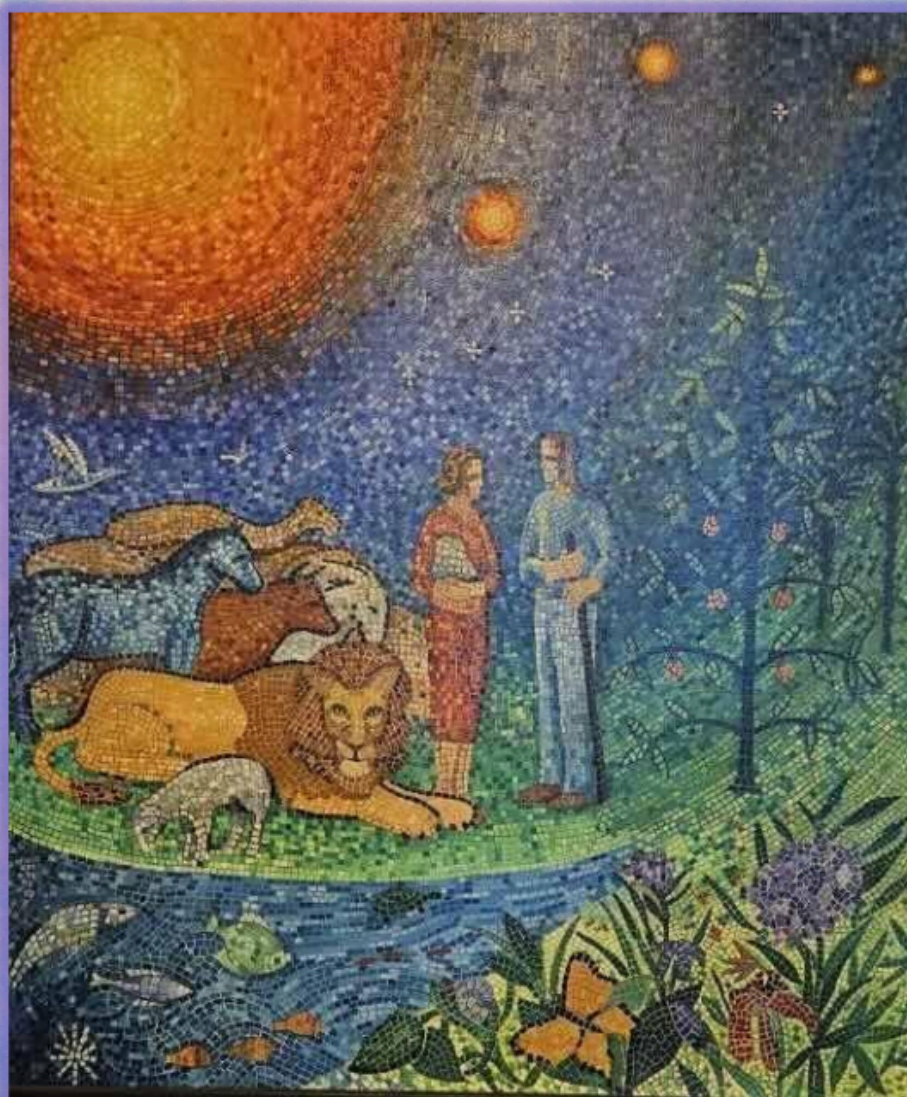


Lent/Easter 2026 Daily Devotional

BEHOLD, I MAKE ALL THINGS NEW

REVELATION 21:5

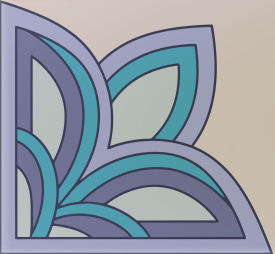


FEBRUARY 18TH - APRIL 5TH 2026

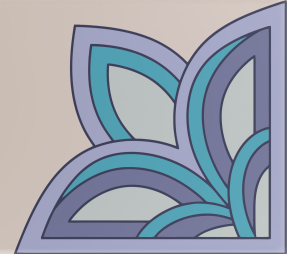
Ministers of Word and Sacrament & Ruling Elders from across the Presbytery of San José, together with invited staff contributors, offer reflections and prayers shaped by the daily Lenten lectionary.

The Presbytery of San José serves the counties of Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, & Monterey, California.

sanjosepby.org



INTRODUCTION



Dear Members, Colleagues, and Friends of the Presbytery of San José,

Joy and peace in the love of God, the grace of Jesus Christ, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. This sacred season of Lent, which begins with Ash Wednesday on February 18, is the time honored tradition where Christians worldwide journey together in worship, prayer, and reflection towards the cross and the resurrection tomb. It is an intentional season to recommit our lives and faith to the Lord, and to hear, once again, God's call to follow the life of Jesus Christ.

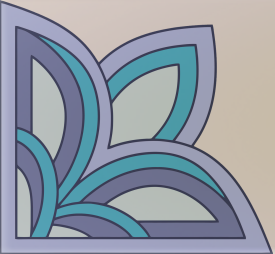
This year's theme, "Behold, I make all things new" from Revelation 21:5 is inspired by the mosaic from Trinity Presbyterian Church of San José. The booklet cover depicts the Shepherd Savior with a disciple in a garden teeming with all creatures great and small. Such an idyllic scene is a renewed creation where moth and rust do not destroy, where lion lies down with the lamb, where neighbor and stranger alike are friends, where truth, love, justice, and joy prevail. That is the new creation which has been inaugurated by Jesus's resurrection, an open protest against the powers and principalities which crucified him three days prior, and the groaning for that promised renewal happening every single day with the gift of the Spirit of Pentecost.

We are blessed once again to have the gift of teaching elders, ruling elders, and commissioned ruling elders contribute their reflections and prayers for each of the days of Lent, Holy Week, and Easter based on one of the Scripture texts of the Revised Daily Lectionary, Year A. We are specially blessed by the contribution of guest writer, The Rev. Cecilia "Cece" Armstrong, Co-Moderator of the 226th General Assembly (2024-26) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), who offered a reflection/prayer for March 26, the day on which we will welcome her to the 3rd NEAR Gathering at Westminster Presbyterian Church in San José.

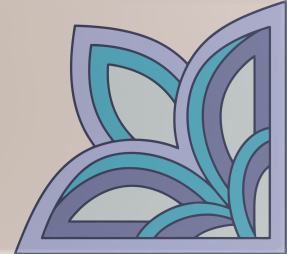
May you be blessed by this devotional booklet, as we journey to the Christ's cross and to the empty tomb, being and becoming Easter people in a Good Friday world.

In Joy and Justice,

The Rev. Dr. Prof. Neal D. Presa
Executive Presbyter



ASH WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 18 JOEL 2:13



In Genesis we read how Eve and Adam ate the fruit God had forbidden. Then they realized they were naked and they hid from God. But God came looking for them, calling, “Where are you?”

Sometimes in life we need to stop and ask ourselves, “Where am I?” Today, Ash Wednesday, we are invited to begin a Lenten journey, a journey that begins with repentance, a journey in which we consciously seek to deepen our relationship with God. But we cannot start on a journey unless we know where we are to begin with. So, I invite you today to begin your Lenten journey by reflecting on the question, “Where am I?” Where am I spiritually? Where am I in relationship with God?

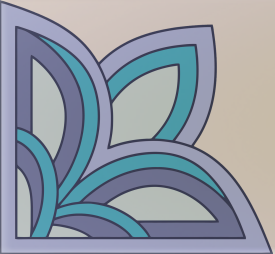
Long ago the prophet Joel called out: “Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love.” This Lent, let us head in a new direction –toward wherever God is calling us. Lent reminds us that the journey of faith is not always easy. It means following Jesus, even though the path may lead to a cross.

So, where are you? Are you ready to begin a Lenten journey with God? Pray to be guided by the Spirit, and you might be surprised where the path will take you.

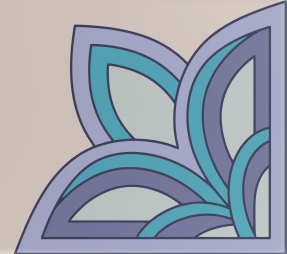
Prayer

Lord, as I begin my Lenten journey, help me to hear your voice calling out, “Where are you?” Help me to move closer to you this Lent. Amen.

