

– over hatred and cruelty, death and despair – life wins, and we are here to say so. We are here to *live* so.

Christ is risen indeed!

*You have won the victory, Risen One!*

*Come now to reign in our hearts, our community, our world!*



Lenten

Prayerscapes

2011



**Lenten Prayerscapes**

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**Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in West Virginia**

**Ash Wednesday, Mar. 9****Read Joel 2.1-2, 12-17**

From Rev. Thaddaeus B. Allen, Regional Minister

The lesson for the day from Joel most aptly sets the scene for the church in Lent. We are called to a grand gathering and turning/returning to God as we approach Easter. It is a holy time. A holy Lent is another sign of grace in the world. A holy Lent renews our Lord's church and refreshes the lives of the faithful. It is good for us, and good for those we touch.

At Ash Wednesday services the text from Joel will be shared. Also, normatively, a statement of purpose will be shared. Chalice Worship gives us this prescription for a statement of purpose:

*Friends in Christ, we begin today a forty-day journey toward Easter.  
We enter the Lenten season to prepare ourselves to welcome  
the risen Christ with lives renewed by the breath of his spirit.  
We assume a discipline of self-examination,  
confession, and penitence.  
We dedicate ourselves to meditate upon the scriptures  
and to converse with God in prayer.  
We seek to be more faithful disciples of Christ  
whose lives are shaped by the one  
whom we confess to be Lord and Savior of the world.  
To this end let us worship God.*

This Lent, let us worship God.

*In the confidence of your children, O God,  
we offer ourselves to you in worship.  
May your transforming love and power make us anew.*

**Thursday, Mar. 10****Read Isaiah 58.1-12**

From Rev. Scott Thayer, Bethany Memorial Church (Disciples of Christ),  
and Chaplain, Bethany College

Today's Lenten passage from Isaiah addresses the soft, vulnerable underbelly of religious life. After hearing an especially challenging sermon, a parishioner said, "That preacher's left off preachin' and gone to meddlin!" We all say something like that when the Word of God

**Holy Saturday, Apr. 23****Read Matthew 27.57-66**

From Rev. Thaddaeus B. Allen, Regional Minister

Holy Saturday is a mystery for us. We know what is coming, yet are very, very aware of that which we entered into yesterday. We are aware – very very aware – that in ways concrete and in ways not-so-concrete, we participate in crying crowds' calls against our Lord. We are not innocent bystanders in the sin that exists around us. For some this day is lonely. But this is a holy day, in which we find meaning in an honest and reflective day of reverence and devotion to Jesus.

Is it not wonderful that we receive a word from Joseph of Arimathea? He comes to the world and gives away his space, and places Jesus there instead. It is a holy example; it is grace. The participation of this one calls us perhaps to participate in like manner. Can we give away our space (by this I might suggest our stuff that claims us in not so helpful ways) and make room for Jesus in its place? Can we make a place for our Lord to dwell with us? Might we be bold enough to let this one wipe away our loneliness, and can we receive this day as our sign of devotion to the Savior?

*In the darkness of this day, O God, bring hope,  
as we make new space in our lives for him who gives life.*

**Easter Sunday, Apr. 24****Read Matthew 28.1-10**

From Rev. Dr. Sharon E. Watkins,  
General Minister and President, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

There could be no doubt. It was God who caused this resurrection. The women saw with their own eyes as the angel rolled back that stone – too heavy by far for a single man to push. The tomb was already empty. In minutes, as the women rushed to the disciples with the news, Jesus – alive! – appeared to them.

He is risen!

Easter joy is knowing that in God, life rules! Even crucifixion and death cannot stop God's intention to love the world. As the risen Christ appears in our lives, the calling is upon us to spread the word. Life wins

**Good Friday, Apr. 22****Read Psalm 22**

From Rev. William B. Allen, Regional Minister Emeritus

I've heard it said that Good Friday is the most important day of the church year. That's probably defensible, after all it is the day on which God took the dramatic/traumatic steps that save us and give us life. This life-giving act is undertaken in the context of a life taking. How strange!

The great God of creation, author of life, essence of love (after all, "God is Love!" - 1 John 4:8) for some reason, a very good one no doubt, secures our life through the death of his beloved Son.

We could, and do, reflect on this at length. Indeed, for lifetimes. And it's never easy, but it is very deep and, to some of us, very satisfying, that God loves us this much. I've known folks who were very uncomfortable with the passion of Christ, who have tried to erase it from their spirituality. I don't know how that works and I think it must leave them somewhat enfeebled for life and death and the fullness of humanity, and also the fullness of divinity. In my own reflection God has given us a great gift in the death of Jesus. Not an easy gift but a very important one. I am well-armed for the battles of life and death because of this gift.

God presents us with a great pendulum swing, from life to death, from joy to despair – and back again. And this all culminates in God's greatest gift – but we'll leave that until Sunday.

Reading Psalm 22, through and through and over and over, we get the drama of the pendulum swing – and I think we comprehend why Jesus recited it on the cross. Let's never miss the gift of Good Friday, God's Friday.

