

Love AND Light

AND EVERYTHING IN BETWEEN



**DAILY DEVOTIONS
FOR THE 2025 LENTEN SEASON**

Written by members of
Grace United Methodist Church

Lent 2025

Please join us in these opportunities for worship, prayer, study and reflection at Grace during the 2025 season of Lent. Visit peopleofgrace.org/lent for additional information.

Ash Wednesday – March 5

Imposition of Ashes (Sanctuary): 9:00AM to 1:00PM

Ash Wednesday Intergenerational Worship: 5:00PM

With imposition of ashes; music by the Youth Choir, Children's Choir, and Joyful Ringers

Ash Wednesday Service: 7:00PM

With imposition of ashes; music by New Life Singers

Palm/Passion Sunday – April 13

Worship at 8:00AM and 11:00AM

(because of the Naperville half-marathon, there will only be two services this day)

Holy Wednesday – April 16

Holy Week Experience at 5:00PM

Maundy Thursday – April 17

Worship at 7 PM

Good Friday- April 18

Worship at 7 PM

Easter Sunday worship April 20

7:30AM* - Worship in the Sanctuary with Brass and Grace Bell Ensemble

9:30AM* - Worship in the Sanctuary with Brass, Chancel Choir and Grace Praise Team

11:00AM* - Worship in the Sanctuary with Brass, Chancel Choir and Grace Praise Team

***These times are different from our usual worship schedule.**

Ash Wednesday, March 5

Living with Intention Pastor Cindy Marino

Luke 9:51 When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem.

I put a child-proof lock on my Facebook page. I don't use Facebook often, but I was finding that when I do, I am easily hooked on the Reels. I discovered that the Facebook management tools allow you to put a limit on your viewing time. It's a bit embarrassing to be lost in that video of a donkey curled up in a farmer's lap when suddenly a notice comes on saying, "Your time is up!" Of course, it then gives you the option of watching for 15 more minutes. You still have to be intentional in clicking it off!

Living with intention means paying attention to how we use our time. I am so easily distracted! Most of the work we do as pastors is work that happens 'along the way,' situations that arise throughout the day that need attention. And as much as that can feel haphazard and unproductive, it's the way God plans for it to be. Much of the work requires simply that we are available, but we still must maintain our overall intentions to finish the work before us.

This Luke passage is key to understanding all that comes after it in Luke's account of the Good News. Jesus is one who lives with intention and it shows up here in a major way. Luke describes here how Jesus "turns His face toward Jerusalem." Everything that Jesus does from here on takes Him to the cross and He is determined to get there. The work that He does along the way is the important work of including others in His saving grace.

How can we be more intentional in including others in the love that God is in Father, Son and Holy Spirit? What is God's intention for you in this season of Lent? What do you need to do differently in order to recognize God's intentions and be more intentional in your own life?

God of all beginnings, as I enter into this new season, give me the wisdom and the courage to begin again. If there are things you need me to learn in these next six weeks, make them clear. If there are things you need me to do in these next six weeks, give me the courage. If there is truth I need to uncover, show me how. Let your intentions guide my actions. Amen.

Thursday, March 6

Martha and Mary
Jacalyn Green Tschirhart

Luke 10:38-42 ... Martha welcomed him into her home. She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what he was saying. But Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so, she came to him and asked, 'Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me.' But the Lord answered her, 'Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her.

Have you ever watched a movie several times over the span of many years? I saw the movie "Parenthood" in the early 1990's. As a parent of young children, I identified with the parents in the movie, and their struggles with sick kids, misbehavior, weariness, and uncertainty as to whether they were doing the right things. We recently watched the movie again, and I realized that now I was closer in age to the grand-parents! And my reception of the movie had changed somewhat with the wisdom of the intervening years.

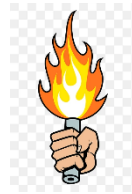
Likewise, I have changed in my thoughts of Martha and Mary. As a child, and even as a teen, during family holidays I was allowed to visit with family and was not asked to help in the kitchen...basically, I was Mary. In 1997, I inherited the role of hostess of family holiday dinners. Holiday dinners require much juggling in the kitchen as our menu typically includes turkey and all of the traditional sides: stuffing, mashed potatoes, gravy, rolls, Jello salad, green bean casserole, dessert... it's a lot of work! Now, as I identify with Martha in this story, I find myself full of sympathy for her, and I wonder why Jesus didn't share my sympathy. He could have said "Hey guys, let's stand in the kitchen so Martha can be part of our conversation, too!" And better yet, "Martha, how can we help?"

Dear Lord, thank you for the Marthas of this world, who do the shopping, cooking, and prepare the table for us! Likewise, help us to realize that by sharing the work among many—both women and men---we can enable the "Martha's" to have time for Your Word as well. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Friday March 7

This Little Light of Mine

Ginnie Battle



Matthew 5:14-16 (The Message Bible) You are here to be light, bringing out the God colors in the world. If I make you light bearers, you don't think I'm going to hide you under a bucket, do you? I'm putting you on a light stand and now that you are there for all to see (on the hilltop), SHINE! By opening up to others you'll prompt others to open themselves to God, our generous Father in Heaven!

While we celebrate the light of our past, it is not enough. We celebrate with the same exuberance the light of our present and future. Will you carry the torch and be a shining light to lead the way for others in the future? Are you willing to share your talents, lighting the path for others? As for me, this little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine!

Heavenly father, we ask your blessing on each of us today. As we pray, we both reflect and celebrate Grace United Methodist Church in our present and what our future may bring. No, we aren't afraid to let our Christian light shine! With your guidance, let us continue to go forth and shine. We pray that you bless us so that our words and actions continue to light the way for others, and by shining, we teach and show others the way. We pass the torch of Christ Jesus our Lord, so that others will continue to light the way for future generations. We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

Saturday, March 8

Ruth and Naomi

Linda Prozialeck

Ruth 1:16: But Ruth said, “Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God.”

As a participant in the Grace United Methodist Church Bible challenge last year, there were many verses that resonated with me. However, my favorite verse that expresses love and devotion was found in the book of Ruth. After Naomi lost her husband and sons, she faced immense grief and uncertainty about the future. Ruth, her daughter-in-law, made the courageous decision to stand by Naomi’s side, refusing to abandon her in her time of need. Naomi embodies the role of a loving and caring mother-in-law. Despite her own trials and tribulations, she nurtures a deep affection for Ruth, treating her not as a foreign daughter-in-law but as her own flesh and blood.

So often we hear about difficult interactions between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law. A frequent stereotype is that a mother-in-law is typically meddling and difficult, resulting in a strained relationship with her daughter-in-law. I have been fortunate enough to have a mother-in-law that has always treated me like one of her daughters. She stayed with me after the birth of both of my children and has always been kind and shown her love for me. Over the years I have been able to return her love, visiting and helping when I could, though we now live across the country from each other.

Now that I am a mother-in-law, hopefully I can show that same love and support to my daughter-in-law that was shown to me. My inspiration and aspiration are to emulate the love and devotion of Ruth and Naomi.

Sunday, March 9
The Meaning of Lent
Pastor Mark Himel

Luke 4:1-2 Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry.

Ash Wednesday is when we enter the Lenten season. In our United Methodist Church from this day to the joyous feast of Easter is a 40-day period. This time-period is set aside for us to worship, reflect on Jesus' temptation in the desert, and experience spiritual cleansing, through fasting, prayer, and repentance. The 40-day period is called Lent after an old English word meaning lengthen. This is because it occurs in the time of the year when the days start to get longer, as we approach Summer.

While Lent is considered a 40-day period, Sundays are not included in the count. Since Sundays are not fasting days, each Sunday is like a mini-Easter. Sundays during Lent are set aside as very special days both to anticipate the Resurrection of Christ, and to celebrate the Resurrection. We balance our emotions to temper the reverent spirit of Lent, with the joyful anticipation of the Resurrection of Christ.

Below is a quote by Bryan Tenor, from "Engaging Your Community Through Lent." "Congregations often ... become satisfied with maintaining the comfort of those who are already here and lose sight of the mission that we are called, ... the mission to go and make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. The season of Lent leading up to Easter is a season of preparation, readying ourselves for the celebration of Resurrection. It is also a time to focus on growing as disciples and extending ourselves outward into our neighborhoods and engaging the community around us in a way that builds meaningful relationships."

Gracious and loving God, help us to reflect on Jesus' temptations in the desert, through fasting, prayer and repentance. Guide me into our community to build relationships with others, so that all can know and experience the good news of Jesus Christ, in knowing that He Is Risen. Amen.

Monday, March 10

Morning Prayer

Sandy Bray

Isaiah 2:5 “Come, O House of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the Lord.”

Praise to you, Lord, my shining star
For life, health and all blessings so far
In Your light, let me always stay,
Guide me through each night and day.
When trials come and sorrows near,
Wipe away each fallen tear.
Renew my spirit, calm my mind,
In Your grace, true peace I find.
As I tread life's winding way
Keep me on Your path, I pray.
Your steadfast hand, my firm embrace,
The anchor that will hold in place.