The Rev. Deborah Troester is Pastor of Santa Teresa Hills Presbyterian Church
and Presbytery Vice Moderator



THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 19 PSALM 121



Known as one of the Psalms of Ascent, this scripture has always fascinated me. The opening line “I look unto the hills, from where does my help come from? - is really testing the listener. On their journeys to Jerusalem, the pilgrims had to pass through the hills that were filled with danger, thieves and occult workers. They lifted their eyes to the hills, the place of God’s earthly dwelling from which he sent help to his people. So help does not come from the hills; instead it comes from the One who made not only the hills but the heavens and earth, the universe.

More importantly, this creator is one who does not sleep (vs. 3 -4) nor does he allow us to tumble or fall on the terrain. The hills were treacherous and pilgrims were in danger of serious accidents. Even though the guards may sleep keeping watch over the campers, the Lord guards the pilgrims without interruption.

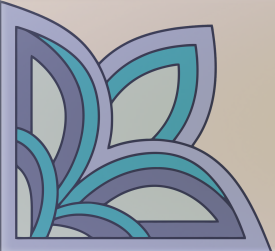
God is also a keeper who protects us day and night. The Lord as keeper of the pilgrims is called a shade stationed at the right hand of each pilgrim to protect them from sunstroke in the day, and moonstruck by night. In ancient times, there were some who believed that strokes were produced by a demon. The fear of moonstroke seems to have derived from the assumption that there was a relationship between the moon and certain diseases. The Greek word for “to be epileptic” means literally “to be moonstruck.

Finally God is a keeper who preserves life (v 7 -8) God preserves his people by guarding them from all sorts of evil in their undertakings - their going out and coming in - in short in everything we do. What solace to know we serve a loving God who guards our every move, our health, our rest.

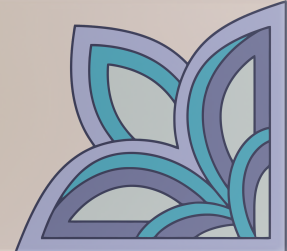
Prayer

Creator God, thank you for the protection you provide - from those who would harm us, for our safety, for our sabbath rest, for our life. Guard our steps as we pass through this Lenten journey. How blessed we are to serve a loving God who knows our every need. AMEN

*The Rev. Dr. Libby Boatwright is an honorably retired teaching elder
and immediate past moderator of the Presbytery*



FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 20 MICAH 7:18-20

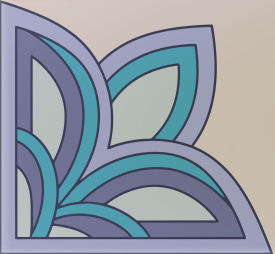


What captures me to this passage (Rev. 21:5 of our theme) from the book of Revelation, "Behold, I am making all things new." is the possibility that it might be an invitation rather than merely a promise. We are currently living at a time where the world is experiencing profound and unprecedented change. The speed of technological and ecological transformation has no historical precedent. When compared with previous eras, this moment is evolving more at an exponential rather than a linear pace. Moreover, it is disrupting almost every institution in every country. And the breadth and depth of these changes herald the transformation of entire systems of production, relationships, and meaning-making.

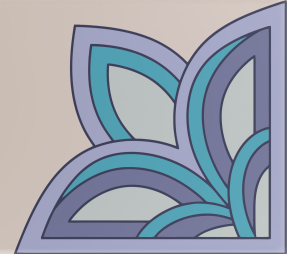
At a time where trust in historic institutions, including the Church, is at a historic low, hearing God say, "I make all things new" lands differently. Public sociologist professor Tressie McMillan Cottom, shares in much of her work that trust in institutions is waning due to a crisis of accountability, the consistent failure of institutions to support or protect vulnerable populations, and the tendency of historical institutions to focus on self-preservation over serving the public. The Church is no different. Regaining trust requires a fundamental shift in how institutional actors behave. What if God's declaration of newness is not just about personal liberation but about the hard work of repair which is achieved through sustainable interpersonal relationships?

This reframes Lent for me. The forty days are not primarily about personal piety but about the opportunity to be a positive actor who supports institutional culture that engages in critical internal accountability. Not skirting it. Not presenting decisions made with collective funds without open discussion. God is inviting us to meet the moment, to be a person, a people who works alongside others in a faith that understands part of the ethic of being Christian is to be trustworthy, rather than using our faith as a stage from which to be seen and heard. Not only am I motivated by this, but I am curious to see if this cultural shift exists or if there is room for such a shift to exist in the Church at such an institutional level. We can flap our jaws all we want; but the proof will be self-evident by the manner in which we do or do not conduct ourselves.

Continued on next page...



FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 20 MICAH 7:18-20



The final dimension I take fundamentally to heart is relational. The newness God is making is not created in isolation, but built and strengthened within relationships. Faith is relational. The newness God is making is not created in isolation or for the triteness of unity for unity's sake, but built and strengthened within relationships which means understanding of systems and dynamics of power. Therefore, it is crucial for me to understand the contexts and perspectives of others, while doing the hard work and thankless work of centering the experiences and expertise of the most marginalized and de-centered from power in the room.

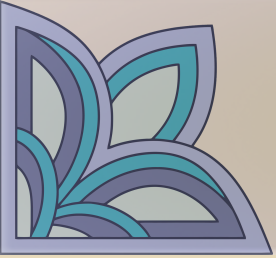
None of this work can be done without including and taking quite seriously a diversity of perspectives and making sense of how they encounter one another socially in addition to interrogating and taking seriously their relationships to power. Most of Jesus's ministry dealt with right-sizing or making more equitable people's relationships to one another which always already included their relationship to power.

This Lent, God is doing the long, slow work of making our relationship to all things, including our institutions, including us, including power, new.

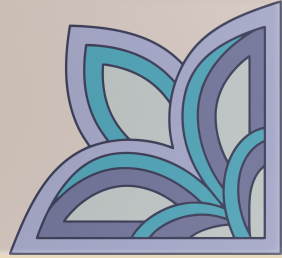
Prayer

Beloved God who is always already making things new, grant us the clarity to see this moment with honesty, the courage to be trustworthy institutional actors, and the relational wisdom to center those most marginalized from power. Meet us in the exponential speed of change and anchor us in the slow work of repair. May our shared understanding of the gospel become a foundation for mutual forbearance and a catalyst for the new things you are speaking into being. We ask this in the name of the One who makes all things new, Christ Jesus. Amen.

The Rev. Annanda Barclay is Associate Pastor at Sunnyvale Presbyterian Church



SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 21 LUKE 7:1-10



At 56 years old with adult children and senior parents, I am firmly part of the “Sandwich Generation.” (Some call it the Panini Generation, like the sandwich, but with a wee bit more pressure.) This reality has become more acute as I have sat in a hospital every day this past week with one of my parents as they address an unforeseen health crisis.

As I’ve sat in the ICU and observed the constant movement of humans who participate in the upkeep and tending to this place of healing, I’ve been reminded of how many people it takes to heal. From the parking attendants, security guards, and volunteers who first greet you, to the nurses, technicians, and physicians who care for patients, to the custodians, food service folks, and others who make sure all the inner workings run smoothly; no single person heals on their own.

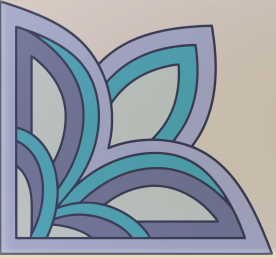
As I think about the servant who is healed, we are reminded that they, too, did not find healing on their own. Multiple humans were part of their healing process: the centurion, the Elders, and Jesus. We could all use a reminder that our healing most often does not come solely through our own effort, but through and because of the efforts and presences of others. I dare say those who need to hear this most are those in the helping professions themselves. For some reason, we trick ourselves into believing that we are above needing the very counsel and presence that we provide others. We buy into the idea that we can push through on our own and don’t need the help of others to move towards healing.

One thing that we are told in this passage is that many people, folks that we may not even know, will play a role in our healing — if we would only let them. During this Lenten season, as we explore the theme, “Behold, I make all things new” let us make one of those new things be the way we see our journeys of healing, not as something we do on our own, but one that is done with others.

