calming, boring, hopeful, despairing, or as C. G. Jung says: “a sea of grace met by a seething lake of fire.”

Tuesday, April 4

Prayer of Trust

Luis Reynaldo

Philippians 1:9–10 *“And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight to help you to determine what is best, so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless.”*

Even with this prayer from the evangelist, sometimes I am in doubt about the quantity of my love, the extent of my knowledge, or my ability to discern what is best. But I do have the desire. So in times like this I have found Thomas Merton’s “Prayer of Trust” to be of great comfort.

“My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think that I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope that I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this, you will lead me by the right road though I may know nothing about it. Therefore will I trust you always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.”

Wednesday, April 5

Earnest Prayer

Caroline Oldershaw

Romans 15:30 *“I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in earnest prayer to God on my behalf.”*

To be earnest today is to court ridicule. Ours is a time of irony. So much so that I meet children who appear ten times more jaded than I.

At a recent family holiday my father asked my niece, his granddaughter, to read a prayer he'd prepared for the blessing. She declined, which I understood. She then rolled her eyes, which I didn't.

To be earnest is to show deep sincerity or seriousness. Its aim, I think, is to point to the truth, even if imperfectly. Thomas Merton said it well. In “Therefore Will I Trust Him” he writes: “and the fact that I think that I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing.”

An earnest prayer and a community praying by the love of the Spirit requires a turning toward God with hearts that are as open as they can be despite the pressure to do otherwise.

Winter Squash Lemongrass Soup

Helen Hartman

1 ½ lb–3 lb sweet winter squash (3 c cooked)	14 oz can coconut milk (reduced fat works fine)
2 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil	4 c stock or water
1 large shallot, finely diced	salt & pepper, to taste
1 c leeks, chopped	2 Tbsp lime juice
2 cloves garlic, minced	¼ c basil chiffonade (basil cut into fine shreds)
2 Tbsp lemongrass, minced	
1 small sweet potato, peeled and diced (or substitute another ½ c squash)	

Preheat oven to 400°. Cut squash in half, discard seeds. Bake cut side down 45 minutes or until tender. When squash is cool enough to handle, scrape flesh from skin and set aside.

Heat oil in a medium saucepan and saute shallots and leeks over medium heat until the leeks are softened but not brown. Add garlic and lemongrass. Saute until aromatic. Add squash, sweet potato, coconut milk and stock. Bring to a boil, lower heat, and add a bit of salt. Simmer partially covered until sweet potato is soft, about 15 minutes. Puree soup in a blender. Add black pepper to taste and the lime juice. Adjust salt. Garnish with basil chiffonade.

Rye Bread

Bonnie Gruber

2 ½ c rye flour	¾ c water
About 2 ½ c unbleached flour	2 Tbsp honey
1 Tbsp sugar	1 Tbsp butter
1 Tbsp salt	¼ c corn meal
1 Tbsp caraway seeds, optional	1 egg white
1 pkg active dry yeast	2 Tbsp water
1 c milk	

Combine flours. In a large bowl, mix 1 ⅔ c flour mixture, sugar, salt, caraway and yeast.

Combine milk, ¾ c water, honey and butter; heat over low heat until warm. Gradually add to dry ingredients and mix 2 minutes at medium speed. Add 1 c flour mixture, enough to make a thick batter. Beat at high speed 2 minutes. Stir in enough flour mixture to make a soft dough. If necessary, add more white flour.

Knead on floured board until smooth and elastic, about 8–10 minutes. Place in greased bowl, turning to grease top. Cover, let rise in warm place until doubled, about 1 hour.

Punch dough down, turn out onto lightly floured board. Divide in half; form each half into a smooth ball. Cover and let rest 10 minutes. Form into loaves and place on baking sheets that have been greased and sprinkled with corn meal. Brush loaves with mixture of egg white and water. Let rise, uncovered, in warm place for 35 minutes. Bake at 400° for 25 minutes. Cool on wire racks.

Thursday, April 6

Whatever You Wish

Judy Braham

John 15:7 *“If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.”*

When I was fifteen years old, my father took my twin brother and me to Sears, telling us to choose our birthday presents. We could have whatever we wanted, whatever we wished for.

It was an incredible moment—all of Sears within our fingertips. I looked at Richard, with breath and heart in my throat. He was smiling even bigger than I.

An hour later, with an impatient father, neither of us could make up our minds. We were lost; we could not measure our desires, adrift on a sea of disquiet.

It seemed a dream come true, but it was on that day, at that hour, standing in Sears, that I realized I had it backwards, my heart grasped that one could lose one's way if one did not have a sanctuary, a place that knew one's heart more than oneself, a home, a place to abide. I learned that to follow one's wishes without such an anchor, nothing could or would be done. One must first abide.