Tuesday, March 11

Being the Light

Jean Ives

I open my email inbox and read, “The U.S. will remake the Gaza strip into the Riviera of the Middle East and order the Palestinians to leave,” followed by “RESERVE NOW for a special Valentine’s dinner at Meson Sabika.” Then, there follows a grounding message from Pastor Eric from Corinthians about love, patience, and kindness. Panic and consumerism followed by the calm assurance that we each hold the power to make choices that can change the world, one person at a time.

We are in the midst of turmoil that, if we let it, can instill fear and anger. As people of the light, we have the tools and the influence to be forces for good rather than for evil. Two forces for good, Martin Luther King, Jr. and Gandhi, provided solid guidance here. Both spoke to the power of individual choices.

Martin Luther King, Jr., in recounting the story of the Good Samaritan, said the religious leaders who passed by the injured man might have been asking themselves, “What will happen to me if I stop to help this man?” But the good Samaritan asked, instead, “If I do not stop to help this man, what will happen to him?” (“The Message of Jesus” by Adam Hamilton)

And Eknath Easwaran writes in “The Blue Mountain Journal: Strength and Courage in Turbulent Times,” (Fall, 2024), “One of [Gandhi’s] most revolutionary contributions is that evil has no lasting reality. What is real is the underlying unity we call God, because it cannot be erased, cannot be altered, cannot be taken away. Here is the practical application: evil is real only insofar as we support it. If you stand in front of the sun, don’t you cast a shadow? We don’t have to look to presidents or prime ministers or experts in any sphere. We look to ourselves. If, in my own life, I can withdraw support from everything that violates the unity of life, I have reduced evil by one measure.”

In every choice we make, we have the power to allow the sun to shine through. Choose good, and then rest easy, leaving the outcome to God.

Wednesday, March 12

Remembering my Father's Love

Vera McDonald



My father lives on the moon. Well, not actually, but looking at the moon is when I think of him most. My father grew up in Shanghai, China during Japanese military occupation, and at twenty years old, following the harrowing years of WWII, he fled the Chinese Civil War and escaped to America in 1947. Here he studied and taught electrical engineering at Purdue University, and in the 1960's was deeply involved in the Surveyor space program, precursor to the Apollo missions.

Surveyor I and its namesake successors are still visible on the moon today, silently standing like little monuments. That is why, since losing my father in 2015, I think of him when I look at the moon. God blessed me beyond words in giving me the father I had. He was a man of the most steadfast love and commitment, and I miss him terribly. He endured so much to hold our family together amidst troubling and complicated circumstances, and like the moon, he was a light to me when things got dark. The moon reminds me that his love lives in me always.

If the sun is like God's glory shining so bright I cannot even look directly at it, then the moon is like God's love keeping watch over me in a form I can gaze at and contemplate. Sometimes the moon is hugely magnified and appears so big and close that, in awestruck wonder, I feel like I can just reach up and touch it. The moon is brightest when the sky is at its darkest and when the nights are at their coldest. The moon moves with planet Earth such that the same face that has looked upon us from the beginning never turns away. It may seem to slip into shadow and even disappear. But I know it remains in the sky in its entirety - its face still turned toward me - whether I can see it fully with my eyes or not.

Thursday, March 13

My favorite “illuminator”

Jacalyn Green Tschirhart

Exodus 20:12 Honor your father and your mother...

Hebrews 13:1-2 Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters. Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.

I am reading David Brooks' book “How to Know a Person: the Art of Seeing Others and Being Deeply Seen,” as part of a church book study. This book is intended to combat the breakdown of social fabric we have observed in recent years with the substitution of digital and online interactions for in-person relationships. David describes two ends of a spectrum: diminishers and illuminators. Diminishers are people who express little interest in others: if you spend an hour with a diminisher, you will likely walk away knowing a lot about them, but they will know nothing about you. Illuminators, in contrast, express great interest in other people. They lean forward, maintain eye contact, look interested, ask questions, and listen carefully. As I contemplated these communication styles, I thought of my mother.

Blaire Green was a natural “illuminator.” She lived in the finger lakes region of New York, for most of her life. She flew to visit us 5-8 times a year, sharing major holidays and attending landmark celebrations. Invariably, when I picked her up from the airport after her 2 1/2-hour flight she would regale me with a comprehensive review of the life of the hapless person sitting next to her (who hopefully did not want to nap). She was very curious about people, and often asked questions that some would consider nosy or prying. She had many friends.

My mother passed away last May, after a long decline in both physical health and her cognition. I am comforted by the fact that she lives on in me and my children, to whom she was very close.

Dear Lord, help me to be a better “illuminator,” a good listener--open, friendly and accepting---developing relationships that mirror Jesus' love of others, and creating bridges among those with differences of opinion. Amen.

Friday, March 14*

Light of the World

Bob Tschirhart

John 8:12 When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.

Light in our physical world has a remarkable characteristic: all observers of a light source measure the same speed of light, no matter if the observer is moving toward or away from the source! You can never outrun a beam of light. This amazing property of light is a foundation of the theory of relativity formulated by Einstein more than a century ago which is the basis of modern physics today where space and time are entangled by relativity. The joy and mystery of relativity drew me into science as a teenager and I am grateful to God for a career in science where I had the privilege to think about relativity and light in our physical world every day.

Jesus is the light of our spiritual world (John 8:12, Luke 2:32 and Matthew 5:14). Much like light in our physical world, Jesus is always with us even if we are moving toward or away from him. Try as we might, we cannot outrun Jesus. Jesus will never give up on us - even at our lowest when we want to give up on him. In Luke 11:33-36 Jesus calls us to be full of light and reflect his light and grace (NIV):

"No one lights a lamp and puts it in a place where it will be hidden, or under a bowl. Instead, they put it on its stand, so that those who come in may see the light. Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eyes are healthy, your whole body also is full of light. But when they are unhealthy, your body also is full of darkness. See to it, then, that the light within you is not darkness. Therefore, if your whole body is full of light, and no part of it dark, it will be just as full of light as when a lamp shines its light on you."

Heavenly father, thank you for the beauty and mystery of light in our universe. Your son Jesus Christ is the light of our world and I accept the challenge and joy of reflecting Christ's hope and love in our world. Amen.

*Einstein was born on March 14, 1879; also, 3/14 is "pi" day.

Saturday, March 15

Loving the Lord and Loving your Neighbor

Bill Fronk

Mathew 22: 37-40. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind; this is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.

When I was growing up in Two Rivers, Wisconsin, a relatively small town, love was not a topic that garnered much attention. Hugging, even within the family, was seldom done. My German, Bohemian ancestry was short on emotions and long on hard work. In fact, showing your emotions was considered a weakness. Love seemed to be conditional. If you did the right things, you felt that everything was alright. If you didn't, you felt you were on the outside.

We had Catechism in the Catholic school I attended through 8th grade, but didn't have Sunday School or Bible Study. The sermons on Sunday always were based on a Bible verse. So, my knowledge of the Bible and its message was one focused on ensuring you didn't do the wrong things.

When I started going to the Methodist church and joining Sunday School classes and Bible Studies, a whole new world opened up. I learned that God loved me, "because the Bible told me so." In our family, Linda and I made it a point to never have love be a "Question Mark". We clearly showed our affection, caring and love for each family member. In the verse above, we learned what Christ said was the greatest commandment. How wonderful and comforting that is! God loves you and He loved you first. With that assurance, you can live a life without the fear of love being conditional. Just think of the amazing feeling (emotion) when you hear the words "I love you."

Think of the wonderful impact it has when you let the other person know you love them unconditionally!

Lord, thank you for your unconditional love. Help me to seek the best in other people and let them know I love them by my words and actions. Amen.

Sunday, March 16

Jesus Visits Martha and Mary

Doug Bowden, retired Pastor

Luke 10:38-39 (Jesus) entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home. She had a sister named Mary, who sat the Lord's feet and listened to what He was saying.

Our Lenten Devotional Theme of “Love and Light and Everything In Between” helps us find new insight and transformative understanding in this always challenging story of Jesus visiting Mary and Martha in their Bethany home. So, thinking we have the story all figured out, we find new wisdom in Lent 2025. First, “love” we find between Jesus, Martha, and Mary. Indeed, Jesus, Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, their brother, were “extended family” in the modern use and meaning of these two words. Jesus found a safe, secure, refreshing place in their Bethany home near Jerusalem. Often, in his three years of ministry, Jesus needed the love, care, welcome, and hospitality of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus. Thankfully, we have this single story in Luke 10:38-42, which we connect to the Gospel of John, Chapter 11, where, as we remember, Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead and comforts both Mary and Martha in individual healing ways. Secondly, we find “Light” through wrestling anew with all that happens in this story. Martha and Mary are important to Luke, in the words of Matthew L. Skinner, “for their evident devotion to Jesus, seen in Martha’s hospitality, Mary’s interest in his teaching, and Martha’s calling him Lord.’ So, ‘Light’ is in both Martha’s hospitality and her profession of faith in Jesus, calling him “Lord.” So, too, “Light” is richly present in Mary, overcoming cultural expectation, sitting at the feet of Jesus, and learning from him. Third, “Everything in Between” lifts up and forward in very new liberating ways. Yes, we are now free of the older traditional division of praise for Mary, sitting and learning at Jesus’s feet and of criticism of Martha for the frustration she feels and expresses. Now, we affirm and praise Martha and Mary both. This is new truth for us. Jesus calling us to be both listeners and servers, like our beloved Bob Schmitt.