*Holy God, your wisdom is greater than our ability to comprehend  
and your love is greater than our ability to imagine.  
All we can do in the face of your mystery and power  
is to say "Thank you!" and to abide in your love.*

*And we pray through our Lord Jesus Christ who loves us to the extreme.*

comes a little too close to home, don't we? Isaiah's words are strong and they are timeless. They apply to all religious ceremony, tradition and ritual. Our practice of religion falls short of God's holy expectations whenever it does not result in loving relationships with our fellow human beings. There is always a horizontal, practical aspect to true worship. There is "a fast that God chooses," and that is a kind of religious practice that seeks not just to bring adherents to heaven, but to bring heaven down to earth. As we worship together with our neighbors and friends this Lent, may we aspire to the kind of religion that pleases God, not just ourselves.

*O God, may my religious expression lead to a closer connection  
both with you and my neighbor.*

**Friday, Mar. 11****Read Psalm 51.1-17**

From Rev. Dr. Bonnie Thurston,  
First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Wheeling

Appointed for Ash Wednesday and Good Friday liturgies, Psalm 51, the *Miserere*, frames Lent. One of seven penitential psalms (6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143—each excellent Lenten fare), it is understood as King David's prayer after his confrontation with the prophet Nathan. (2 Samuel 12) Verses 1-9 confess sin and ask for cleansing. Verses 10-17 pray for restoration of relationship, reflecting the hard truth that when relationship is broken, only the wounded party can restore it because only the wounded can forgive. Lent reminds us what the wounded God has done to restore relationship with us. The focus of our Lenten journey is Christ's cross and the empty tomb: God's restoration of the joy of our salvation.

The Psalm *is* a prayer. Pray it.

Try to hear a recording of Allegri's glorious setting of it.

**Saturday, Mar. 12****Read 2 Corinthians 5.20b--6.10**

From Rev. Joshua Patty,  
Central Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Fairmont

Paul gives a conversion sermon to people who've already become Christians. But their actions do not always match a Christian identity. How often do we worry people will use our Christian values against us,

guilting us into giving a contribution or an endorsement? How often do we worry that being a Christian will get in the way of getting the job we want, driving the car we want, dating who we want, or saying what we want when we want? In other words, how often do we hold back?

Paul seeks to convert us from being afraid of Christ to embracing Christ. Look, he says, I faced hardships and poverty, but in Christ I am alive and rich beyond measure. You can have this too, he says. Now is the time; now is the day!

*Reconcile me to you, O God.  
Help me to turn away from human pride,  
to seek the reputation of your name  
and the riches of your righteousness.*

**First Sunday in Lent, Mar. 13**

**Read Matthew 4.1-11**

From Rev. William Flewelling, Proctor, WV

Fresh from the waters of baptism – raised from the Jordan, met by the Spirit, declared to be well-pleasing to God by a heavenly voice – Jesus is then led up into the wilderness. The wilderness in the region of the Jordan, on either side, is desert: rock and dryness, a severe, even fierce landscape. Tradition has it that Jesus went into the hills west of Jericho, a land of harsh rock – sandstone – gouged by occasional bursts of water raging from higher ground, cascading to the Jordan below. Most of the time, the land is utterly dry, watered little and rarely at best. *There*, the Spirit that had come upon him as a dove led him (Mark says ‘drove him’) to be tempted by the devil.

Precisely at the time when we anticipate freshness and delight in our taste of the life of faith, Jesus is led into a severe land, there to be tempted. And the temptations are apt: stones to bread for a hungry man in a hungry world; a splash of notoriety for a man with a message to tell; the promise of great power and authority for a traveling preacher in the back waters of Palestine. In all the ways he would be working, these would gain instant attention, popular favor. The temptation is for obvious success!

We meet this text devotionally within the season of Lent, a season of intense brooding, stretching from stories of temptation and ranging

Jesus impending betrayal by Judas. We are often just as confused as the disciples, although they were closest to Jesus. We still struggle with the same questions: What is our calling? How do we follow Christ more fully? Where is the Holy Spirit leading in the midst of our own confusion and betrayal? But the new commandment comes from Christ loud and clear: love. Love as Christ loved all people. Unconditionally. Faithfully. Eternally. Passionately. Without ceasing.

*God of grace and glory,  
we give thanks for your abundant love and peace.  
As they draw us nearer to you and one another in discipleship,  
may we follow Christ’s example,  
despite our doubts, insecurities, and shortcomings.*

**Holy Thursday, Apr. 21**

**Read 1 Corinthians 11.23-26**

From Rev. David T. Chafin, Deputy Regional Minister

Today, we hear Paul repeating a corporate memory from the Church’s tradition—not a cherished sentiment that he had treasured from his past. For him, Christ’s giving of this meal to *us* on the eve of his own Passover from death to life meant that God’s people would no longer look back over their shoulders to see God’s hand at work in salvation. The often-misnamed “Last Supper” would be the first of numberless glad and glorious Eucharists, in which the Church would know Christ’s living *presence* and look *forward* to his coming in final victory.

It’s easy to get lost in our own hazy memories of our storied past, but on this holy day we can resolve to *pull ourselves together* as a community—Christ’s body alive in this world—and to make our gathering at the Table something anchored not only in what *was*, but in *what is* and *what is to be*.

*Help us, O God of our days and of eternity,  
to see you in the present and the fullness of our future  
as we receive the bread and wine from your hands.*

the cross answered fundamental issues of life and creation under the theme of redemption.