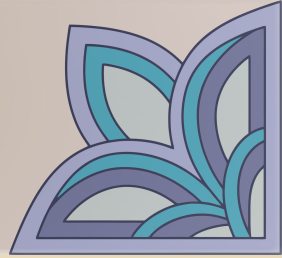
Prayer

Gracious God, thank you for all those who help in healing, comforting, and caring for us and for each other. Enable us to offer our hearts and lives to help others, even as we graciously receive the hearts and lives of neighbors and strangers in our midst. Amen.

The Rev. Bruce Reyes-Chow is a minister member at large of the Presbytery



SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 22 MATTHEW 4:1-11



Many years ago when we lived in New Jersey, my best buddy sent me a birthday card that had Winston Churchill's famed quote, "When you're going through hell, keep going." Harvard University professor of psychology Luana Marques writes about anxiety and avoidance. While our instinct when faced with a challenge – big or small – is to "fight, flee, or freeze," the anxiety that wells in us is telling us something about ourselves. When the door rings and our dog Calvin barks, it doesn't help anyone if we don't answer the door. He'll keep barking and the Amazon delivery person outside will leave the package at the door, or some solicitor will stand at the porch and continue ringing the doorbell. We need to get to the source of what is causing the angst. We have a temptation to fight, flee, or freeze.

The classic confrontation between Jesus and the tempter/devil and how Jesus faces hell on his own terms. Where at every turn the tempter/devil tried to ensnare Jesus with the human desire for sustenance, security, and splendor, Jesus would have none of that for He knew who He was. No testing was needed, no proving of who He is. He knew that He was already valued in the Father's eyes and heart, taken care of in every way. To give an inch to the tempter/devil, would yield a mile to the power and principality that has no interest in God, God's love, God's kingdom, and God's people. The tempter/devil's offerings were a ruse, an empty ploy to have Jesus give in a bit by fighting (the hunger and turn the stones to bread), fleeing (from the Father's promise), or freezing (by giving in and throwing himself down from the temple's pinnacle).

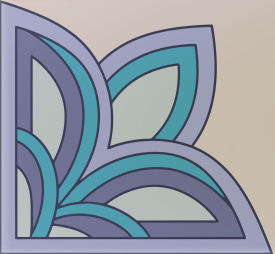
Jesus goes to the source and speaks truth to power, puts power in its place. Led by the Spirit to the wilderness, the same Spirit who affirmed his sonship at his baptism in the previous chapter (3:13-17), the same Spirit empowers and enables Jesus to be anchored in the Father's heart. It was the tempter/devil who ended up fleeing (4:11).

This Lent is a season for us to inspect the sources of our anxious hearts. Yes, seek the psychologist and pastoral counselors, who are gifts from God, humans specially trained in the helping profession as part of our holistic well-being. What is the Spirit of the Lord leading you to respond?

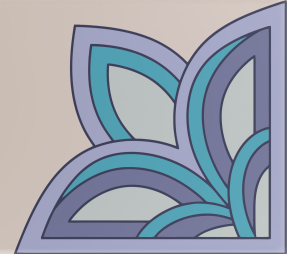
Prayer

May you be anchored to God's heart, beloved child of God, so that you can speak God's loving truth to the tempter/powers/principalities, and live in and with the promises of Christ. Amen.

The Rev. Dr. Neal D. Presa is Executive Presbyter



MONDAY, FEBRUARY 23 HEBREWS 2:10-18



We all cherish the idea of spring. The dark days of winter —the apparent death of vegetation, the grey skies, and the chill in the air —gradually give way to renewal: to rebirth, recreation, reconciliation, and new life. Spring thus functions not merely as a change of season, but as a natural parable of hope.

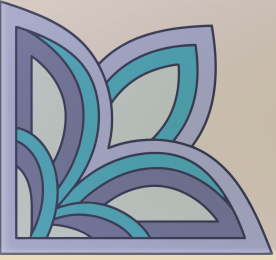
In Revelation 21:5 we encounter the divine declaration: “Behold, I am making all things new.” The grammar is significant. The verb is in the present tense, indicating that a divine action already underway will one day reach its final consummation. What has begun within history will come to its appointed fulfilment: the unveiling of a new heaven and a new earth.

When we speak of our own rebirth, or of becoming a “new creation,” we are not describing an isolated or merely private religious experience. Rather, we are speaking of the first fruits of God’s cosmic renewal. Personal salvation is not the end of the story; it is the beginning of our participation in a far larger divine project.

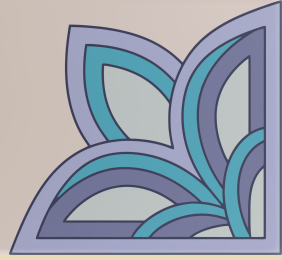
This is precisely the theological vision articulated in Hebrews 2:10 –18. If Revelation offers us the final outcome of God’s purposes, Hebrews shows us the means by which that renewal enters history. God makes the world new by first making a new humanity in the Son. The author of Hebrews situates this within the larger narrative of creation. From the beginning, God’s intention was to establish a harmonious world, inhabited by a humanity that enjoyed both the goodness of creation and intimate communion with God. Yet through human rebellion, that vocation was distorted. Humanity became subject to corruption, and creation itself was drawn into the same pattern of decay.

Into this fallen order Christ enters. He relinquishes the privileges of divine glory and assumes full humanity —not as one marked by sin, but as one who fully inhabits the conditions of our broken world. Through suffering and temptation he identifies with human weakness, and through obedience he becomes, as Hebrews insists, the pioneer of salvation. For this reason the resurrection is not merely the vindication of Jesus, nor simply the guarantee of individual salvation. It is the decisive moment in which the cosmos itself is realigned. The risen Christ stands as Lord over a renewed creation.

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MONDAY, FEBRUARY 23 HEBREWS 2:10-18



As Hebrews puts it, “the one who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one Father,” and therefore Christ is not ashamed to call us brothers and sisters. New creation, then, is not creation *ex nihilo* in the strict sense. It is reconciliation and transfiguration. Just as in nature spring does not abolish what existed before but restores it to its intended vitality, so God’s work in Christ does not annihilate humanity but heals it. We are made new not because we become superior to others, but because grace restores us to the relationship for which we were always intended: communion with God, reconciliation with one another, and renewed participation in the life of creation itself.

In this sense, Christian renewal is not an escape from the world, but the first sign of its redemption. We stand within the horizon of new creation, looking forward in hope to the final cosmic act of reconciliation. Yet we are also given the privilege of living already within that new reality here and now. And we do not live this life in isolation.

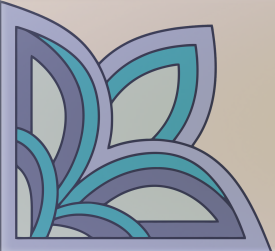
We belong to a community —the bride of Christ —through which we are shaped, formed, and sustained, as together we worship God in spirit and in truth and bear witness to what God has accomplished at the cross and will finally bring to completion in the future.

And so I pray that God would open our eyes to see this divine privilege: to live lives that express the freedom and wholeness granted to us through his Son; to be empowered by the Holy Spirit to affect other lives with the message and hope of reconciliation.

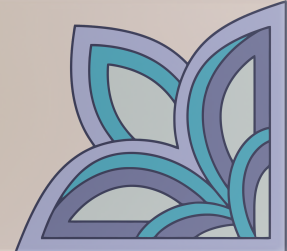
Prayer

May we see this season not merely as a recurring cycle of the natural year, but as a living sign of new birth, new life, and new creation —realities that only God can illuminate in our souls, our minds, and our communities. In his name we pray. Amen.

The Rev. Dennis Woodsmall is Pastor of First Presbyterian Church of Santa Clara



TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 24 HEBREWS 4:14-5:10



This is my 23rd year in pastoral ministry – 19 years of that in local congregations in New Jersey and southern California, two years of that as a senior administrator and faculty member at a theological seminary, and in my second year in mid council leadership. Each and all of these contexts are in my vocational call as being a Minister of Word and Sacrament, with respect to the spiritual and liturgical dimensions of our ecclesial life, and a Teaching Elder, with respect to the governance dimension of our life together. In all these contexts, I have been asked, “I pray for ... (fill in the name of a loved one) all these years but they aren’t coming to church, he/she/they isn’t following Jesus. What do I do?” Whether it’s a congregant, a student, or a fellow ministry colleague, each and all desire for our loved ones to know the love and joy of God, as well as all those in positions of authority and decision-making. In all cases, we wonder if Word and Sacrament are sufficient to change and transform hearts and lives. And the answer is a resounding Yes, more than sufficient.