Friday, April 7

Praying With Joy

Rebecca Woolums

Philippians 1:3–4 *“I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you.”*

At this point in time Paul was in prison as he wrote to the church in Philippi, but he still abounded with joy as he thought about the people who brought him hope and happiness despite his circumstances. This characteristic is something that has always intrigued me about Paul; he often begins his letters with a word of thanksgiving for the people who have touched his life and how they have moved him to pray with joy, regardless of what he has or is going through.

How Paul understands joy is very different from how many of us understand it. Paul’s joy comes from a higher place and deeper within. It is something that comes from God and something that he has personally experienced through this community at Philippi. This joy did not come from things that had been bought or because of good things that happened to him. It is a joy that is far more valuable as it encourages, comforts, and is shared in relationship with others. This is a joy that comes from knowing God, through Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit. It’s what binds and unites Christian faith at the core and encourages communities in every circumstance. Amen.

Lord God, thank you for the joy that only you can provide. Help us to experience that joy from day to day, even when it is hard to find. Amen.

Saturday, April 8

In Silence

Rebecca Woolums

Psalm 88:13 “*But I, O LORD, cry out to you; in the morning my prayer comes before you.*”

When I hear this verse, I think about the confirmation retreat I went on in eighth grade at a retreat center in Lake Geneva. Out of the whole experience, the thing I remember most was the morning that I wrote my statement of faith. The sun had just come up and was peeking through the tree branches, the air was cool, the birds were starting to chirp, and the only thing I could hear was the sound of the water moving in the lake down the way. Everything else was silent, completely silent.

It was in that silence that my heart began to feel connected to God in a way that it hadn't before. It was in that silence that the proclamation of my faith came into being. It was in this silence that the voice of prayer in my heart began to feel alive and able to speak. When I think on this, I thank God for the newness of every morning, for coming to us in the silence, and for hearing the prayers of our hearts no matter what we are going through.

Lord God, we thank you for stirring our hearts, hearing our prayers, and strengthening us for the journey ahead. Amen.

Sunday, April 9

They Have Not Ceased Praying

Bill Graham

Colossians 1:9 *“For this reason, since the day we heard it, we have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of God’s will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding.”*

It’s a blessing to receive a “Thinking of You” card and a comfort to know that we are not alone. The writer to the Colossians did more than think about the readers, but prayed for them. And not casually or occasionally, but the writer’s community prayed continually that the readers be filled with the knowledge of God’s will.

It’s not too far a stretch to understand the writer is also praying for us—2,000 years on—that we may also be filled with the knowledge of God’s will. That’s a welcome message when it is often so difficult to know God’s will. So much is unclear, options so many, and opinions so diverse. Having insight into what God may want of us in dealing with life and the state of our world helps us each day and with each choice we make. Knowing that there was someone in the past (and certainly others in the present) praying that we be filled with the knowledge of God’s will helps us make choices and face our days with a true blessing.

Monday, April 10

Pray and Sing

Brenda Ryther

1 Corinthians 14:15 “*What should I do then? I will pray with the spirit, but I will pray with the mind also; I will sing praise with the spirit, but I will sing praise with the mind also.*”

I am reminded of singing a favorite hymn in a childhood bible school class (on a hot summer day while appreciating the cool basement of our church). These simple, familiar words, “What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and grief to bear. What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer,” still fill me with a sense of comfort and peace. Prayer and music offer the space to nourish and deepen faith: sometimes over painful life events; sometimes over concern for others who are struggling; sometimes an expression of gratitude; sometimes over the pure joy of being alive—the list is endless. Jesus gave us many gifts and leads us to pray for hope, compassion and forgiveness.