Paul makes it clear that the cross itself is a scandal to Jews and folly to Greeks. Here is something so out of place in serious and traditional thought as to be found ridiculous. Paul notes the cross marks a curse, claims Jesus (who knew no sin) became sin. He teaches that the subjection of people to other powers, other authorities – understood spiritually, most of all – are ended at the cross. And here he admits to these proud and wise Corinthian Christians that only insiders – those being saved – realize that the cross is the power of God. Everyone else finds it foolishness. And to bother speaking of a cross as do Christians is to those outside, sheer folly.

Something in this doesn't match up well. He is encountering a congregation in which he had invested a year and a half of his ministry. He knows them to be an exceptional people, a people of great spiritual experience and a divisive sort of pride. They seem to squabble among themselves and portray a real party spirit, one against another. Within his presentation there appears a sense that these people are attached to themes of wisdom, their own brand of traditional wisdom. Into this dissention he remembers the word of the cross; he knows they heard it because he preached it to them! The word of the cross breaks down the barriers our wisdom puts up; the word of the cross is the power of God – a power all our wise constructs don't get. We think the cross folly – a folly wiser than the wisest wisdom we know.

*Our God, in your wisdom folly reigns; the cross of shame is the power of freedom in heart and Spirit. Bring into our hearts the humble, guileless joy that knows your power in Christ Jesus, the Crucified.*

**Holy Wednesday, Apr. 20**

**Read John 13.21-32**

From Rev. Kevin M. Snow,  
Central Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Huntington,  
and Associate Regional Minister for Youth and Young Adults

Reading the Gospels with a careful eye reminds us that the disciples, as well intentioned as they were, frequently just didn't "get it." In chapter 13 alone, Simon Peter doesn't understand why Jesus must wash his feet or where Jesus is going, and the disciples don't comprehend

through all sorts of misunderstanding of what Jesus is about until we meet again at the cross, when everyone is dismayed that Jesus has failed them in their expectations. Our season savors our hearts – the core of our awareness – on the cutting edge of our reluctant movement from favored misapprehensions to the victory of God at Golgotha.

In starting – simply starting – we indulge ourselves in the radical, *drastic* austerity that meets success in the face of the desert and knows it as a temptation for the less than the fullness of God. We cannot realize such things without temptation, without engaging ourselves in the severity of standing on our own integrity in the breach between enthusiasm and the pure holiness of God our Savior.

*O God, as we are startled by your calling,  
grace us with the stamina of vision  
and the truth of your holiness embedded in our souls  
that we might know the bliss that sears our too-easy ways  
and lifts us in the way of Jesus.*

**Monday, Mar. 14**

**Read John 2.1-12**

From Rev. Magdalyn Sebastian  
Interim Pastor, Fairhill Manor Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

The best until last. In this pre-resurrection resurrection miracle story, Jesus turns water into the best wine of the whole party. And not just a little wine -120-180 *gallons* of wine. Through this story we learn of God's *extravagant* love and abundance, the "over the moon" joy of God's saving acts, and the joy of what is yet to come - the very best.

There was a saint of the church whose favorite hymn was "I Was There to Hear Your Borne Cry." He loved, "I'll be there as I have always been with just one more surprise." John couldn't wait to see what was going to happen. May we all anticipate with joy what God has in store for us in this life and the life beyond.

*Gracious One, may we eagerly anticipate the resurrection –  
like kids on Christmas Eve.*

**Tuesday, Mar. 15**

**Read Psalm 32**

From Rev. X. Rae Browning,  
First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Cumberland, MD

As worldly creatures, we make mistakes and sin. Don't be stubborn as a mule. Confessing our sins to God can bring peace that opens the way to progress.

Trust in Jesus Christ and his great sacrifice. God sent Jesus to pay the price for eternal absolution. Verse 10 ends by saying, "The LORD's unfailing love surrounds the one who trusts in him." Jesus' resurrection opened the gates of heaven for all to enter who believe. Put your trust in the God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and follow God's Word.

*We confess all of our sins to you, Lord.  
Your love abounds a love like no other.*

**Wednesday, Mar. 16**

**Read Romans 5.12-19**

*You, O God, are the Giver of life. Search my heart.*

[Pause to consider the ways in which God has given freely to you.]

*As I have been gifted by you, help me to grow in gratitude.*

[How has your life expressed gratitude for God's gracious gifts?]

*Teach me the value of turning away from selfish pursuits,  
and of sharing your gifts with others.*

[Consider ways in which you can enjoy the freedom from sin  
which faith brings to all believers,  
and cultivate an awareness of others  
and their hungers for freedom, so that you can share with them  
the good news of God's gracious gifts in Jesus Christ.]

*Receive this day which I offer to you in Christ Jesus. Amen.*

**Thursday, Mar. 17**

**Read Genesis 12.1-4a**

From Rev. Darrell Pierce, Clarksburg, WV

We meet this text devotionally within the season of Lent, a season of intense brooding, stretching from stories of temptation and ranging

The liberation that Jesus offered may not have been what the crowds sought. Jesus offered a spiritual freedom that would liberate his followers from the powers of fear, isolation and alienation from God and one another.

Evidently, the parade crowd wanted a different freedom. For when the shouting had stopped, the throne where Jesus rested was a cross and the crowd returned to stand with the Herods, the Mubaraks of that time.