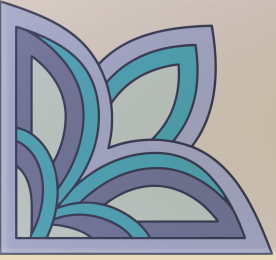
When the apostle Paul describes the “word of God” as “the sword of the Spirit” (Ephesians 6:17), this is connected to Hebrews 4:12 where the “word of God” is described as “living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” It goes on to say that we are naked in the sight of God, the One to whom we are accountable. That is a remarkable declaration, description and promise. This, then, connects to our lectionary text, in its description of Jesus as our high priest, our advocate, our intercessor, the One from whom “we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” (4:16b). The Heidelberg Catechism asked in Question 50 about Jesus ascending to be seated at the right hand of God, which following in Question 51 asked “How does this glory of Christ our head benefit us?” The Catechism answered, “First, through his Holy Spirit he pours out gifts from heaven upon us his members. Second, by his power he defends us and keeps us safe from all enemies.”

Is God’s ministry of Word and Sacrament sufficient to transform and make all things new? Yes, absolutely and certainly. Because of Jesus Christ.

Prayer

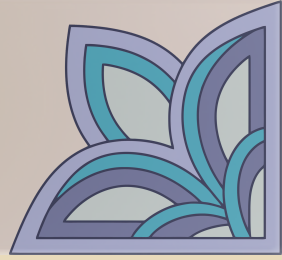
Lord, thank you for being our trustworthy and faithful Advocate.

The Rev. Dr. Neal D. Presa is Executive Presbyter



WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 25

PSALM 32



This moment in Psalm 32 feels embarrassingly honest: “While I kept silent, my body wasted away.” This silence is not peaceful. Unconfessed sin does not sit quietly in the soul. It seeps into everything, stealing joy and tightening the chest.

Confession, the psalm suggests, is not something God demands for God’s sake but offers for ours. “Then I acknowledged my sin... and you forgave.” Confession, then, is not humiliation; it is release.

In Exodus 34, Moses returns after the covenant lies shattered. The failure is fresh, yet God meets him with mercy: “merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love.” The covenant is renewed because God leans toward restoration, not because Israel earned it.

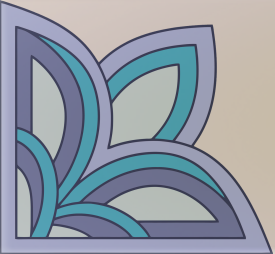
Jesus echoes this in Matthew 18. A shepherd leaves ninety -nine sheep to find one lost. The story is not about efficiency but value. The sheep does not return on its own. The shepherd goes searching. The order is important. We confess, God forgives. We break covenant, God renews it. We wander, God comes looking.

Renewal begins with God coming closer. Lent invites us to tell the truth and trust that God’s first instinct is not to discard what is broken, but to restore it.

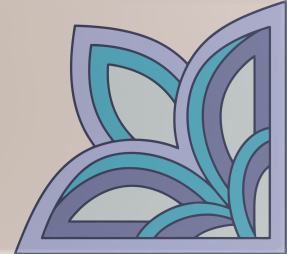
Prayer

Gracious God, thank you for your unfailing and unending love which pursues us and never lets us go. Amen.

The Rev. Mark Peake is Pastor of First Presbyterian Church of Monterey



THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 26
PSALM 128; NUMBERS 21:4-9;
HEBREWS 3:1-6

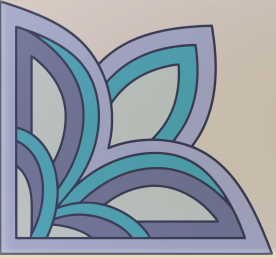


Easter is a time of bunnies and spring flowers —spring flowers in lovely pastel colors. Lent, however, is a season of the church calendar that begins with Ash Wednesday. To me, it begins with the Tuesday that comes before Wednesday. Over the years, I've celebrated that Tuesday in a variety of ways. The end of the pre-Lenten season is Shrove, or Pancake Tuesday. That Tuesday is also called Mardi Gras (the French term meaning "Fat Tuesday"). It is traditionally the day when people eat all kinds of sweet treats —cleaning out refrigerators and preparing for the Lenten tradition of giving up sweets. This is a hard thing to do in my family. Making pancakes and topping them with rich syrup worked well for us. In fact, a few years ago, we did this with my youth group.

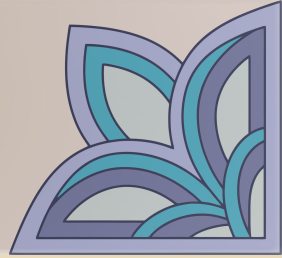
We humans create calendars filled with all kinds of celebrations. Some are religious or had their origins in religious practices. Some are close to the heart, others more spiritual. Some are traditional, others sacred. Some are family-centered, and others cultural. During his life on earth, Jesus gave instructions to his followers. Some of these were very specific, and we continue to follow them today —such as the Lord's Supper, Baptism, Palm Sunday. Other celebrations, like Christmas, Epiphany and Good Friday were established later, after Jesus had joined his Heavenly Father.

As a follower of Jesus Christ, I have the benefit of knowing many of the ways God wants me to live my life. Knowing and doing, however, are often not the same. Knowing and following through can be two very different things. In fact, I'm only successful about half the time —or less. Asking for help from my Lord is a common prayer for me. Some prayers are small and personal. Others are larger and offered for shared needs. Some prayers show results quickly, and others do not—at least not in a timely fashion.

Continued on next page...



THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 26
PSALM 128; NUMBERS 21:4-9;
HEBREWS 3:1-6



An example of this came during a skiing trip to Tahoe, where I broke my leg in two places. During my recovery, I came to appreciate a man I was dating for his quiet care and consideration. He brought me books and chocolate malt and even found a theater that could accommodate wheelchairs. His name is Gerry, and we have now been married for 58 years. The Lord worked His magic —causing me to slow down and fall in love.

The calming feelings I receive when I pray is something for which I am deeply thankful. There is grace and peace that come from prayer, knowing that God —He/She —listens to me. I feel that Christ is sometimes there, lending a helping hand to my prayers. “Help” is one of my simplest prayers, as I am not always sure I have something worthy to share.

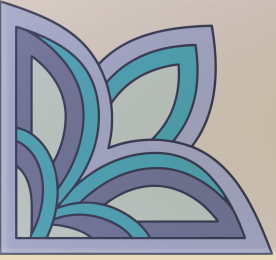
Communication with our Heavenly Father takes many forms. Sometimes we seek advice, and sometimes it comes to us in unexpected ways and in unusual places. Often, the place itself becomes the inspiration for the prayer.

Prayer

Creator God,

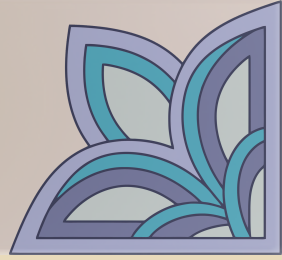
As I pray and talk with You, so many images crowd my consciousness. Our world needs help in so many ways —basic needs such as food, housing, health care, and education. There is a place where I could step up and act. It is a joy to feel that I can be part of service that helps another. Show me where our labor and our dollars should be used so they may be the most beneficial. We are blessed to live in a place that offers freedom to its people. Northern California, with its openness, celebrates diversity and activism, and for this I am grateful. Schools where we are free to learn, question, and grow are a blessing. We give thanks for love in all sizes and shapes. Help us to walk in the Lord’s way, so that we may be given courage and humility, inspired by hope. Amen.

*Rosaleen Zisch is a ruling elder of Stone Church/Willow Glen
and Moderator of Presbyterian Women of the Presbytery*



FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 27

ROMANS 4:6-13



Paul's reflection on Abraham reminds us that God's grace shows up before we do anything to earn it. Abraham is called righteous before he accomplishes anything impressive —before works, before ritual, before proving himself. God blesses first, and then invites Abraham into a life shaped by that blessing.