Oh God, inspired in new ways, let us be both listeners and servers, as Jesus’ disciples. Amen.

Monday, March 17

We Are All Children of God

John and Linda Bodine

Galatians 3:26-28: So, in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

We are all children of God: we sometimes lose sight of this truth when fears, egos, obsessions, or rivalries pit us against one another. Man or woman, young or old, or different cultures, ethnicities, or skin color do not diminish nor privilege one over another. In the eyes of God, we are all his people.

We are sometimes blessed to find ourselves in a community that values differences of mindset, experience, and culture. To the extent we each offer unique perspectives, we enrich our communal experience and heighten our ability to draw on all of the talents, creativity, and capability of those around us. If we denigrate or maltreat others because of different appearances, thought processes, culture, or experience, we impoverish ourselves and lose the opportunity to leverage our full capacity as a community.

Our purpose and continual focus must be to embrace and value the full spectrum of human attributes that make up our community of children of God.

Lord, we ask for your guidance in pushing aside fears and jealousies between people that get in the way of the full enrichment of our community, using all of the talents, skills, experience, and perspectives that diverse people can bring to bear. Amen.

Tuesday, March 18

Mercy and Love

LeeShelle Short

Luke 6:36 Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

This verse reminds me of the profound call to love—not just those who love us, but also our neighbors, our enemies, and even those who harbor ill will toward us. God, in His infinite wisdom and grace, understands every mistake we have made and will ever make. Yet, He continues to extend His mercy and love to us. In the same way, we are called to reflect His character by showing kindness, even to those who have wronged us.

I experienced this lesson firsthand when I became a leader at work. The transition was not easy, as I had to extend kindness and patience to individuals who had not always treated me well. At first, it was a struggle, but I committed myself to prayer each day, asking God for the strength to love those who opposed me. One way I chose to embody this love was through small acts of kindness. I would prepare crockpot meals for everyone in the office, inviting even those who had been unkind to me to share in the meal. These simple gestures helped break down barriers, fostering a spirit of unity and understanding. Over time, I saw how love and mercy could soften even the hardest of hearts.

Dear Lord,

Thank You for Your unending grace and mercy. Thank You for showing me that when others do wrong, I can rise above and respond with kindness and love. Help me to follow Your example, to love my enemies, and to extend compassion even when it is difficult. Lead me, guide me, and direct my steps so that my actions reflect Your divine will. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Wednesday, March 19

My Guardian Angel

Ruthann Johnson

Psalm 91: 11 For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.

I heard God speak to me in a clear voice in 2012 as if He was right beside me. We were staying at our daughter and son-in-law's new home in Iowa. I walked down very tall basement stairs in search of red paper and ribbon to decorate for Valentine Day. As reached the bottom, I noticed 3 gallons of paint to the left of the bottom step. I had a thought to move the paint to a less visible space, when an unfamiliar voice clearly said, "Do not move those cans." No one was in the basement, and I was startled, but I didn't touch the cans.

As I returned upstairs, I did not notice the lack of hand rails on the staircase. Later, I returned to the basement, but this time I tripped at the top where the stairs made a right turn. There was nothing to catch me, and I went head first over the side of the stairs toward the cement floor beneath. I landed squarely on top of one of those plastic cans, with my head and neck perfectly positioned to prevent injury. The half full plastic can had cushioned my head and neck and my hair was full of paint.

I called for help, but no one could hear me, so I carefully examined myself, stood up and walked up the stairs. I was taken to the hospital where my son-in-law, a physician, made sure I was examined and x-rayed, and he returned home with me for observation.

The waiting room was abuzz with questions on how I would get the paint out of my hair.

My gratefulness and prayers of being unharmed continue to be overwhelming.

Heavenly Father, Thank you for your love, guidance, and protection every day. Help me to continue to listen, to hear and to respond to Your voice. Amen

Thursday, March 20

The Hands of Jesus

Leslie Stevens

Luke 5:17–20 ... the Lord’s healing power was strongly with Jesus. Some men came carrying a paralyzed man on a sleeping mat. They tried to take him inside to Jesus, but they couldn’t reach him because of the crowd. So, they went up to the roof and took off some tiles. Then they lowered the sick man on his mat down into the crowd, right in front of Jesus. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the man, “Young man, your sins are forgiven.”

In a recent playoff game between the Buffalo Bills and the Baltimore Ravens, Baltimore tight end Mark Andrews ended up dropping a two-point conversion that would have tied the game in the final quarter. Consequently, the Bills won by 2 points. Andrews looked crushed. While many Raven fans were relentlessly critical of Andrews, however, the Bills fans started a GoFundMe campaign to raise money for Andrews’ charity for juveniles with diabetes. The goal was \$5000. So far, they have raised more than \$120,000! Andrews wrote, “Even when the moment seems darkest, perspective can reveal that there’s still a lot of light in this world...”

In Luke, some men know Jesus can heal their friend if they can only get their friend to Him. They spared no effort to achieve their goal. Jesus saw their faith and healed their friend. I can only imagine what they felt at that moment in time!

In times of distress, I have had friends make sure that I was cared for and kept me near Jesus until they knew I was okay. Sometimes, it was the unexpected person, the last person I would think would be there for me --- or even a stranger---who helped me. They were willing to be the hands and feet of Jesus and I will be grateful that they made sure that I knew I was not alone. They made sure I knew “there’s still a lot of light in this world”.

Loving One, please help me to be present to those around me that need to know “there’s still a lot of light in this world.” Let me be willing to be your hands and feet where needed. And let me be willing to accept help when needed. Amen.

Friday, *March 21
Reflections on Light
Ruth Allison

John 8:12 I am the light of the world.

In the early days of the Covid pandemic, when vaccines did not exist and many public venues were closed, Bob and I moved to our summer cottage in Castle Park. This is a community just off of Lake Michigan. We enjoyed waiting for the sun to set as the cottage owners came out of their cottages and headed up to the dunes where the sunsets put on quite a show. The light would accent a cottage and the results were phenomenal. One night the clouds were reddish and the glow was felt as we all came together to witness God's show for us.

For months, there was nothing to do as we began to wonder if the pandemic would ever end. There was a book being written telling the Castle Park story. Waiting until the light was just right, I would head out every evening to catch each of the 110 cottages shining brightly. At the end of the pandemic, the beautiful book was finished. I was thrilled to see my photos enjoyed by guests and owners alike, who would light up as they read the stories of each cottage.

Th Morton Arboretum Photography club offered classes via the internet. Light for making outstanding photographs was being emphasized. You can take a picture of a tree with no light shining on it. It is an OK photo. Then, the light from the sun comes out and that same tree looks amazing. Just like us, when we let our light shine, we can be amazing...just like God!

**On this date in 2020, Illinois officially instituted a stay-at-home order in response to the pandemic.*

Saturday, March 22

God's Love is our Light

Barbara Hoch

Who would have ever thought that reading the whole Bible in one year would have been such an amazing experience! I certainly didn't! Even though I had been in bible studies for many years, I knew there were lot of parts that I had never even looked at before. I knew it would be a big commitment, but I also felt it would be a rewarding adventure.

My first surprise was how many friends were willing to take on that task with me. I realized there were many others who wanted to find a new way of looking at the Bible stories. This we accomplished by joining small groups to discuss what we had read that week. The leaders of these small groups, Pastor Eric and Sandy Bray, gave us background information which shed new light on biblical situations and people. Their guidance made us feel like we knew the people better.

These groups of fellow readers reminded me of a big family reunion where we all meet to hear about the news of what was happening in our lives. This helped me because I felt like I was living through those times with them in the Bible. I felt more involved in their lives. It gave me a more connected feeling with how God's perfect plan for us was played out then. Such as when the people walked with God versus when they tried to do things their way instead. I could see how God was always there encouraging all mankind with His love. I could see He gave us Jesus to be our light, and how we should be like Jesus. He taught us to pray and to serve others and to always be grateful for all that God has given us.

Heavenly Father, we know your will for us is to trust You in all circumstances, and let the Holy Spirit help us share your love with others and encourage us to be a shining light in the world for You. Amen.

Sunday, March 23

Jesus's Parable of Judgment and Mercy

Doug Bowden (Retired pastor)

Luke 13:8-9 (The gardener) replied, Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around and put manure on it. If it bears fruit next year, well and good, but if not, you can cut it down.