*Hosanna to our Christ who truly sets us free!*

**Holy Monday, Apr. 18**

**Read Isaiah 42.1-9**

From Rev. William Pollack,  
First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Princeton

The words of the Prophet should be music in our ears. We are told of the coming Servant who will make the world a better place by bringing justice, light and a newness of life for the people. We should rejoice at this news as we find ourselves in the midst of a world that often reflects the opposite of God's plan. We also long for a new direction, light for the journey and seek the justice for our lives. Just let us not forget that, while we search, we are called to be the same for those who walk in darkness. This Lenten season, may we be the very things we seek to a world that is sought for by our Lord.

*O God, may we rejoice in your call to live a servant life in the world.  
As you supply us with all we need,  
may we offer the same blessings to others whom you send our way.*

**Holy Tuesday, Apr. 19**

**Read I Corinthians 1.18-31**

From Rev. William Flewelling, Proctor, WV

From the beginning, the followers of Jesus who preached the message of Jesus had the enduring problem of the cross. In modern times, we find we bother little with the cross. In the earliest time, though, the cross was THE embarrassment. It spoke of shame and curse and foolishness. Yet the fact of the matter remained: Jesus was crucified and his followers did not (even if they could) disguise that fact. They certainly wouldn't make it up: instead they set out to show that

“It is too much to bear, have mercy, bring relief.”  
Too strong for a bottle or a pill, I wait  
Too weak for darkness, I wait  
Glimpses of light and love come, I wait  
I wait and I pray  
I wait and I sing  
“I am yours, wonderfully made, your undying love.”

*Many are the voiceless cries of the happy faces.  
Help us to stand together and see your love, O God our refuge.*

**Saturday, Apr. 16**

**Read Philippians 2.5-11**

From Rev. Donald Snyder,  
First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Beckley

With the brush strokes of a master artist, Paul paints a picture of Christ for disciples not only to see, but also mimic. This Jesus, whom we know by faith, was willing to divest Himself of all that He was as God, to become all that we are (less sin)—human. Moreover, in His humanity Jesus suffered our fate death, but his was the death of rejection: the cross at Calvary. The image doesn't end in ignominy, but exaltation through resurrection and restoration to the divine place of honor. Thus, the God who became human, once again becomes God. This humble, self-sacrificing service to one another done in love is a must for a Christian disciple who would live, as a Christian disciple should.

*O God who comes to us dressed as a slave,  
teach us the way of life that is found in giving ourselves to others.*

**Palm/Passion Sunday, Apr. 17**

**Read Matthew 21.1-11**

From Rev. Darwin Collins,  
Vice President, Great Lakes Zone, Christian Church Foundation

Our familiar Palm Sunday text resonates the same unrestricted joy and excitement of the recent events in Egypt. The people have gathered in the streets to welcome a new leader. The Gospel writer certainly means for us to assume that they were anticipating a great leader who would welcome in a period of new freedoms.

through all sorts of misunderstanding of what Jesus is about until we meet again at the cross, when everyone is dismayed that Jesus has failed them in their expectations. Our season savors our hearts – the core of our awareness – on the cutting edge of our reluctant movement from favored misapprehensions to the victory of God at Golgotha.

*Almighty God, giver of every good and perfect gift,  
forgive us for using your many blessings for just us and ours.  
Please help us to use your gifts to bless them and theirs.*

**Friday, Mar. 18**

**Read Psalm 121**

From Rev. Jayne L. Chafin, Parkersburg, WV

For years I have used this Psalm in memorial services and funerals as words of comfort and hope. Living in West Virginia, this beautiful part of God's creation, I have found new strength and new comfort in them.

Watching the changing seasons in the hills that surround us is at once comforting, hopeful, and awe-inspiring. The power and the beauty of the colors: the many shades of green in the summer, the range of hues in the fall, even the blanket of white in the winter, all call my eyes to automatically look up, and see the beauty and power of God in my life.

Now spring is approaching. The crocuses are blooming in my front yard. I look forward to seeing the dogwood blooming on the hills once again. How great is our God who sets such beauty all around us. In this time of rebirth, as we move along on our journey this Lent, let us step outside, step back, and look. Look to the hills, look to our God who neither slumbers nor sleeps, see God's mighty works, and seek the reawakening of God's spirit in our lives.

*As spring breaks forth in our world, O God, break forth within my heart,  
so that I may see you in your majesty and rejoice in your presence.*

**Saturday, Mar. 19**

**Read Romans 4.1-5, 13-17**

From Rev. Aaron Watkins,  
First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Bluefield

As I was praying and studying this passage, I was struck by verse five. It is indeed a blessing these days to have employment, and those who

work should feel blessed. When we work, we do it in order to have income. Paul in this passage contrasts faith with works. For Paul, faith means that the one who exercises it receives a righteous standing from God. By faith, God helps us do jobs that are too big for us. By faith, we put our trust in Him. This Lenten season, let us be reminded that nothing is too big, too much, or too overwhelming for God to accomplish in our lives.

*You, O God, are ready to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves.  
Thank you for your gracious gift in Christ Jesus.*

### **Second Sunday in Lent, Mar. 20**

### **Read John 3.1-17**

From Pastor Kenneth Hardway,  
First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Logan

*“Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?”* Have you ever been in a conversation about the faith, and someone chided you with words like these? “You’re a Christian/Elder/Deacon/ Pastor, don’t you know these things?” It seems people expect us to have all the answers; “I don’t know” is never allowed. I wonder why?