Most of us get this backwards. We work hard to belong, to be worthy, to feel secure, imagining God's approval as something fragile and dependent on our performance. But Paul keeps pushing back on that idea. Righteousness —our right relationship with God—is not something we achieve; it's a gift.

That's good news for anyone who is tired, anxious, or trying to hold everything together. Grace isn't the prize at the end of a long effort; it's the starting point. You are loved first. Claimed first. Welcomed first.

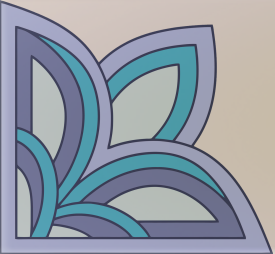
This blessing and grace become our identity and our home, which is both remarkable and deeply countercultural. As we learn to trust God's blessing, something begins to shift: the pressure to be enough loosens, freeing us to live with greater service and joy. Like Abraham, we are shaped by God's blessing, grounded in the truth of who we are in God's heart.

Perhaps the word for today is this: rest in the gift. Where are you striving to earn what God has already given?

Prayer

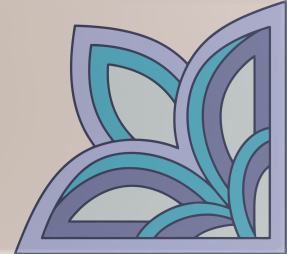
Gracious God, thank you for loving us first. Help us rest in your grace and walk through this day trusting it is enough. Amen.

The Rev. Diane Ford is Pastor of Trinity Presbyterian Church of Santa Cruz



SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 28

JOHN 7:53-8:11



Jesus knows the entirety of our lives and the depths of our hearts. Scripture tells us that his eyes are “like a flame of fire” (Revelation 1:14; 2:18) —not to destroy us, but to see us truthfully and completely. Nothing is hidden from him, not our sins, not our fears, not our deepest struggles.

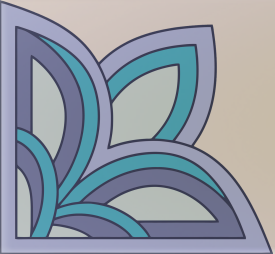
In John 7:53 –8:11, we encounter a woman whose life has been reduced to a single moment of failure. Dragged before Jesus, she stands surrounded by accusers holding stones, ready to execute judgment. According to the law, she deserves death. Her problem is no longer whether she will live, but how she will die.

Then Jesus speaks: “Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone.” One by one, beginning with the elders, the crowd leaves. The power of Jesus’s words exposes the hearts of the accusers, awakening their consciences. Judgment dissolves in the presence of truth. At last, only Jesus and the woman remain.

Jesus asks her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” She answers, “No one, sir.” And Jesus replies, “Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again.”

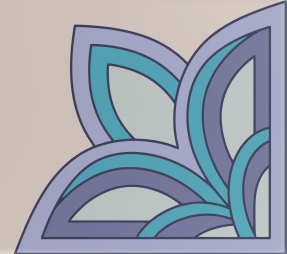
The word “condemn” here comes from the Greek *katakrino*, meaning judgment that leads to punishment. The woman stood under a sentence of death, yet Jesus refuses to affirm that verdict. This does not mean that Jesus minimizes sin. Scripture is clear that sin is destructive and grows stronger over time, ultimately leading to death (James 1:15). Sin is serious, and its consequences are real. Yet Jesus reveals something deeper still: God’s purpose is not condemnation, but restoration. Jesus does not excuse the woman’s sin, but neither does he define her by it. He forgives her and then calls her into a new way of life.

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SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 28

JOHN 7:53–8:11



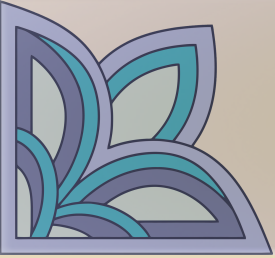
In this moment, we glimpse the promise of Revelation 21:5: “Behold, I am making all things new.” Renewal begins not with denial, but with grace. Isaiah reminds us that Christ was wounded for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities, and that the punishment that brought us peace fell upon him (Isaiah 53:5–6). This is why Jesus does not condemn the repentant sinner. He bears the weight of judgment himself. Like the woman, we all stand before Jesus with lives marked by brokenness. We face countless problems —financial, relational, vocational, spiritual, physical, and moral. There is no one without wounds or failures. But when Jesus speaks into our lives, change becomes possible. His word has the power to interrupt cycles of sin, despair, and death.

In this Lenten season, we are invited to stand honestly before Christ, to lay down our stones and our shame, and to hear his voice. When Jesus speaks, forgiveness is given, life is renewed, and all things begin again.

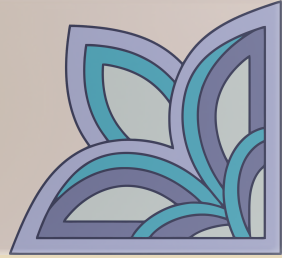
Prayer

Gracious and loving Jesus,
we come before you as we are —exposed, broken, and in need of mercy.
You see us fully and love us completely.
We lay down our sins, our fears, and the burdens we carry.
Speak into our lives with your word of grace.
Free us from condemnation, and lead us into newness of life.
Renew our hearts, restore our hope,
and teach us to walk in obedience and gratitude.
Make all things new within us.
We pray in your holy name. Amen.

The Rev. Dr. Taejinn Hahn is Pastor of Daesung Presbyterian Church of Sunnyvale



SUNDAY, MARCH 1 JOHN 3:1-17



The kingdom of God, also called the kingdom of heaven, is a way of referring to the collective group of people who follow Jesus as their Lord and King. The kingdom is both present here on earth and will be the nature of eternal life with Jesus.

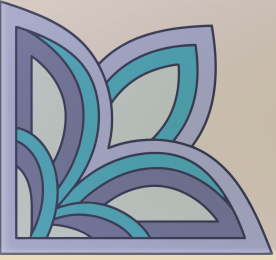
Nicodemus states a belief of some of the Pharisees but does it under the cloak of darkness by saying, “Without God’s help no one could do what you do.” Jesus turns the discussion to entrance into the kingdom of God. Jesus says that just as a person must be born into this life, one needs to be born into the spiritual life as well. He refers to the Old Testament story where Moses lifts up the serpent on the staff and all who looked at the lifted-up staff would be healed. Why? Because they believed that God would heal them if they did what Moses instructed them to do. Jesus says to Nicodemus, “Whoever believes in the Son of Man will have eternal life.”

At the beginning of the Lenten season, we have the opportunity to turn our focus once again to the story of the Son of Man. In John 12:32, Jesus says, “When I am lifted up, I will draw all people to me.” Jesus provides healing, forgiveness, restoration, and wholeness to all who will look to Him for help.

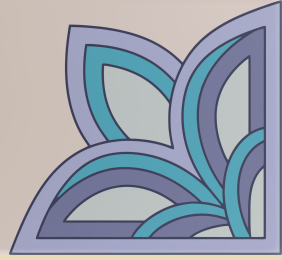
Prayer

Jesus, we turn to you today. Thank you for your sacrifice, your gift to us. Help us be more aware of what you have done for us. Give us not only healing but the confidence to know we are whole in you. Amen.

The Rev. Edd Breeden is an honorably retired minister and Presbytery Treasurer.



MONDAY, MARCH 2 HEBREWS 3:7-19



Many of us have experienced Disneyland's legendary Jungle Cruise. Deadly hippos, rhinos, crocodiles, piranhas, lions, and tigers lurk at every turn. Of course, the dangers are highly simulated, and played for comic relief.

Though not always so dramatic, the perils we face in our lives are much more real, and not so easily laughed off. We are left with a series of hard questions. Why do we and loved ones face illness and medical challenges? Why don't we get the job, the promotion, or raise we felt we deserved? Why do the evil seem to flourish and the good suffer? Why is the world beset by hunger, natural disasters, armed conflicts, and political strife?

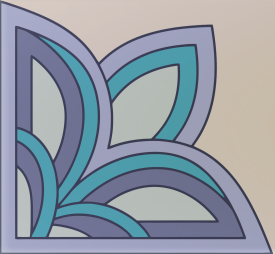
These disappointments can test our spirits. One response is to turn away from God. That is what the Israelites did. Although God had led them out of bondage in Egypt, they quickly lost faith and rejected their Deliverer through repeated acts of grumbling, disobedience, rebellion, and idolatry. The result: they wandered in the wilderness for forty years, unable to enter the Promised Land.