Where do we find our Lenten Devotional theme of "Love and Light and Everything in Between" in the parable Jesus tells here to a seeking group of people, as he himself is travelling to Jerusalem, where the cross awaits him? First, in Episcopal Bishop Michael Curry's insight "Clearly Jesus is here responding to a pastoral human ache." Indeed, Jesus is speaking directly to their beliefs on tragic human suffering, which they have just witnessed in Galilee, not just once, but twice. Jesus tells this Parable then and for now. Leslie J. Hoppe, my seminary classmate, says this is Jesus's Parable of the Fruitless Fig Tree. Beyond the space of this Lenten Devotional, Genesis, Deuteronomy, 1 Kings, Micah and Isaiah, in the Hebrew Bible, all speak and write of the Fig Tree. All listeners, especially Jews in Galilee, knew well the Fig Tree, as both essential in their agricultural economy and as metaphor for their history of life in the vineyard.

The crisis is clear. The moment of truth has come. Every listener would have known that three years was enough time for the fig tree to produce fruit. So, facing the order to "cut it down," the gardener is the hero for our more sensitive eyes. Indeed, dare to believe, that God is like the gardener in calling for mercy, for one more year to be given, for hard work to be done, to replenish the soil. Pondering this story, we do find "Love and Light and Everything in Between." God's judgment is tempered by divine mercy.' (David Defenbaugh). Mercy given to us by God as gift and blessing, moving us to do all we can to bear fruit in acts of agape love for our sisters and brothers in need among us: "Everything in Between," practicing the mercy of God, disciples of Jesus. Thanks be to God!

Oh God, may many fruits come, in the mercy we give to others, as Jesus's Disciples. Amen.

Monday, March 24

Loving Like Jesus

Elaine Pauls

Luke 6:27 But I say to you who are willing to hear; love your enemies. Do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you. Pray for those who mistreat you.

We have just read the Bible all the way through. It feels so good, but I can't quote scripture like some of my friends do, and of course I don't remember it all, but I learned much about the people God chose to build his kingdom on earth.

They are ordinary folks of their time, striving to make a good life for their families and doing their best. But they mess up a lot, too. Many are selfish or arrogant; many do things that would not be considered very friendly or God-like. But we learn that God is always by their side and is a forgiving God, when they have it in their hearts to do better, to turn their lives around and live differently. Sometimes it is hard to know what is in the hearts of those around us. We often assume the worst (often assume wrongly), but God knows. We as a people are slow learners. We needed someone to show us the way more clearly. God came on earth to show us. He came as an infant, helpless and dependent on others. He felt sorrow, thirst, hunger, pain, and love. He was our example of how to live. Do we understand it all? Do we know what it means to love even our enemies?

After studying the Bible, the next step is to live according to God's plan, caring for one another and building the Kingdom of God here on earth. We achieve this by praying and following the nudging of the Holy Spirit. If we regularly pray and read scripture, and rely on the Holy Spirit's guidance then it will become a natural way to live each day to share with Jesus our thoughts and concerns.

What a friend we have in Jesus! I love that hymn. It reminds me that Jesus as a friend is always with me and ready to listen to whatever I have to tell him, as well as respond to what I have said, so I listen.

Lord God: I come with open heart and mind this day. Help me to be the person that will listen, care, and be without judgment. Help me to do your will this day in my little corner of the world. I pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Tuesday, March 25

Striving to be Better

A Christian Pilgrim

The date is 640 BCE. You are eight years old and have just become the King of Judah. The two previous rulers, your father and grand-father, were 'evil.' You however wish to be a 'good' king but unbeknownst to you they have done all they can to hide the 'Law' as it has been passed down. This has allowed them to prosper and the people to live happily in sin. During your eighteenth year of rule, you send your high priest to oversee the reconstruction of the temple. While there, he discovers a surviving copy of the Book of Law. Upon reading it, you rend your clothes at learning how far you and your people have fallen from God's Law. You then spend the rest of your life instituting reforms to return to the Law.

This is the story of King Josiah which is told in 2 Kings 22-23. Far be it from me to compare myself to Josiah, but I do feel there is a real parallel. Perhaps you will too. I was raised a Methodist, I go to church, I pray, I keep the ten commandments, most of them, most of the time. I'm good, right?

A faith that isn't growing is no faith. The road to salvation has pitfalls, dead ends and temptations all there to keep your faith from growing and thereby stopping or even causing you to backslide on your path.

I recently discovered Bible Study. It's working for me and has changed my life. Fortunately, at Grace Church there are classes and groups whose sole purpose is to help us increase our faith. We also have a lovely library loaded with reference materials if we don't have our own or don't know which ones to get/use. Most importantly we have people! People who want to help you grow in Christ; four full-time clergy, retired clergy, our Sunday School teachers and that guy who sits next to you in the pew each Sunday who has found what works for him and would love to talk with you about it.

Now, imagine yourself in the place of Josiah----because we really are. What reforms are you willing to make to get back on the path to salvation? It's easy to remain complacent. I know. I had been doing it for decades. The challenge is to take that first step onto that never ending upward path. Lent is a great time to start!

Wednesday, March 26
Be A Light In The Darkness
Linda Fronk

In his book, THE MESSAGE OF JESUS, Adam Hamilton cites a story about Robert Louis Stevenson. Raised in Glasgow, Scotland, every night as a young boy he would sit at the window and watch as the lamplighter come by lighting the street lamps. One night his father asked him what he was watching and Robert replied, "I'm watching that man punch holes in the darkness."

In Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, He calls us to be "light and salt" to the world. Light illuminates and salt gives taste and preserves goodness. As Christians we are called to be the light, to bring Christ's message of love to the world not just by words but by loving the world as He did. How bright would the city of Glasgow be if all of the lamp lighters sat in classrooms learning how to light the lamps, and studying the different routes they were to take through the city, and negotiating the pay they would receive? All these things were important, but it wasn't until they began making their rounds...until the spark lit the gas that the darkness was extinguished.

As a kid my parents had a cottage on a lake in Michigan. At night looking across that broad lake lights were clearly visible on the other side. These were not spotlights but ordinary household lights. I often hear comments from older congregants that "they have put in their time." Now, it's off to play golf or tend to some other hobby to relax and leave the work behind. As an older person myself I understand that we transition in our roles in the Church. However, we never "retire" from what we are called to do by Christ...to be love, light and salt to the world. That continues until our last breath.

In Kansas City I had a dear friend who was 23 years older than I. One day while we were having lunch she asked me, "Why do you want to be friends with me when I am so much older?" I gave her a big smile and replied, "Hazel, when I grow up, I want to be just like you!" Hazel died at 94 and I had the privilege of being her Stephen Minister the last 4 years of her life. I learned many things from her but the most significant was how to die.



Heavenly Father, may we illuminate your world by punching holes in the darkness with your love throughout our lives. Amen

(picture from Linda Fronk)

Thursday, March 27

Love isn't always easy

Phyllis Pepiot

Luke 6:27 But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you.

Luke 10:27 ...Love your neighbor as yourself.

Two love verses which are difficult for me to practice are “love your enemies” (Matthew 5:44 & Luke 6:27), and “love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 19:19, Mark 12:31 and Luke 10:27). I figure if something is repeated in multiple gospels it must be pretty important!

One thing I've been trying to do is be kind and listen to folks with differing political views (enemies?). It is important to share your views, but it is also important to listen to opposing views. The all-church book read – How to Know a Person by David Brooks– speaks to the idea of listening. Many situations in this world are complicated and can't be solved easily. So many unplanned consequences can result. I keep coming back to the “love your neighbor as yourself.” I try to ask myself “Is the reason I am for something is because how it will affect me?” or should I be thinking of how it will affect others? Maybe I should rethink my priorities.

I've been considering my upbringing. We were not rich materially. My father was a school teacher; my mother was a homemaker. Our basic needs were met. We were a family of seven. We were taught to tithe what we earned, to live frugally and not live beyond our means.

Early on I was taught in the Mission Band (EUB) to think of others in the missions of the church. Each month the children met for their own mission church service including hymns, inspiring mission story and offering for others. This may have been an early seed planted in me to ignite my passion for United Women in Faith whose vision is “Turning faith, hope and love into action on behalf of women, children and youth around the world.” One of those ways is implementing the Charter for Racial Justice which was proposed by the women's organization and implemented by the entire United Methodist Church. I am proud to serve (from afar) on the Racial Justice Committee of Grace Church supporting and encouraging their work in so many concrete ways. I hope you will consider joining their efforts. They meet monthly on Zoom.

Contact Jaci Tschirhart, president of United Women in Faith, to learn more about United Women in Faith at Grace.

Friday, March 28

Treasure in Heaven

Teri Heyson

Matthew 6: 19-21 Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

This past year I made many trips to Ohio not only to visit my 92-year-old dad and 89-year-old mom but also to go through the many, many possessions they had accumulated over their lifetimes. During the prior year, they had moved from their spacious condo into a much smaller 2-bedroom apartment in a senior living facility and therefore needed to get rid of a lot of 'stuff!' This process turned out to be a lot more painful for my mom than I would have guessed. Much of this was probably due to growing up in the Depression of the 1930s and early 40s. Both my parents scrimped and saved their whole lives, especially when we kids were growing up. Any possessions they acquired/purchased were hard-earned and treated with the utmost care. So, when it came time to reduce their inventory of stuff, it was like pulling teeth for my mom – very painful, emotional and slow! We got through it all but not without a lot of biting my tongue and unfortunately some conflicts.