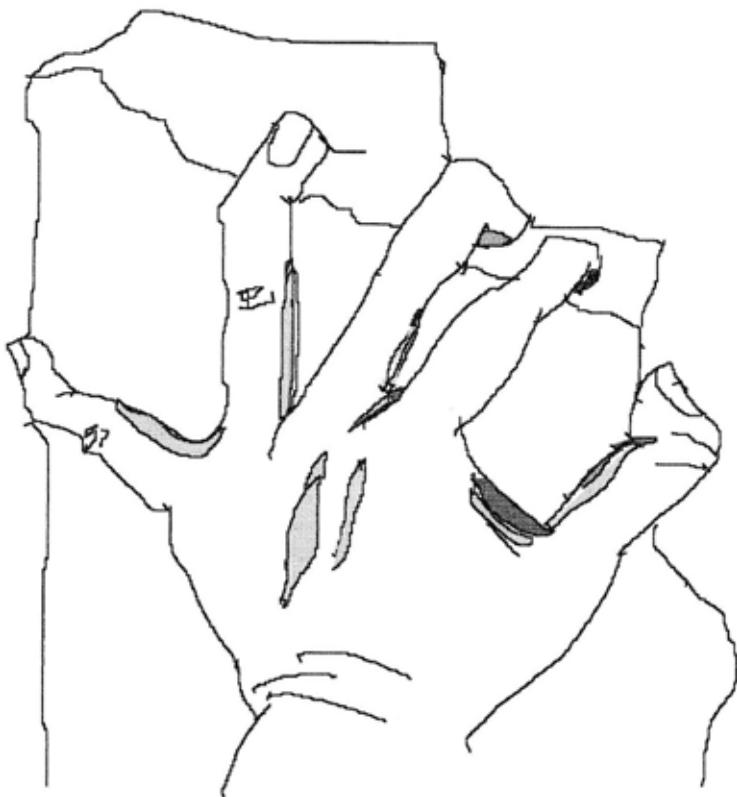
Gracious God, help us to serve you and to care for others as you have cared for us. Bless and offer solace and refuge to all in need. Amen.

Tuesday, April 11

That You May Have the Strength

Judy Braham

Luke 21:36 “Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.”



Wednesday, April 12

Giving Thanks

Lewis Bosworth

Psalm 95:2 “*Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!*”

Giving thanks after a “Hail Mary” touchdown or before downing a meal of turkey and all the fixin’s – not what the psalmist had in mind when writing about being in His presence.

Here we are—days from the cross—not much time to rejoice and give thanks for the real story, the passion play to end all spectacles, worldly narratives or daily newscasts.

It’s time to set the stage—polish the bells and warm up the recorders, get out the metronome and clear your throats—the opening chords of St. Matthew’s Passion are in the air still.

The celestial chorus has no patent on singing—the angel choirs we hear on high every Christmas do accept new members—and going solo on timpani or viola is pleasing to God.

Many of us—largely children—agree that when making noise, we should be joyful, loud and yes, not be afraid to do it in public: sometimes gangs even march on their way to forgiveness.

As we look around in the confusion of our world—have you looked lately?—it's very helpful to read the psalms, the songs of David, it is said, can be of comfort and enlightening.

Close your eyes and imagine a mystical figure playing the lyre and singing the words of this psalm—give thanks, sing, praise—the words call us, an invite to worship.

This is the liturgy you can have every waking hour—in the house of the LORD and in yours: you can praise the LORD in any key—anywhere—as long as you practice the steps of faithful allegiance to the one who gave himself for us. Amen.

Autumn Vegetable Soup

Yvonne & Randy Eide

2 Tbsp olive oil	Kosher salt
3 med carrots, diced	1 qt low-salt chicken broth
1 large yellow onion, diced	14.5 oz can no-salt diced tomatoes
2 cloves garlic, minced	4 sprigs fresh thyme
2 c butternut squash, peeled ½" cubes (about 2-lb squash)	2 c lightly packed kale, coarsely chopped
¼ tsp ground allspice	
pinch cayenne pepper, to taste	1 c low-salt canned chickpeas

Heat oil in a large soup pot over med high heat. Add carrot and onion; cook, stirring occasionally, until they begin to soften, about 6 minutes. Add garlic and cook for 1 minute more. Add squash, allspice, cayenne, and 1 tsp salt, and stir to combine. Add broth, tomatoes with their juice, and thyme. Bring to a boil; then reduce heat to medium, cover and simmer for 10 minutes. Add kale and chickpeas, and cook uncovered until the squash is tender and the kale has wilted, about 10 minutes. Discard the thyme sprigs before serving. Season to taste with salt and cayenne. Serves 6–8 as a starter, or 4 as a main course.

French Breakfast Muffins

Sarah Thiele

1 ½ c + 2 Tbsp flour	1 egg, beaten
¾ c sugar	1 tsp ground cinnamon
2 tsp baking powder	½ c sugar
¼ tsp salt	½ tsp vanilla
½ tsp ground nutmeg	⅔ c butter, melted
½ c milk	

Combine flour, ¾ c sugar, baking powder, salt and nutmeg. Add milk, egg, and ½ c melted butter. Mix thoroughly. Combine cinnamon, ½ c sugar and vanilla together; set aside.

Grease and flour small muffin tins. Fill each muffin cup half-full with batter. Bake at 400° for 20 minutes or until lightly brown. Remove immediately from tin. Dip top in melted butter and then in cinnamon/sugar mixture.

Thank you

A special thank you to each author who contributed a prayer, poem or story to this devotion. To Bill Hunnex, who coordinated this effort. And to Robin Wagner, who designed this booklet.



Luther Memorial Church