We don't have to make that same mistake. When we encounter trials, we can take our laments to God, recognizing that God is the only one who can truly help us. We can remember God's faithfulness and steadfast love. We can remain open to the redemptive work God will do in the future. And we can encourage one another to not let sin's false promises pull us away from God.

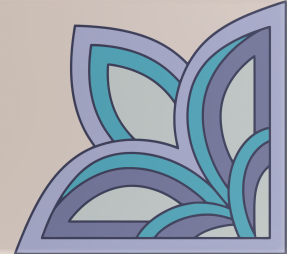
Prayer

Dear Lord, we thank you for your goodness, mercy, and love. Keep us sensitive to Your voice and alert to Your presence in our lives. When we face struggles, help our hearts to remain faithful to You. Amen.

David Burgess is a ruling elder at Westminster Presbyterian Church in San José



TUESDAY, MARCH 3 PSALM 121



When I run or fast-walk 3.25 miles around our neighborhood everyday, I see the mountains on the east and west, with interstate highway 101 running north and south. These times of hearing my breath, listening to my Spotify list, watching a squirrel scamper across my path, cars passing me by, and pedestrians with their dogs gingerly making their way, this is a steady space and time to recalibrate with our Creator. This 30 minute time is sacred, centering me on whose I am, reminding me of the “why” of my life, existence, and vocation.

Psalm 121, one of the so-called Song of Ascents, uses the word “keep” or “keeper” a few times. God keeps us. God is our keeper. In our comings and goings, in the trials and travails we encounter or which encounter us. Whether by day or by night, in our waking and sleeping moments, the Holy One who made heaven and earth has our back all the time, every time.

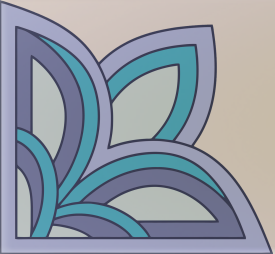
In 2008, I traveled to Israel/Palestine with a group of pastor alums from Princeton Theological Seminary. I recall reading this Psalm as we were walking along the Kidron Valley. We imagined pilgrims who traveled dirt roads, sandy paths, and various terrain from near and far distances to rendezvous at the Holy Temple. As the ancient pilgrim ascended from the Kidron Valley, one would see the city gates of Jerusalem, the huge protective stones as like a fortress, and what was then the Holy Temple, within which was the holy Ark of the Covenant and the presence of God. To behold the city itself after traveling a long distance, the Psalmist asks the rhetorical pondering of the heart and soul, “I lift up my eyes to the hills – from where will my help come?”

In your own particular geographical location, you may not be near hills or mountains. You may be near a body of water, or flat land, or in a hospital bed. You may be reading this reflection at the grocery line, or in your car waiting to pick up your loved one. You may be in solitude on the street, on an airplane, preparing to join a protest. Still yet, you may have a printed copy in a war zone or a place of military conflict. The promise of Psalm 121 has got you covered. It’s comprehensive in scope, because the God who holds us and who keeps us has a generously vast heart for the entirety of all of creation. Thanks be to God! Amen.

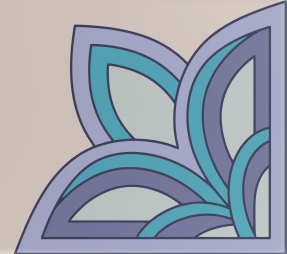
Prayer

Thank you, loving God, for your generous goodness in keeping us. Amen.

The Rev. Dr. Neal D. Presa is Executive Presbyter



WEDNESDAY, MARCH 4 EZEKIEL 36:22-32

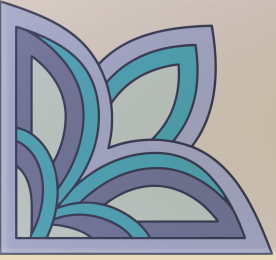


The early 20th century Spanish American philosopher and writer George Santayana famously observed that “those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” A variation of this in our day, Stanford political scientist and former U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice cited a Stanford historian who observed “if one doesn’t know history, then everything is a precedent.”

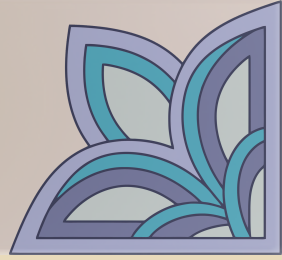
This reminds me of when our sons were in elementary school and around a Lenten season as we were looking to observing Holy Week and then Easter, one of them asked why miracles don’t happen anymore. They pondered why we don’t hear, read about, or witness bodies of water parting like the Red Sea in Moses’s day, water being turned to wine, a few loaves and fishes multiplying; let alone, the dead resurrecting from the grave.

This section of Ezekiel’s prophetic word has a lot of future tense stuff: “I will take you from the nations” (36:24); “I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean” (36:25); “A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.” (36:26) There’s a lot of things the Lord promises God will do, in the near and distant future. And when it happens, whenever it happens, to whomever it will happen, that will be a miracle, that will be an unprecedented thing, that will be a new beginning, that will be God doing a new thing. . .or is it? From our limited human perspective with transitory memories, it will be a new thing. Consider this: unless the future children of my sons listen to 1980s music, they won’t know who Motown is. And if they were to hear R&B for the first time, they’ll say, “Wow, this is cool new music.” But it isn’t. It’s always been there. We just didn’t know or we weren’t aware.

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WEDNESDAY, MARCH 4 EZEKIEL 36:22-32

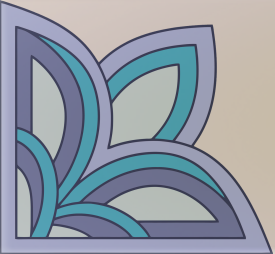


That's largely what I've come to glean from the Scriptures and from engaging with our faith. There's nothing new under the sun, most of the time. God has a long track record of changing people, of changing hearts, of doing miracles, of even raising God's Son from an unremarkable tomb. We are part of the future tense of what God is up to. And often times, what we call a "miracle" or an "unprecedented" work of God, is actually our hearts, minds, and faith catching up with what God has been up to all along, and God desires to "Wow" us as we behold of that new thing, of that new heart God gives. Because in that awe-inspiring moment or season, we will be filled with joy and gratitude for the surprising new thing God is doing. Be on the look out. God is on the move!

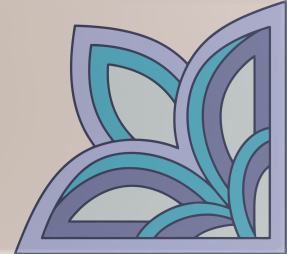
Prayer

Gracious God, keep us attentive to what you are doing in our midst. Thank you for including us in your good work in the world. Enable us to live with joy and gratitude for what you say and do. Give us new hearts and a new heart to behold you, to trust and believe in you, and to follow you. Amen.

The Rev. Dr. Neal D. Presa is Executive Presbyter



THURSDAY, MARCH 5 PSALM 95: EXODUS 16:1-8: COLOSSIANS 1:15-23



These days, I have been slow to “sing to the Lord.” I have been too weary to “make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation.” (Psalm 95:1 -2) Why? Because the world is burning, of course. These days, I have been grumbling alongside the “whole congregation of the people of Israel in the wilderness.” And I fear the LORD has heard “the grumbling that I grumble against him.” (Exodus 16:2,8)

The poet Katie Farris asks “Why write love poetry in a burning world?”

Answer: “To train myself to find, in the midst of hell what isn't hell.”

Another answer: “To train myself, in the midst of a burning world to offer poems of love to a burning world.”

It seems to me there is no greater time than Lent to do this training. To find poetry in the privation, the injustice, the wandering and grumbling and hungering and thirsting of the creation God knows and loves and still calls good. It seems to me that this is part of the reconciliation that Paul confers to the Colossians.

And oh! There is still so much poetry, so much music!