Dear Lord, we are very thankful for your blessing us with all our physical needs each day. However, help us to understand what is truly important in our lives: love for you and love for others. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Saturday, March 29

A Lenten Prayer

Ginnie Battle

Dear Heavenly Father,

We are grateful for this Lenten Season and the chance to join in worship here at Grace Church. We look forward to all the days of Lent as we remember the triumphs and immense sufferings of Jesus. When we have lost loved ones and we feel hopeless and alone, we know God is with us to bring us comfort. He never deserts us.

Help us show tolerance and understanding to those who do not look or do not think as we do. As Jesus did, as the prophets did and as we here at Grace strive to do, may we make the world a better place each day just by being in it and doing your work.

We thank you, Lord, for Grace Church. May You bless each of us as we carry hope to those among us who feel hopeless. We thank You for all the blessings in our lives May we share these blessings with others.

We pray these things in your holy name. Amen

In loving memory of Bob Schmitt who worked as God's servant and with God's people tirelessly, helping all of us all of the time in so many diverse ways. We are all better people because he touched our lives. We loved him as he loved us.

Sunday, March 30

Repentance and Rejoicing

Doug Bowden (retired Pastor)

Luke 15:6-7 Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost. Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

This is one of the first parables of Jesus, I think, that many of us learned from our dedicated, nurturing Sunday school teachers. A cherished memory for me is Virginia Sleeman, one of my many gifted Sunday school teachers in the First Methodist Church in Highland Park, Michigan. Mrs. Sleeman and her husband, Cal, were family for my brother, sister and me. They loved us, with the shepherd-like love we see in Jesus's parable of the lost sheep. So, I can hear Mrs. Sleeman, 70 years ago, telling me this story. Intentionally, Jesus tells this parable as a direct, challenging, and transformative response to the pharisees and scribes, who were grumbling about Jesus's radical hospitality for tax collectors and sinners, even to the full acceptance of eating with them at the same table. These religious leaders were deeply offended. So, within our Lenten Devotional theme, "Love and Light and Everything in Between," Jesus's parable of the lost sheep fits well. Love is the very nature and essence of God. Confirming this, we see God as the Shepherd here in these words of Helen Montgomery Debevoise "God treasures every child of the family. When one goes missing, God goes into search mode. God's nature is love, and love looks like one who goes out tirelessly searching, because the one is so lost that she cannot find her way back home." God finding us, when we are lost, moves us to repent in gratitude for such shepherd love. Then, God calls us to rejoice with the one who is found and comes home. Jesus, even more amazingly and directly, calls the righteous, the religious leaders, and the ones who feel superior, to rejoice in a family, welcoming all. "Love and Light and Everything in Between": all are here, repenting and rejoicing, one in Christ.

Oh God, may we be Shepherds, searching for the lost, in Jesus's name. Amen.

Monday, March 31

Motherhood and Life and All the Love In Between

Bonnie Lewan

Luke 2:34-35. Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: “This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.”

I've had many relationships in my 45 years – I've been a daughter, a sister, a friend, a doctor, and a wife. I've experienced many forms of love - some easy, some harder. But no love has come as easy, and as powerful, as when I became a mom. And no love has hurt so much either. Simeon was right when he warned about that piercing sword.

Don't get me wrong, I certainly haven't suffered to the depths that Mary did in her motherhood. Jon and I have had a relatively simple go of it in our parenting journey. Early on we were faced with our child's life-threatening illness, and weathered two devastating family losses during his formative years, but on the whole our experience has been smooth. Our kid has pretty much gone easy on us so far.

Yet I feel the tip of that sword threatening to pierce my heart daily. I just want to solve that tough math problem for him, elbow the bigger soccer player in his way, take away every pain, big or small. My heart actually aches with love watching his peaceful breaths as he sleeps, or catching a glimpse of him completely absorbed in his favorite book. When I consider the idea that I will have to let him go at some time - that is the point of raising a child, of course - there is that painful love piercing my heart in anticipation.

All of the “in-betweens” of mothering and life cause so many layers of love all wrapped around each other. Some days it is so easy to carry this love. Some days it is so difficult to carry this love. Mary carried both the easy and difficult layers of her love for her son with grace and humility. Jesus carries both of his layers of love for us with strength and promise.

I will continue to try to carry both layers as well, with whatever I can muster, between love and light, motherhood and life, and everything in between.

Tuesday, April 1

Sisters

Jacalyn Green Tschirhart

Proverbs 11:16 A kindhearted woman gains honor....

Hebrews 6:10 God is fair. He will not forget what you have done. He will remember the love you have shown him. You showed it when you helped his people. And you show it when you keep on helping them.

In 1985 I saw the movie *The Color Purple*, sitting between two of my girlfriends, Mindi and Maria. Both had sisters; I had a brother. In the movie sisters Celie and Nettie are separated; their communication is cut. At the end they are reunited. In this moving scene, I was startled to find my two companions sobbing. Not wiping the corner of their eyes with a tissue, as I was, but sobbing. Mind you, I'm not usually stoic at heart-warming movies, but it was clear that because I did not have that relationship in my life, I did not relate as much to the scene.

Fast forward ~40 years: I retired from work, and joined United Methodist Women, now United Women in Faith. I was touched by the warm welcome I received, and at the depth of caring the members share with one another. (I also wondered why I did not join earlier!) United Women in Faith is composed of multiple "circles," each with 10-20 members. Monthly general meetings include a program, usually describing a local mission, and lunch. There are other subgroups, too: a book club, the quilters, and the prayer shawl ministry. United Women in Faith is probably best known for running Mistletoe Marketplace and Cinn Sunday, but we do so much more!

The major external goal of United Women in Faith is to support mission work in many ways: Cinn Sunday donations all support Youth Missions, in which Grace youth go into the community to help others. Mistletoe Marketplace profits are donated to a large variety of organizations, ranging from local to global. All help those in need.

That said, for me, the most important take-away is I feel I have gained a large number of sisters!

Dear Lord, thank you for sisterly friendship. Help us to support one another, to work together to be Your hands in the world, and to welcome others in this work. Amen.

Wednesday, April 2

In the Darkness

Melva Casillas

Luke 1:79 (ESV) To give light to those who sit in the darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.

In the darkness I sat, in a cage made out of my own fears.

In the darkness without no end, I thought, loveless and alone.

In the darkness, someone held my hand and told me, “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.” (John1 1:5)

In the darkness, a ray of bright light came, called by my name and healed my heart with his sacrificial love.

Out of the darkness, I saw many people lost, wondering, and in traps of their own.

In the darkness, I set up my tent, no longer in a cage. I told everyone about the light and love that set me free. Jesus’ message: “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” (John 8:12)

My dear sisters and brothers, my prayer is that the love of Christ in you, helps you to shine his light for those who are still in the darkness. Amen.

Thursday, April 3

And There Is Light
Barb Ceruti

John 8:12 I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.

An ironic chuckle escaped my lips when I learned of this year's Lenten focus on light. That's because 2024 was perhaps the darkest year of my life. I could mince words or lean on suggestion, but I'll just say it: I suffered a severe clinical depression that at times rendered me unable to get out of bed.

"Suffered" is no exaggeration, as anyone who's ever experienced profound depression knows. Even as the particularly glorious days of last summer shined on and on, for months not the slightest ray of light broke through my despair.

Depression did what depression does – it robbed me of hope.

The Bible tells us Jesus is the light of the world. Is He really? I wondered. I prayed ardently for relief, but relief did not come. Where was light? Where was hope? Where was God?

What I didn't know is that while my faith was shrinking smaller than a mustard seed, light was fighting to get through. Like a blackout shade with a pinhole of sun poking through, it was there, even as I was mired in the darkest moods, the darkest thoughts.

Light was there in my husband's constant presence and encouragement, in my children's love and concern, and in the outpouring of support from friends and family. It was also in my 9:00am worship family, who never let me out of their loving embrace.

Twenty-nine percent of Americans have been diagnosed with depression at some point in their lives, and that's only those who sought help. If you are depressed, don't hide it. Get help. There's no shame or stigma in admitting you're depressed.

I've written this to let you know you can get better...and there is light.

Dear God: Let me see your abundant light. Let me know that though I may walk in the shadow of darkness, your light is always there. And if I cannot see your light, let me seek help, free of fear or shame. Amen.