In this season of Lent, we are called to remember our own human frailties, our ignorance to the spiritual things, which move us into a fuller understanding of our absolute dependence upon Christ. Perhaps “I don’t know” is a perfect place to begin our prayers. It’s not a defeatist conclusion; it’s a starting point in our Lenten conversation with our Rabbi, our teacher, Jesus.

*We come to you, Lord Rabbi, Teacher Christ,  
eager to learn of that which we don’t understand.*

### **Monday, Mar. 21**

### **Read Romans 1.1-15**

From Rev. William Pollack,  
First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Princeton

We are “set apart for the gospel of God”. What an immeasurably great thought. That somehow, God in His wisdom would look down and choose each of us for His work in the world. What does God see in us?

We hear verse 24, “This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it,” but do we realize how blessed we are to have such a loving God. He gave us our very being, knowing that we would sin against Him. Then he sacrificed His only son for our sins, that we may spend eternity in heaven. What a glorious God! Praise His holy name!

*God in heaven, praise be to you. We love you and give you all the glory.*

### **Thursday, Apr. 14**

### **Read Isaiah 50.4-9a**

From Rev. Richard Howard,  
First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Morgantown

Darkness comes in many forms: death, disease, disability, depression, disappointment, doubt, loss of friends, financial woes, missed opportunities, unrewarded effort. The shallowness of life can leave us wallowing in darkness, not knowing which way to turn.

As Christians, we read the words of Isaiah through the lens of Jesus Christ. As Christians, we read “teacher” and see “Jesus.” The questions expressed by Isaiah in this passage, “*Who will contend with me?*” and “*Who are my adversaries?*” are echoed in the Apostle Paul’s letter to the Romans, when in chapter eight he asks, “*Who will bring any charge against God’s elect?*” and “*Who is to condemn?*” For Paul, and for us, it is the love of God as revealed in Christ Jesus that overcomes all the darkness, even the ultimate darkness: death itself.

As we reflect on Isaiah’s words this day, may we take heart that God’s help, no matter what, will always be with us.

*Great Protector, our lives, our hopes, our dreams,  
our fears are in your hands. Accept us with your enveloping arms,  
that we may dwell with you in safety forever.*

### **Friday, Apr. 15**

### **Read Psalm 31.9-16**

From Rev. Dawna Watkins, Bluefield, WV

Broken, alone, I wait  
Hoping and fearful in dark places, I wait  
Surrounded by distrust and scorn, I wait  
I wait and I weep  
I wait and I scream

difficult and sometimes impossible. But no matter what our age, care must be taken to avoid becoming spiritually blind, deaf and infirm. Jesus saw and healed this physically blind man in order that others might see God at work.

No matter what our physical state or age, we must recognize and repent of those things which prevent God's works from being revealed in our lives. Jesus saw and healed the blind man. Jesus sees us and wants to heal us today from all that would make us spiritually blind and would thus prevent others from seeing God at work.

*God of light, touch us with your healing grace in those areas of our lives that have become blind to the things you would have us plainly see.*

**Tuesday, Apr. 12**

**Read Romans 10.1-13**

From Rev. Scott Thayer,  
Bethany Memorial Church (Disciples of Christ), Bethany,  
and Chaplain, Bethany College

In this passage, Paul tells us that our faith means both *confession* of our lips and *belief* in our hearts (Romans 10:9). These two things always go together. Neither stands alone without the other. Lip confession of Christ's Lordship without belief in the heart is shallow, superficial, even silly. But belief in the heart without confession with the lips is hidden, elitist, even cowardly. The season of Lent calls us to both confession *and* belief, both external and internal dimensions of the faith. May God's Spirit give us a holy boldness to confess Christ's Lordship to those around us. And may that same divine Spirit give us the deep faith in Christ and his claims that will be needed to sustain and authenticate our confession.

*O God, may my lips and my heart always run in tandem with your Spirit.*

**Wednesday, Apr. 13**

**Read Psalm 118.1-2, 19-29**

From Rev. Rodney Hubbs,  
First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), McMechen

These verses and the entire 118 Psalm is a reminder that God has made me what I am and I need to continually give Him the glory and praise.

How is it that God would have a need to carry on the work of His Son, Jesus, through us?

We are called and gifted through the faithfulness of the Son. If we carefully read the words of Paul, we are given encouragement for the calling. He says we are "graced", "called" and "beloved". During this season of Lent, may we become more aware of His need for us, as we are constantly reminded of our need for Him.

*Heavenly Father, may we be worthy of your confidence in us.  
Help us to encourage others, even as we are encouraged by You.*

**Tuesday, Mar. 22**

**Read Psalm 62**

From Dorothy Brownlee,  
Chapel Hill Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Wellsburg

In today's world who can you trust? The first three definitions of trust in the dictionary are: 1) a firm belief in honesty, truth, justice, 2) faith, 3) hope. These sound like a description of God and his Son, Jesus Christ. I don't listen to many news programs, I don't trust them. I stopped listening when the events of 9/11 happened. At the end of each day I tried to sit in silence and listen for God's voice. I wanted to trust that God was in control, no matter what anyone reported.

A few years later during a moment of silence and listening, I felt called to answer "yes" to the *Woman-to-Woman Worldwide* journey to Bosnia in 2007 for Disciples Women. It was there that I heard people trust God. I listened to Jewish, Orthodox and Muslim women tell of running for their lives as windows, buildings, and people shattered around them, and then heard them say "Allah be praised," "God be praised," "He is so good." God (by whatever name we call God) is our refuge in all times, in all places, to all people.