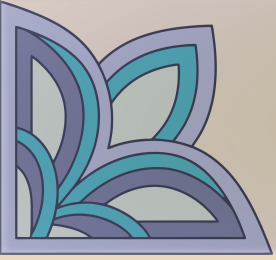
An example: “The people of Israel came to the wilderness of Sin.” (Exodus 16:1) “A wilderness named Sin?” I ask myself. Yes, that's exactly what sin is! A wilderness we wander through, alive and unmerciful and painfully, dreadfully gorgeous. A place we must move through in order to arrive to where we are going, the chimeric Promised Land. Easter morning. The mythos of Milk and Honey.

Another example: “And [Christ] is before all things, and in him all things hold together.” (Colossians 1:17) “Can this really mean,” I ask myself, “that Christ is in the wilderness of Sin with me?” Christ in the grumbings I grumble? In the songs I do not stand to sing? Christ in the burning world? Of course!

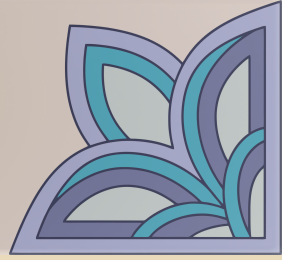
“Everything belongs,” writes Richard Rohr, “only when we live and see through God's eyes.”

These days, it is only when I pause to see the hell through God's eyes that I feel the warmth of that which isn't hell. It is only then when I hear the singing and find that it comes not from outside, but from within me!

The Rev. Juli(ann)e Porras-Center is Pastor/Executive Director of Somos Watsonville



FRIDAY, MARCH 6 EXODUS 16:9-21



One of my favorite Japanese words is “mottainai,” a phrase reflecting the feeling of regret over something wasted. Despite having gathered all they needed, a few Israelites felt compelled to stash some bread away – just in case God failed them tomorrow. I imagine Moses waking up to the stench of rotting food and the sight of wriggling maggots. I hear him angrily bemoaning, “Mottainai!” What a waste!

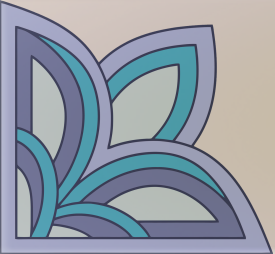
Waste is a huge problem in America. The USDA estimates 30 -40% of the food supply is wasted annually. We lose not only food, but also water, energy, labor, and resources used to grow, harvest, slaughter, process, pack, and ship these products. Then there is the added wastefulness of this waste being driven, shipped, and flown around the globe, to be piled on methane-producing landfills.

God created a world of goodness in which all creation could find sustenance. Human greed invented “trash” and concocted scarcity mindsets. God has provided all that we need! We must resist taking more than our fair share. We must resist stockpiling, hoarding, and wasting precious resources. We must share when we have more than we can use in this lifetime.

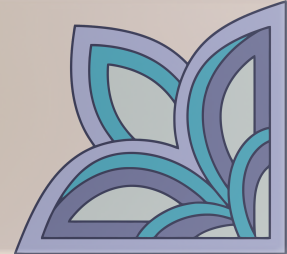
Prayer

Abundant Provider, help us trust in the sustenance you generously provide to all creation. Make our hearts sensitive to “mottainai,” such that we cherish and share rather than hoard and waste. May we rejoice in gratitude, for everything in life is a gift from you! In Christ’s magnanimous name we pray. Amen.

*Veronica Ota is the Presbytery’s Peacemaking and Justice Advocate and
is a Candidate for Ordination from the Presbytery of San Gabriel*



SATURDAY, MARCH 7 EXODUS 16:27-35



In Exodus 16, we are reminded of the way that the ancient Israelites are given “manna” in the wilderness from God. They needed something concrete and real, and this bread from heaven was an unknown substance. Even the name meant something like, “What is it?”

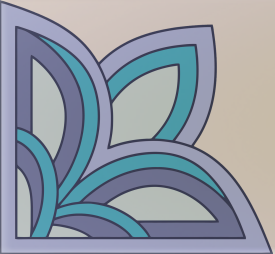
Maybe faith is like that. Anne Lamott writes that, “The opposite of faith is not doubt, but certainty.” Even when we receive blessings and goodness from God, it still causes us to ask, “What is this?” How is this happening? Do we deserve it? (Nope!) Faith has a sense of trusting in the purposes and character of God, even while we wrestle through the details of all that we don’t understand about our own lives, our country, and our world right now.

The Gospel lesson for today is from John 4 and is the beginning of the famous “woman at the well” story. But before that happens, we see the background. Jesus hears that the Pharisees know about his ministry impact, and he tries to get away from the crush of the crowd. He leaves Judea (in the South) and moves back toward Galilee (in the North). But on the way, he goes through the Samaritan city of Sychar.

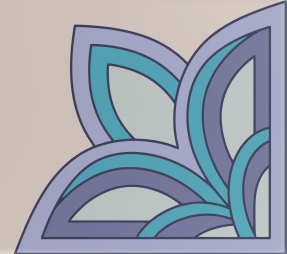
Amidst the cult of success that is part of everyday American culture, Jesus seems to strike a very different stance. He isn’t seeking more recognition for his good works, and he isn’t after larger crowds to listen, like, subscribe, give, and follow. In fact, he is moving into areas where those who don’t usually interact with someone like him might be. What comes next is a story of grace and mercy on display. What would it look like for you today to live into these Biblical reminders? First, that our faith encounters things we don’t understand. There is mystery in this world, and yet we are asked to trust God deeply.

Second, that unlike the always-on nature of life in Silicon Valley, walking with God calls us out of our regular routines. When you come across someone new or different in the days ahead, would you follow Jesus’ model—sitting down to talk, listening with love, and showing uncommon grace? May it be so for you.

The Rev. Dr. David G. Watermulder is Senior Pastor of the Presbyterian Church of Los Gatos.



SUNDAY, MARCH 8 ROMANS 5:1-11



Through our belief in Jesus as the Messiah, we come to understand the extent of His love for us. As our faith in His love increases, we learn how He helps us withstand the difficult times that come our way by teaching us that these experiences will make us stronger.

When we patiently work through the circumstances of our lives, both easy and difficult, we become mature in the ways of God. This maturity helps us know God's love more deeply and sense the presence of His Spirit surrounding us.

God chose to help us understand the depth of His love by dying on the cross in our place while we were still full of our evil tendencies. This was not something done for just a few people but for all humankind, for all have evil tendencies.

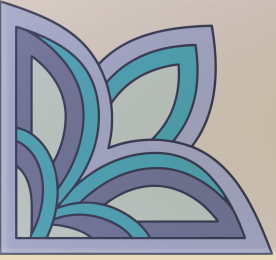
All people were destined to die because Adam and Eve disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden. Yet God had another, one like Adam, come to our rescue because of His love for us.

The choice Jesus made to die for us brought about forgiveness of human evil and the restoration of all humankind with God.

Prayer

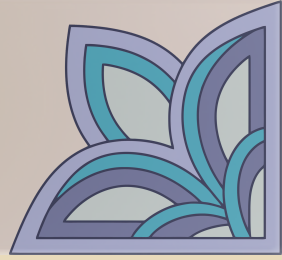
Jesus, thank you for your gift of forgiveness and life. Take away the guilt we feel and fill us with the confidence of being a child of God, destined for your eternal kingdom. Amen.

The Rev. Edd Breeden is an honorably retired minister and Presbytery Treasurer.



MONDAY, MARCH 9

JOHN 1:1-13



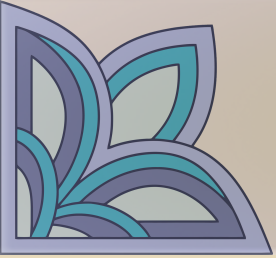
In John's Gospel, Jesus comes to us as the light of the world. This is good news for a dark world. We are living in an era of despair. Today the world is dark. The shadow of despair falls harshly on the most vulnerable. Those who are poor, marginalized, sick or sojourners are cloaked in darkness. It seems overwhelming. The politics of death are all around us. People are unable to access healthcare. Children are dying needlessly around the world as profits are placed above people. American citizens are murdered and revenge, hate and racism seem to rule.