Friday, April 4

Love and Light and Everything in Between

Chamus Burnside-Savazzini

Have you ever met a person who was always filled with light, love and everything in between? The focus of the Grace devotional this year sparked so many thoughts that kept pointing at a person that was always filled with light and extended so much love even when she was not feeling her best or even when she was in the midst of a tough situation. I had the honor of witnessing her ministry of "being light and love" to every and anyone she met. The biggest lesson I took from her, was the way she always loved people no matter who they were, where they came from, what language they spoke or how they looked. She had friends from every walk of life and the relationships were deep and not superficial. When I was a little girl, I was blessed to go to school with students from all over the world like Sri Lanka, Greece, Spain, Haiti, Portugal, Trinidad and Tobago, France, Bahamas, China, Mexico, Jamaica and England etc. I remember trying to answer a social studies homework question and turned to get her opinion, and she responded telling me to never take someone else's opinion of another culture, especially if they have never been there to experience it first hand and even if they did actually visit, remember it's just an opinion. She encouraged me to engage in conversation with one of the children who were originally from that country. That was the best advice and I was able to dismiss myths and other false beliefs as well as I gained a new friend! To me, being light and love in this world means meeting people where they are, accepting them for who they are and always remembering that they too are a child of God. Jesus did not sit and wait for the lost to find Him, He went out and interacted with people who were from different cultures and backgrounds. He did this and was able to transform lives for heaven's sake. I thank God for allowing me to see an example of living in the light and showing love to all people through my mother, Annamae. We never know who will be a part of our salvation story and we do not know whose story we will be a part of.

Loving God, I pray that our hearts will always be open to love like Christ and be a source of light for whoever needs it no matter what the look like, where they are from, or what language they speak. Amen.

Saturday, April 5

Kind Words

Trudy Andsager

1 Thessalonians 5:11 Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.

Our spoken words can be so very powerful. Especially in these days where our world is so divided, a kind word can go a long, long way. Everyone needs a cheerleader in their corner---someone who speaks kindness and peace over them and supports them and believes in them with words of encouragement!

I remember when our son was about 8 years old and was playing little league baseball. It was the first year where the kids were pitching the ball to the batters. One of the dads in our neighborhood was his coach. Each time when Matthew would go up to bat, Coach Ovington would yell, "Come on slugger---you can do this!!" As the years went on, baseball became Matthew's sport. He loved it and played it all the way through high school. Throughout his career, I always thought his strength was his hitting. One day I remember telling him what a good hitter he was! His words back to me were so awesome and insightful. He told me that Coach Ovington used to call him "slugger" and that always gave him the confidence to stand at the plate and hit the ball! Simple, small, positive, kind words that his coach would yell out to him built him up and made him believe that he could do it! What a good lesson to think about...our words have the power to make a HUGE impact on others.

Dear Lord, I hope and pray that the words that come out of my mouth can help build someone up who needs to hear a kind word. Jesus always showed kindness and grace to everyone that HE met; not just those who looked like HIM or behaved how "society" said they should behave. I pray that all of us can share kind, uplifting words with each other, so that our world can become a more loving, peaceful, kind place to live. Thank you, Jesus, for your amazing example of how to build people up. Amen.

Sunday, April 6

A Love Story

Richard Newell

Romans 8:28 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.”

In 1986, a man and women met for breakfast in Lexington Kentucky. They were on a date. You see, she traveled for business so he would fly to wherever she was that week. To make a long story short by the end of breakfast this couple were engaged to get married, which they did in March of 1987.

They had the hope of having children. It became clear that having children may not happen, but they were given an opportunity to adopt a child that was not yet born. They took this opportunity feeling that it was a gift from God. One June evening they received a call to go to the hospital, the birth mother and baby were in distress. The baby was born with many complications and was admitted to the NICU. They named the baby Sean and had him baptized. By the end of the second day Sean was lost to them.

As time went on, they got on with their lives and continued in their marriage. But they both fell away from a relationship with God. It would not be correct to say that they stopped believing in God, but their relationship with God was hurting. God would not let them go, and their lives are still “a work in progress” ... Their names are Coletta and Richard Newell.

What we have learned and what we believe is that God uses everything for His purpose; even in the most difficult and challenging of times God uses, “All things” for His good; “Called according to his purpose” ... God has plans for each person. We were thought about even before we were born.

During this Lenten season pray that you open your hearts to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. With an open heart you will hear what God is calling you to do.

Monday, April 7

A Happy Ending

Karen Hoopes

“Small gestures can make a big impact” is a widely recognized adage that few would question. However, it’s not as common to prove the validity of those words in an everyday setting. Such is what happened here at Grace during the height of the Christmas season.

I arrived at Grace for my volunteer “afternoon shift” at the Welcome Desk on Monday during the week prior to Christmas. The first shift volunteer shares any updates so there is a smooth transition from one person to the next. On this particular day, I was informed that the mail carrier had not yet arrived, and that in addition to the outgoing mail, there was a small parcel that had been found in the parking lot on Saturday. The belief was that the package had fallen off the postal carrier’s truck when he was making his delivery. I was asked to give him the package as well as the mail.

Our mail carrier, known to all of us as a very caring person, arrived a while later. I was surprised at how elated he was to learn about the package. Apparently, he had been looking for the parcel since the recipient for whom it was intended had alerted the post office that it was missing. Packages are now easily tracked, and the mail carrier said that inexplicably it was no longer in the system. The postal carrier knew the location to which it was to be delivered, and said that he would immediately drive over to that home, where he knew the resident would be very happy.

I didn’t give it further thought until the phone rang about an hour or so later. The caller identified herself as the owner of the package found at Grace Church, and said that she was calling to thank the person who had found the package in the parking lot and made the effort to see that it was returned to the post office. She further said that she had tried calling both the manufacturer and the post office to find the missing package with no success. She told me that the package was a Christmas gift for her son, and that it was the only thing he had wanted. With Christmas just days away, there was no time to reorder. She expressed her tremendous gratitude that her son would not be disappointed on Christmas morning!

What a blessing that the loss occurred at Grace UMC where each person’s small gesture of caring created a big impact for this family!

Tuesday, April 8

Loving Gaze

Leslie Stevens

Psalm 80:3 Restore us, O God; make your face shine on us, that we may be saved.

I saw You today. As I was going through my daily routine, I saw You. There You were gently pawing my leg to get my attention. You were there in the gaze between us; lovingly looking at me. I felt the peace, the serenity, the love flowing between us. Then I tried to get back to my tasks and you gently nudged me drawing me back to your presence. I heard You say, "Stay with me for a while longer."

I saw You today as I looked across the yard and there You were sitting in the lawn chair under the oak tree. You had a beautiful smile on Your face and, of course, there was a tooth-pick tucked into the side of your mouth. And your eyes had that twinkle in them as You looked out over Your big, crazy family. There You were just watching the laughter and chaos unfold. You must have felt my eyes on You because You turned and looked at me and You were still beaming. In that moment, I felt all the joy and unconditional love of Your gaze taking me in. I couldn't bear to look away.

I never know when or where I will see the gaze of Love Everlasting. It appeared in an interaction with my dog as he lay beside me. I saw it in my earliest memories of my dad and through the day he left this earth. And that is why the above verse resonates with me. The face of God, that loving gaze that beams at us is so resolute, so beautiful, so generous, so full of love it can take away pain, it can fill us with joy, it can save us.

Love Everlasting, make your face shine on each of us, that we may be saved. Amen

Wednesday, April 9

Love One Another as I Have Loved You
Ginnie Battle

Disliking people merely because they are different is very much against the teachings of Jesus. In Romans 15:7, we find **“Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.** It is easy to say this but hard to do. The reality is, Jesus Christ accepts us when we don't deserve to be accepted. We have a chance of a heavenly home because Jesus not only accepted you and me, but He died for us. We have seen so much hate in recent times: Asian hate, Black hate, Jewish hate, Native American hate, immigrant hate, one part of the country accusing and criticizing other parts, and our politicians accusing each other of trying to ruin America, all in the name of “justice, fairness and honesty.”

What does God say about this hate we see every day from our politicians, some of our elected officials, from some of our friends, even from our own family members? Perhaps we start by examining ourselves. Luke 6:42 applies here: **“How can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.”** We all are far from perfect, so pointing out flaws in someone else ignores our own. Remember that saying about being critical of someone else, “when you point a finger at someone else four fingers are pointed at you?”

In Philippians 2:3-4 we find guidance: **“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.”** Humility, valuing others and seeking to really serve others would be the Christian way.

How can we reverse the current trend taking shape in our country? Can we accept all people as creations of God? Can we treat each other with respect? Can we work towards doing as Jesus teaches us to do?

Dear Lord. Open our hearts to accept others as part of your wonderful creation. Help us to focus our thoughts & words on the positive & understand that we all have faults. Help us to appreciate our differences & know that all of us are your children. Help us to accept each of us as you made us, to be patient, to use our varied talents to the glory of your kingdom & remember to love one another as you love us. May we show others the same tolerance, caring & love you continually show us. In Jesus Name we pray, Amen.

Thursday, April 10

Love is a Roaster

Jacalyn Green Tschirhart

Ruth 1: 16-18 But Ruth said, “Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. Where you die, I will die, and there will I be buried. May the Lord do so to me and more also if anything but death parts me from you.” And when Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more.

The mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relationship gets a bad rap in popular culture. It is interesting that the Bible includes the story of Naomi and Ruth, who remained close even after Ruth’s husband, Naomi’s son, passed away.

The first Christmas after I got married, my mother-in-law gave me a very large aluminum roaster. I must have been obvious in my puzzlement when I opened it (this was not on my list!) for she rushed into explaining that her first gift from her mother-in-law had been a roaster, so she wanted to give me a roaster, too.