*God, lead us on this journey to a deep and abiding trust.*

**Wednesday, Mar. 23**

**Read John 5.1-18**

From Rev. Jamie Gump,  
Madison Avenue Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Huntington

Oh, to point fingers and poke fun at the ridiculous griping and complaining we see here. I mean, grumbling about healing on the

Sabbath? It'd be easiest to just judge those who are judging, and ignore any other message in this passage, like the one in Jesus' exchange with the ill man.

He asks the man, "Do you want to be made well?" Seems that should go without saying. But no! *You* have to *want* what Jesus offers. And do you? Want to be well? To be holy and righteous? To be more loving, more caring, more just, more ethical? Do you really want it? Really? Good, but that's not all. Jesus says to the man, "Take up your mat and walk."

If you want it, then you also have to do something about it. Same goes for you and me.

*We want to be made whole, O God.  
Give us the grace of wisdom to receive your healing and go.*

**Thursday, Mar. 24**

**Read Exodus 17.1-7**

From Rev. Rodney Hubbs,  
First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), McMechen

After reading these verses, I can't help but compare our lives today to the Israelites that were led out of Egypt. They couldn't see or realize the gift they had been given. This leads me to the question, "Do we appreciate the gift that we have been given?" Jesus died for our sins. This Lenten season the world reflects on His death and resurrection, however, after Easter Sunday, many fail to recollect what He did for us.

Let us remember this gift we have been given and live our lives so that, 'we know that the Lord is among us.'

*Father, thank you for your gift of your Son.*

**Friday, Mar. 25**

**Read Psalm 95**

From Rev. Dawna Watkins, Bluefield, WV

We could spend all our time voicing the wonders of God. Many books have been written! We could also spend our time remembering the Exodus story which brings about the admonishment in the second half of this Psalm. But what do those things have to say about preparing our hearts in this Lenten season for the glory of the cross and the

**Saturday, Apr. 9**

**Read Romans 8.6-11**

From Rev. Douglas Richardson,  
First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Cameron

Have you heard this expression; "If that would have been a snake, it would have bitten me!" People often lose sight of important items, then go earnestly looking for them, only later to find out they were in plain sight all the time. One of the sad items that we face in society is the total lack of relevancy people place on God. Unfortunately they are just like those whose "mind is set on the flesh." However, the good news is that there are those whose "mind is on the Spirit" and in whom the Spirit dwells. May we be messengers to help people find the one who has been in front of them all the time.

*Keep us alert, O God, to the movement of your Spirit  
in our lives, and in the lives of those around us.*

**Fifth Sunday in Lent, Apr. 10**

**Read John 11.1-45**

From Rev. Delma Parris, Lost Creek, WV

Verses 20-27 helped me to see Martha in a different light. Though Martha has received bad press from the account in Luke in which she is fussing over serving, it seems in this exchange she is personally and powerfully engaged with Jesus. It is also noteworthy to me that Martha was first to greet Jesus, while Mary "sat in the house." (vs. 20) The passage is a reminder to me not to judge a person based on an isolated incident or limited experience with them. It also reminds me that while I may get busy about my daily tasks, Jesus always challenges me to stop what I am doing and engage him personally. Only then do I really experience Him as "the resurrection and the life."

*God, you meet us where we are, in the midst of everyday life.  
Help us to see you, and to learn to see others, with your eyes.*

**Monday, Apr. 11**

**Read John 9.1-17**

From Rev. Judith Bennett,  
Island Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Wheeling

Aging is not for the faint of heart. Eyes, ears and limbs begin to weaken, and tasks once accomplished with ease and grace become

Lent is about the dry bones of our scattered illusions and the life-giving word. In Lent we do not stand before a mirror; we kneel before God. It is not *things*, but *illusions* we are invited to give up.

Lent's liturgical word with ashes is "You are dust and to dust you shall return. Repent and believe the gospel." Ponder Auden's haunting words:

We would rather be ruined than changed,  
We would rather die in our dread  
Than climb the cross of the moment  
And let our illusions die.

The question for this penitential season: "What is the word that gives life?"

*Blow across the bones of our lives, Spirit of Life,  
and stir us again.*

**Friday, Apr. 8**

**Read Psalm 130**

From Pastor Kenneth Hardway,  
First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Logan

"Why should I confess my sins, or try to count them? God forgives me...what's the point?" Yes, I've heard this before. Yes, I've said this before. Have you?

Try it. Spend 5 minutes jotting your list of sins. Be self-reflective on this. Then take 5 minutes and jot a list of communal/societal sins that we all involuntarily participate in. Think idolatrous consumerism, lack of concern for the poor, etc. My guess is your two lists will be long.

Now take 5 minutes imagining that these lists will be what define you before God. No redemption. No Christ. Just your lists and God. After 5 minutes the Psalmist's plea, "Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord" may take on powerful meaning.

*It is in the depths, O God,  
that we come to know the power of your redemption.  
It's in the waiting that we praise you for our Hope, our Redemption,  
Christ our Lord!*

second coming? What does it say to us about our Sunday morning worship? Do we praise God for all that God does, and do we listen for God's judgment? More importantly, do we hear God's love and forgiveness in the judgment? A gentle Fatherly reminder, that we can and do learn things from our ancestors.