At the time I confess I did not appreciate the gift. We lived in a small one-bedroom apartment and the roaster, which could hold a 25-pound turkey easily, seemed gigantic. Over the years I had many meals made lovingly in the original roaster that my mother-in-law had received: pot roast, baked chicken, ham. Her roaster was actually a fraction of the size of my roaster, and it eventually dawned on me that, as a woman who raised six children, five of whom were boys, my mother-in-law had gifted me the roaster she would have wanted! (And even later I realized, that I was the only daughter-in-law to whom she had given a roaster!)

My mother-in-law passed away in 2006. I now have both roasters, and the love that they represent gives me joy.

Heavenly Father, thank you for the love of parents and for the very special gift of love from the family one marries into. Help us to strengthen those bonds, and may all be blessed with such love. Amen.

Friday, April 11

Compassion in a Panera

Matthew 25:35 ... I was hungry & you gave me something to eat.

A number of years ago I was having dinner at a local Panera Bread. I was there by myself, as my family had gone out of town and I was fending for myself regarding dinner. Just after the food that I had ordered was delivered to my table, I noticed a woman walking past me with a rag-tag coat and what looked like all of her earthly belongings. She sat down at a nearby table and put her head down and closed her eyes. After a few minutes I went over to her and asked her if she was alright. She told me that she was doing "ok" but that she was hungry. I asked her what she would like to eat and she said "a cup of chicken noodle soup and some water would be nice."

I walked over to the counter and ordered her a soup, a sandwich and a drink. A few minutes later, I delivered it to her table. She then tried to give me a few crumpled dollars from her pocket for the food--which I would not accept. In fact, while I was waiting for her food to be prepared, I looked into my wallet and saw that I had exactly five twenty-dollar bills. When I delivered the food, I also gave her the five twenties. She looked at the money and couldn't believe I was giving that to her in addition to the food.

When I gave her the money, she told me she could not accept it. She kept saying "you worked very hard for that money" and tried to hand the money back to me. To be honest, I wasn't quite sure what to say. I finally decided to tell her that in fact I had worked hard for the money but that I wanted her to have it. She again tried to hand it back to me -- but I put it back on the table next to her food and told her that I would not accept it. She then thanked me profusely for the generosity. While she was doing so I kept thinking about how blessed that I was.

I have never shared this story with anyone before--even my own family--and I have asked to keep this anonymous. The only people that knew about it (until now) were me, the woman at the Panera (who I have never seen since) and a young family of four that was sitting nearby me. Even though I thought I was doing all of this invisibly, on my way out the door the young mother said to me, "we all saw what you did, and that was very kind of you." I told her thank you and went on my way.

Saturday, April 12

Christian Love in Action

Barbara Hartman

Matthew 25:40 Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.

I learned about Wallace Brown when the Hearts on Fire Sunday School class studied Adam Hamilton's "On the Way to Bethlehem" book this past Advent season. Brown's story exemplifies love and forgiveness, leaving a lasting impact on me.

St. John's Episcopal Church in Washington, DC, a.k.a. the "Church of the Presidents," with every president since James Madison attending services there. After losing his home in 1977 due to an unethical lawyer, Wallace Brown was often seen on the church porch. In 1989, he met President George Bush entering the church and asked him for prayers. President Bush responded, "No, come inside with us and pray." Those few words profoundly impacted Brown and eventually the congregation.

Brown became a regular attendee, always contributing a wadded-up dollar bill to the offering plate, humbling wealthier members. Once, when someone refused to shake his hand during the passing of the peace, another member expressed anger, but Brown calmly said, "Don't worry. It's not important." Church members befriended him, helping with groceries and securing him an apartment. His involvement in the church brought him happiness and peace.

When Brown passed in 2000, his unclaimed body would have been buried in a potter's field. However, members of St. John declared themselves his spiritual next of kin, claiming custody of his remains. He was interred in the sacred columbarium next to the church, where fewer than 100 individuals have been honored.

Wallace Brown's story is a profound reminder of the power of community, compassion, and faith. His life touched countless hearts, and his journey from homelessness to belonging illustrates the transformative impact of simple acts of kindness. His story is an enduring call to live with love and grace toward one another just as Jesus would have done.

Lord, thank you for the example of Wallace Brown and the love shown by the St. John's community. Help us to see others through your eyes, offering compassion and grace to all we encounter. May we always be instruments of your love. Amen.

Palm Sunday, April 13

Showing up

Pastor Cindy Marino

As seen in Luke 19:29-44, Palm/Passion Sunday is a day of paradox: a day of silence and shouting, of celebration and disappointment, a Savior on a donkey leading a procession. Some things just don't add up. Will we ever come to terms with Jesus presenting Himself in such humility? We so want a king—a wealthy, powerful king who can wave a scepter and fix the world! Unfortunately, if any human had such power, they would likely use it to serve themselves. This sort of explains why we need a Savior.

On Sunday mornings we pastors enter worship in a somewhat haphazard procession. We stop at the altar while the preaching pastor prays. It is often a raw, vulnerable and humbling moment for me as we stand before God. We are prophets who offer God's proclamation to the congregation and priests who represent the people before God. Some Sundays it's almost more than I can bear to feel the weight of the paradox in how ill-equipped I am for this, and how powerful God is in bringing us to it.

I am always reminded in that moment, standing before the throne of Jesus, that it will never be my words that reach someone in love, but God's work in and through our willingness to simply show up.

On that first Palm Sunday, Jesus showed up. Bold and determined, with strength that defies human logic, Jesus presented Himself in humility, willing to allow God's plan to take its course. Jesus, "who, though he existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped." He led the procession. He is still leading the procession.

When and how has Jesus showed up for you? How will you show up for others?

Merciful God, we give ourselves to you. Use us this day to proclaim your love in humility. Give us the strength to show up in Jesus' name, Amen.

Monday, April 14

No Matter Our Age

Ginnie Battle

Do you remember when you were elementary, junior high, high school and college age? It was so much fun and so many important decisions lay ahead of us. Here at Grace Church, our Faith Formation (aka Sunday School) and church activities can give us a boost in learning and sharing God's love. I especially bless our youth volunteers who work so tirelessly. May we who are all grown up now continue to bless each of our young people along life's journey at every opportunity.

Our young people count on God's love and guidance just as we have for so many years. Rain and sunshine come to each and every one of us. May we prepare so that we are able to survive and then see the blessings of both. We are thankful for families who love us and are always there to support us, rain or shine, young or old.

We who are older and, we hope, wiser, want to tell 'those younguns' what to do way too often. Instead, let us pray they do God's will and if they stray, we can be there to gently offer them a Godly solution. May we remember to ask You, Lord to show us Your will and then Your way. No matter our age, we still need Your guidance.

These days, the tables are turning on my generation and it is we who often depend on the younger generations to help us. That too is a great blessing, but sometimes hard to accept. May we be generous enough to accept their loving guidance and help, as they accepted ours just a few years ago.

The truth is, we are blessed to be the age we are right here, right now. We are grateful for all past opportunities and pray we do not miss the future opportunities to help others. Likewise, may we work towards being gracious enough to accept help and caring advice from our loved ones when that time arrives in our lives, no matter our age.

Tuesday, April 15

Here I am Lord

Jacalyn Green Tschirhart

1 Samuel 3:1, 4-5 The boy Samuel ministered before the Lord under Eli. In those days the word of the Lord was rare; there were not many visions. Then the Lord called Samuel. Samuel answered, “Here I am.” And he ran to Eli and said, “Here I am; you called me.” But Eli said, “I did not call; go back and lie down.” So he went and lay down.

Hymn “Here I am Lord” by Dan Schutte

Here I am Lord. Is it I Lord?

I have heard you calling in the night.

I will go Lord, if you lead me.

I will hold your people in my heart.

It seems that our current time is similar to the time of Eli, in that “the word of the Lord was rare.” Samuel did not recognize that God was calling him until the third time, when he spoke to Eli, who recognized what was happening. One does not read in the newspapers nor see on Facebook or Instagram the latest visions of any prophets. And some who claim to be prophets say things that do not ring true with the love of Christ.

But many people do hear ‘nudges’ or ‘whispers’ from God. There are several stories herein that share these whispers. I have felt this too. United Women in Faith was seeking a new leader, and Chamus came into our Thursday morning disciple bible class and announced, “We need a new president. I think there may be someone in this room that would be the perfect candidate!” I looked around the room and thought “Here I am! Is it I?” And after some thought I decided to say yes. Likewise, I said “yes” to editing this collection. Both experiences have been very fulfilling and I am happy to think I might be doing God’s will.

Heavenly Father, Thank You for Your whispers and nudges. Help us to listen to You, and to respond to these directions with an enthusiastic “yes,” knowing that You will walk with us and guide us in the path You have in mind. Amen.

Wednesday, April 16

Why am I here?

a Christian (you can call me reverend) Pilgrim

After only eleven years of marriage, my father died at the age of 38. I was five and my sister was nine. I can't imagine what that must have been like for my mother. We didn't have a lot, but we made do and we got by.

My sister was the first in our family to graduate from college. I was the second. We both went on to have successful careers in our respective fields, get married and raise families, including grandchildren. For ten years I worked three jobs to put our daughter through college and to help make ends meet. She married and blessed us with two grand-children. As my mother grew older, she needed to move into assisted living and her home, its contents and her car needed to be sold. She died at the age of 96. I was holding her hand.

Five months after retiring, my wife was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer and given 6-12 months. She fought valiantly for thirty months, always keeping a great attitude. Again, I was holding her hand.

While this all sounds terribly maudlin, I consider myself truly blessed. I got to see our daughter graduate from high school, college, and have children. Both will have graduated from college this year and they both are engaged to be married in the Fall of 2026. And my father got to experience none of that! Any time I start to feel sorry for myself I just remind myself of all the blessings my father never had the chance to experience.

Now, to get to the point. All of us wonder what our purpose is in life. Why am I here? Early on the answer is easy. Education, marriage and raising a family. After that we may start to wonder. First it was caring for my mother and then my wife. In the last few years that question has crossed my mind often without any 'good' answers.

Well let me tell ya,... on Thanksgiving I got a good answer. My Grandson and his fiancée asked me to officiate at their wedding next year!!! What an honor! That's a purpose I can live with and for. So if you're having trouble finding your purpose in life,... give it a minute. God will let you know.

Thursday, April 17

Living Sustainably in Our World

John and Linda Bodine

Chief Seattle: The earth does not belong to man; man belongs to the earth. All things are connected like the blood that unites us all. Man did not weave the web of life; he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself.

Pope Francis, The Joy of Love [Laudato Si], #82: “When nature is viewed solely as a source of profit and gain, this has serious consequences for society. This vision of 'might is right' has engendered immense inequality, injustice and acts of violence against the majority of humanity, since resources end up in the hands of the first comer or the most powerful: the winner takes all. Completely at odds with this model are the ideals of harmony, justice, fraternity and peace as proposed by Jesus.”

We understand, though not all will acknowledge, that the unbridled expansion of human industry and lifestyle on our world is adversely impacting climate on all parts of our planet. Gases spewed into the atmosphere trap heat, creating unlivable conditions for species in numerous places around the world, including humans. Geoscientists understand that such changes in Earth's climate have occurred numerous times in the past.

The difference now is that humans are capable of understanding how such changes have and can occur, and can recognize the adverse impacts of how we live on the Earth today. We also have the capacity, with this awareness, of understanding what we can do to slow, limit, or reverse these changes, but we need the will to do so. Taking such action requires sacrifice and changes to human assumptions and preferences for how we live and breathe and relate to other life forms on our planet. This is difficult and requires a rigorous commitment to belief that this is needed for the common good of God's creation. This we must do.

Gracious God, we come before you today humbled by the beauty and wonder of your creation. We confess our failures to be responsible stewards of the earth, and we ask for your forgiveness and guidance as we seek to live in harmony with your design. Amen.

Good Friday, April 18

Darkness and Light

Nadia R. Kanhai

Isaiah 58:10 Feed the hungry and help those in trouble. Then your light will shine out from the darkness, and the darkness around you will be as bright as noon.

As Martin Luther King, Jr. said “Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.” The latter quote isn’t scripture, but it is part of my daily prayer for peace. The truth is: we can’t truly understand light and love without understanding darkness, hate, and apathy.

“Hello darkness my old friend,” the old Simon and Garfunkel song begins a haunting plea of invisibility, emptiness and loneliness. There’s a comfort in the cloak of darkness, a place to hide from the world and nurse our inner wounds. But we can’t stay there – God’s light breaks through and reminds us that our Creator always loves us, even when we feel unworthy and unlovable.

“It only takes a spark,” the old church camp song begins, and we know it’s true. Once you experience God’s love and light, you want to pass it on, to share the bounty of God’s creation. It’s in the giving, the sharing of God’s love and light with others that we experience a joy that’s much richer, fuller than hollow worldly happiness.

“This little light of mine” is not just a children’s song. It’s the secret of social justice warriors...the wonder that a little light can do, one small act of justice at a time. Yes, one small act of feeding a hungry man, helping a struggling mom with a door, smiling at a stranger, high-fiving a child – these little sparks count. God’s love shines through us and God’s image radiates back to us in the faces of strangers.

I don’t hate the darkness. It’s still an old friend. Lent can be viewed a journey through the darkness to find meaning, fulfillment and love. Have I tried to hide my light under a bushel? I sure have. It’s a constant struggle, but the light is not extinguished.

My light joins with your light and together we shine brighter. We are a connected community of little lights shining God’s love on our corner of the earth as we seek to share this joy with others. Easter’s ultimate joy breaks forth from Good Friday’s utter darkness and deep despair.

Holy Saturday, April 19

Preparation for Easter

Pastor Kim Neace

Luke 23: 50-54 Now there was a man name Joseph, a member of the council, a good and upright man, who had not consented to their decision and action. He came from the Judean town of Arimathea, and he himself was waiting for the Kingdom of God. Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body. Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen cloth and placed it in a tomb cut in rock, one in which no one had yet been laid. It was Preparation Day, and the Sabbath was about to begin.

Psalm 62:5 For God alone my soul waits in silence, for my hope is from him.

Historically, Holy Saturday was a time of silence and reflection. People past and present may have an array of emotions and feelings about Easter such as doubt, wonder, confusion, grief, sadness, satisfaction, joy, or anticipation of the Resurrection.

Jesus' life and last days show humanity and love. His approach to teach God's ways was full of grace, patience, wisdom, and love. We have much to learn from others. Some honor Jesus; even with uncertainty or true understanding, the disciples prepared for the entrance to Jerusalem and the space for the Last Supper; Mary anointed Him with oil; some desired to crucify Him; Peter denies Jesus; and Judas betrays Him. Yet, Jesus moves forward teaching the ways for humanity to live a life of loving God and others for the transformation and reconciliation of the world.

The scripture passage for today did not occur on Saturday, but it gives us one more glimpse of preparation before the resurrection. Joseph took tender care in preparing God's body. The love and tender compassion Joseph shows is a kind of love that runs deep.

Take time to reflect on Holy Week and the impact of Easter on your life. How deep is your love for Jesus? Where do you find yourself emotionally? What responsibility do you feel to be the love and light in the world?

Dear God, give me the time and motivation to sit and soak in your word today. Help me to access my belief. Empower me to live my life so that I can love you and others, because you gave your life not only for me, but for the world. Amen.

Easter Sunday, April 20

Surprise!

Pastor Cindy Marino

Luke 24:1-12

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! It always makes me smile when we say that together on Easter morning!

But why? What does Jesus' resurrection have to do with us?

It means that whatever you have given over to Jesus has gone to the cross with Him, died with Him, was resurrected with Him and has been redeemed! Howard Thurman, in his book *The Meditations of the Heart*, refers to this as the "glad surprise."

The fact that Jesus was not in the tomb where they laid Him confounded those who made this discovery. If His body was missing, it was either stolen or resurrected. A stolen body makes rational sense. But a resurrected body makes our hearts leap. Which would they believe? Which would you believe?

Your response is crucial in understanding how faith works in our lives. With faith, we serve a God who continuously makes all things new. We live in the certainty that the worst thing to happen is never the last thing, and our worst day never needs to define us. We live with wonder as we contemplate the mystery that God is and anticipate the next surprise that God is preparing. We live without regret knowing God already loves us and came among us. God took the worst we could offer and turned it into the best God could provide.

Or, we can believe the body was stolen and spend our lives managing our disappointment.

Nah

Gracious and loving God, open our hearts to your glad surprises in our lives. Give us a sense of anticipation, of expectation for the new thing you are always doing. Help us live into your offering of renewal, restoration, redemption and resurrection as we unite with Jesus in His sacrifice on our behalf. We are grateful for glad surprises. Amen.

From the Editor

I'd like to express my deep appreciation for all these writers who have shared their time and personal stories to make this devotional booklet possible. This collection would not exist without you! It takes time to commit to writing these devotions, and courage to share one's stories. I am grateful to Pastor Cindy, Barb Ceruti, and Angela McCurdy, who in different conversations explained to me what was involved in generating this book. Many thanks to Patti Cash who created the lovely cover art, and offered helpful suggestions. In my previous working life, I did a lot of writing and editing, and I have applied my skills here. In most cases I changed the writing a bit—a word here and there—mostly to get the words to better fit the space without using tiny font. It is wholly possible that in this process, mistakes were made or I made a change that was upsetting to an author. It is even possible that someone emailed me a piece and I missed it. (I hope not!) For any of these possible errors, I apologize. And, as the Amish say, "Only God is perfect!" That said, I feel proud that the people of Grace have once again generated a booklet of devotions that are wholly unique, personal, and indicative of the current theme, time, and place.

My God bless all those who contributed, and all those who read these devotions. And thanks be to God, for nudging all those who wrote to share their thoughts!

Jacalyn Green Tschirhart



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