*God, open our hearts to your wonders and help us to voice them,  
as we remember the lessons of our spiritual ancestors  
and the glory of the cross and resurrection.*

**Saturday, Mar. 26**

**Read Romans 5.1-11**

From Rev. Delma Parris, Lost Creek, WV

In our age of information overload it is easy to become indifferent to messages that crowd our brains, particularly to those that are repeated. As Christians this is no less true of our response to the gospel. We have heard that God is love, that Christ died for our sins, and other similar messages so often that it is easy to think, "Yes, I know that," and move on. For several years I have attempted to bring Christ's death and suffering alive by listening to music, reading a book and/or simply reflecting on the gospel accounts of the passion during Lent. "But God shows his love for us (me) in that, while we (I) were yet sinners, Christ died for us (me.)" How will these words come alive for you?

*Awaken me to your good news, O God,  
by whatever means I am able to receive.*

**Third Sunday in Lent, Mar. 27**

**Read John 4.5-42**

From William Flewelling, Proctor, WV

From Jacob's well a drink,  
then promised water lures –  
the living water, Jesus Christ,  
who satisfies.

Familiar are the ways  
our Jesus fills our days:  
by opening the Spirit's flow  
he satisfies.

Intensely worshipping  
in spirit and in truth,  
we come together to the Lord  
who satisfies.

By word of heart you speak.  
O Lord, expose on us  
the speaking that reveals the heart  
now satisfied.

*(6.6.8.4. Suggested tune: Amen Court)*

**Monday, Mar. 28**

**Read Psalm 77**

From Rev. Judith Bennett,  
Island Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Wheeling

*Remember when...?* This a question we hear bantered about whenever groups of family and friends celebrate together at reunions, baptisms, weddings and other joyous occasions. It's also one we hear when the same people gather to grieve the death of one of their own.

We are a remembering people. Whether we are remembering a time of joy or one of sadness, God's presence can be evidenced in them all when we have placed our hope and trust in Him. During this Lenten season as we call to mind the myriad and wonderful deeds of our Lord, may we boldly proclaim them to all those we encounter.

*God of all creation, help us to never forget the wonders of your Love.*

**Tuesday, Mar. 29**

**Read John 7.37-52**

From Rev. Dennis Sparks,  
First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Ravenswood,  
and Executive Director, WV Council of Churches

*Put your hand in the hand of the man who stilled the water;  
Put your hand in the hand of the man who calmed the sea.  
Take a look at yourself and you can look at others differently,  
By putting your hand in the hand of the man from Galilee.*

"It is I."

In the hearing, if I heard it, there was no more rowing,  
no more storm or dark or sea. In the hearing, if I heard it ...

"It is I."

*Lord we meet you in storms. We meet you in night-terrors.*

*And you greet us and say, "It is I."*

*You land us safely, and then you feed us the food that does not perish--  
the food of eternal life. Praised be your name!*

**Wednesday, Apr. 6**

**Read Romans 8.1-5**

From Rev. David Chafin, Deputy Regional Minister

I'm often perplexed by this kind of talk from Paul. What looks on the surface like a discounting of "the law," however, is not a denial of God's gift to Israel at all. It is a reminder to people like me that, no matter how much energy I may put into being good and godly, I cannot overcome my selfish ambitions by my own effort – not even my ambitions to be the good and godly guy I think I ought to be. No. Something greater is needed to distract me from focusing on myself, and to draw me toward the righteousness of faith. That "something" is life in the Spirit – a life which draws me away from my own interests and into the lives of others, even the life of the world. For me, "life in the Spirit" means engaging with life in this real world.

*Open my mind, O God, to the movement of your Spirit  
which calls me to live more fully in the world you have created.*

**Thursday, Apr. 7**

**Read Ezekiel 37.1-14**

From Rev. Dr. Victor Hunter,  
First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), New Martinsville

Ezekiel's double vision is stark.

Death. Dry bones. Hopeless. Lifeless. Disintegration.  
The prophetic Word calls forth the wind, the breath,  
the spirit. Resurrection. Life alive.

*In our sinfulness, Lord, we are blind.  
Restore our sight and teach us to see with the vision of faith.*

**Monday, Apr. 4**

**Read Psalm 89.1-18**

From Rev. Jayne L. Chafin, Parkersburg, WV

Be honest, how many of you started singing “I will sing of your love forever,” before you finished the first line of this Psalm? “With my mouth I will proclaim your faithfulness to all generations.” Singing and celebrating, so many songs and hymns run through my mind! *Great is Thy Faithfulness, I Will Sing of Your Love Forever, Pass it On, How Firm a Foundation, How Great is Our God* (sing with me!). Songs of our hearts, songs of faith, praising our Savior all the day long.

Indeed, *happy are the people who know the festal shout.* All God’s people, living a life of praise and celebration with the song of our hearts, the festal shout, the life of praise and prayer! Whether we think we can sing or not, whether or not we sing off-key, may we always sing with gusto, with lives that are lived in love and faithfulness, for that is a song that will carry us through the ages as we celebrate all that God has done for us.

*Fill my heart with song and my lips with praise, O God my Savior!*

**Tuesday, Apr. 5**

**Read John 6.16-27**

From Rev. Dr. Larry Grimes,

Community Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Beech Bottom,  
and Director of Church Relations, Bethany College

I am terrified  
my family storms around me  
lightning bolts from my tongue

It is evening, dark, and my life has been  
rowing, rowing, rowing—back ached and arched.  
Bent from the metaphorical miles of rowing, rowing . . .

I am terrified at my doing, the lightning,  
my tongue, the storm, the evening, the dark.

How did I hear it above the storm? Did I hear it?

*Every Time I look into the holy book I wanna tremble  
When I read about the part where the carpenter cleared the temple  
For the buyers and the sellers were no different fellers  
than what I profess to be,  
And it causes me shame to know I'm not the gal that I should be.*

Writing about this passage, the Anne Murray pop song of yesteryear dominates my thoughts. For in so many ways we all remain “the buyers and the sellers” and “the Pharisaic tellers.” They were all good and successful people protecting the core values passed down from generations before them.

Believing in and turning to the ancient scripture, they proclaimed that no prophet had ever come or was to come from Galilee. Only those who did not know the law supported the one who stood in the temple shouting, “Out of the believer’s heart shall flow rivers of living water,” to be a prophet. So many times the “good news” comes in reverse of what we perceive as truth and causes us shame.

*O Lord our God, may we look into the depths of our souls  
and give up those old things that keep us away  
from the gospel of living water flowing from our hearts.*

**Wednesday, Mar. 30**

**Read John 8.12-20**

From Rev. X. Rae Browning,

First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Cumberland, MD

Jesus’ testimony of the light that wipes out darkness—even when things look bleak to the human heart and eye—holds great truth. When things take place that seem to blot out all manner of life and hope, turning to Jesus as the Light gives hope to the believer. Calling on the Father to send the great Healer to minister to a loved one in need generates a revealing of the truth that Jesus never leaves us alone. Jesus with the Father stand together, loving us so much that the promise is made sure: Beyond all suffering, pain, and sorrow lies a glorious future. So trust in Jesus and call on God’s light to take away the darkness in the world.

*Father Almighty, where there is darkness let there be light --  
the light of Jesus that opens our hearts to believe and receive.*

**Thursday, Mar. 31**

**Read 1 Samuel 16.1-13**

From Rev. Aaron Watkins,  
First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Bluefield

Recently my wife bought for me a pair of nice slacks for me to wear to work during the week. They were not the high priced slacks from Gucci, Nordstrom or Louis Vuitton. I don't need high end clothes like that. I find it more important to be 'high end' on the inside. With God's help I am working on that. I know though that my heart is not clean because I am a sinner; but I am fully aware that, despite my sins, because of Jesus Christ I am forgiven, and I thank the Risen Lord for that. Among other joys, this Easter I will celebrate how perfect Jesus was before and after His death and Resurrection.

*You, O Lord, look upon the heart.  
Search my heart and reveal yourself within me,  
that I may live faithfully as your child.*

**Friday, Apr. 1**

**Read Psalm 23**

From Rev. Magdalyn Sebastian, Wheeling, WV  
Interim Pastor at Fairhill Manor Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Separated as we are by millennia from the time this Psalm was written and our own time, we really don't get all the pastoral references. We think we do. Shepherd cares for sheep and protects them. Got it. These are the comforting words said in times of trial.

Do we recognize that much of Psalm 23 talks about the shepherd disciplining his sheep? The shepherd takes the sheep through the routines of eating good food and not something else that would get them sick, of drinking by still waters since running water is frightening, and of gently being kept in line with the rod and staff. There is peace in knowing someone is taking care of us through the love of discipline—limits--guidance. We are not left bereft, in fact we are showered with abundant love.

*Good Shepherd, we rejoice that you are always guiding and prodding.  
May we respond in life-giving ways.*

**Saturday, Apr. 2**

**Read Ephesians 5.8-14**

From Rev. Richard Howard,  
First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Morgantown

Jesus said, "I AM the light of the world." When the Lord God wanted Moses to go to Pharaoh, Moses asked God's name, who responded, "Thus you shall say...'I AM has sent me to you.'" (Exodus 3:14) Through God, the great I AM, we have received the light of the world. It will be through our faithful following of the teachings and life example of Jesus that we, too, can become children of the light.

The Lenten season is a time to evaluate our lives in the light of scripture. Are we living as children of light should be living? Are we shining brightly in a darkened world or have we grown so dim that we can hardly be distinguished from non-Christians? Let's reflect on the meaning of this scripture and apply what we learn to our lives this season.

*Gracious One, help us to open ourselves to the light of your love,  
that we might share your love with others.*

**Fourth Sunday in Lent, Apr. 3**

**Read John 9.1-41**

From Rev. Joshua Patty,  
Central Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Fairmont

Most Americans pride themselves on being "in the know." We refuse to be duped by Big Brother, by evil corporations, by self-aggrandizing neighbors. This is good when it keeps us from giving our bank account information to reputed Nigerian princes or British lottery agents. But it's bad when we pretend to know things we don't know.

So it is with the Pharisees. They see Jesus redefine sin, and they condemn him. Perhaps we see the grace and humility in Jesus' healing, but they were blind to it. By insisting they saw and understood, though, they are held responsible.

We are often blind to our own faults, to our selfishness, hard-heartedness, and vengeance. If others cross us, and get their just desserts, we see and rejoice. Perhaps we know; perhaps we see; perhaps we are blind.