There is something interesting about darkness, however. It has no power, it has no quantity or measurement. Darkness is the absence of light. Darkness, as John writes in his Gospel, cannot overcome or even comprehend light. Today we need to be advocates for life and allies of the light. A new day can dawn. Like the dawn, the light may come slowly but it will come. Jesus is the light of world and all life can flourish in his love

Prayer

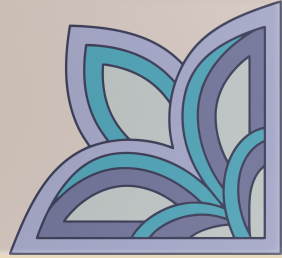
Lord of life you come to give us light. You bridged the barrier between heaven and earth, between the human and the divine. Yet, we often build barriers between ourselves and those who we judge as different or as "the other." As your Son built bridges between races, classes and nations, teach us to walk on those well-lit paths and stay out of the shadows of hopelessness and despair. In the name of the Holy One we pray. Amen

The Rev. Larry Villardo is an honorably retired minister and member at large of the Presbytery



TUESDAY, MARCH 10

GENESIS 29:1-14; 1 CORINTHIANS 10:1-4



The lectionary pairs Genesis 29 (the story of Jacob, Laban, and Rachel) with 1 Corinthians 10 (identifying Jesus Christ as the spiritual rock and the spiritual water which Moses and the Israelites drank in the wilderness and were washed in the cloud and sea). We are grateful for the connection with the desert well in Genesis 29, the water which the desert shepherds used to nourish their sheep and rolling the stone that covered the well. We can readily see for the Lenten season how this applies to us: we are the flock of sheep whom the Shepherd gathers at the well, the stone is lifted and rolled away, revealing the water that will nourish the gathered flock. Connecting this to Easter's stone that is rolled away, revealing God's power and light, the spiritual water of Christ whose life nourishes God's lambs. We, like the desert sheep in Genesis 29, are cared for because of the caring Shepherd who sees to it that the stone is lifted at the right time when the flock is gathered at the well. That preaches! Go for it.

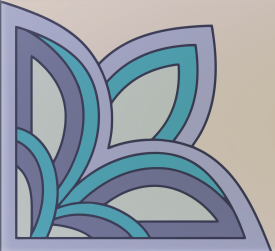
But there's something else there. We see Jacob speaking with the shepherds. He sees Rachel, identified as his cousin. Her father, Laban, is Jacob's uncle; Laban is Rebekah's brother. When Jacob sees Rachel, he walked over to the stone covering the watering well, rolls it over, and then approaches Rachel and kisses her. I guess he didn't have any boundary training nor attended an anti-harassment workshop. Then a few verses later in the chapter, we encounter Jacob's other cousin, Leah, who is Rachel's sister. I won't go further into the sordid story of Jacob and his family; read the tale, it's like a daytime soap opera of intrigue, jealousy, sex, rape, kidnapping, forgiveness, reconciliation, favoritism, last wills and testaments, among so much details beyond but including spiritual drink and spiritual water.

That juxtaposition of the nice spiritual truth happens with the messiness of a family, in the stuff of life. That's what real faith and real life are, and that's the world which God loves, in which Christ lived and crucified, into which he resurrected, and which he is presently renewing. So the next time you are on a spiritual high or a spiritual low, look around you and see the beauty of God in the midst of the world we live, and, move, and have our being.

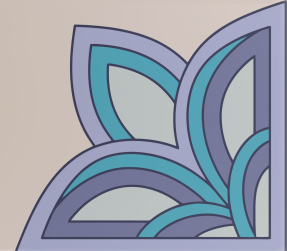
Prayer

Thank you, God, that you love the world as we live and experience it, and that your Son lived and experienced the same, and redeems and renews us and creation.

The Rev. Dr. Neal D. Presa is Executive Presbyter



WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11 JOHN 7:14-31



Jesus has ALWAYS been controversial!

From his conception/incarnation to his resurrection, Jesus has messed with the status quo, doing things in ways no one would have expected (or recommended). It's no different in our passage for today. Jesus had previously fed the five thousand, walked on water and made scandalous claims about being the Bread of Life. (John 6).

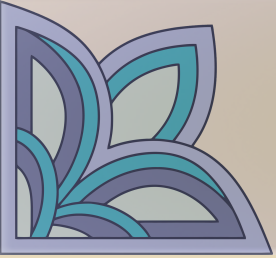
In John 7, Jesus taught with unexpected authority, challenging conventional teachings. In John 7:20 the crowd responded by saying he was "demon possessed"! Between the Pharisees defense of doctrine, and Jesus's ability to teach with authority (paired with his demonstrated ability to perform miracles) there was utter confusion about how to respond to him.

I've wondered, incredulously, how the crowds and Pharisees missed seeing Him clearly. And yet, I've had to admit with humility, that I miss seeing God's hand at work in the world today. His unexpected ways continue to confound me daily. I'm more like the Pharisees than I want to be when I'm SURE that God should show up and do what I think is right. Can you relate?

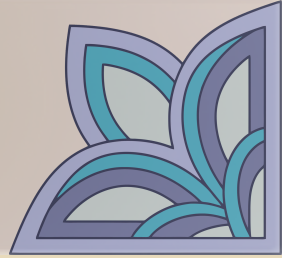
Prayer

God in Heaven, I confess that I can get pretty self-righteous sometimes. Help me to understand when you interrupt my expectations. To recognize, and to trust You when things don't make sense. Holy Spirit, help me to follow Jesus closely so that I might do your will and bring your kingdom near. Use me as I love you to love my neighbor. Amen.

Vicki Minerva is a ruling elder at Gilroy Presbyterian Church



THURSDAY, MARCH 12 EPHESIANS 4:25-32



I'm not much into New Year's resolutions. I gave those up long ago. Not because I failed to be a gym rat by the third week of a new year or give up an extra scoop of ice cream by the first hour of making the commitment, but because each day is an opportunity to recognize I am a perpetual work-in-progress. When I lie down to sleep and reflect upon a day just finished, I say a prayer of thanks and commit what was left undone to the hands and heart of the Lord. When I wake up, I give thanks to God for the Lord's mercies made new each morning, and ask the Holy Spirit to guide me on how I may serve in the new day. So, each day is a new day's resolution to do a bit better, to be faithful, and to be loving, caring, and just.

Today's passage has these exhortations:

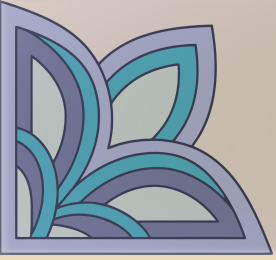
- Put away falsehood
- Speak truth to our neighbors
- Be angry but do not sin
- Thieves -give up stealing; instead work honestly
- May our mouths bless, not curse and not tear down
- Don't grieve the Holy Spirit, but instead listen to, discern, and follow the Spirit
- Put away bitterness, wrath, slander, malice
- Be kind, tenderhearted
- Forgive people

These imperatives, these ethics of a new life in Christ, are everyday fruits of the root of God's love in our lives. We don't do these consistently and constantly. I won't wait until January 1, 2027 to ask the Spirit to help me to do these things. Today is the time to live out and embody what our salvation means (Philippians 2:12). Such imperatives emanate from the indicative of Christ's work in our lives. Because he is Savior and he has freed us to live for God's purposes, we are free to do all those things as we rely upon the power and fellowship of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

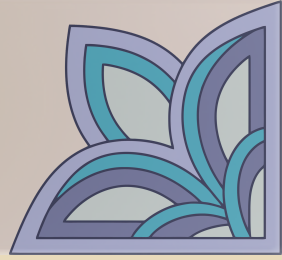
Prayer

Thank you, Lord Jesus, for your work in our lives. We are crucified with you, nevertheless we live, yet not us, but you live in us. And the life we live, we live by your faith, for you loved us and gave yourself for us. Amen.

The Rev. Dr. Neal D. Presa is Executive Presbyter



FRIDAY, MARCH 13 1 SAMUEL 15:22-31



Whenever I read this passage, my heart hurts. Saul was in over his head as the first king of Israel. I imagine the honor he received as the people chose him to be their king and also the pain this caused God. God was to be Israel's only Ruler but they had become just like other nations. God seemed distant to Israel. They wanted someone in the fray. So, God gave them what they wanted though it would forever be a shadow of what they could have been.

Saul wanted to be a good king but he, too, was more aware of the people around him, of pleasing them more than God. Saul wanted to hide his sin - his rebellion against what God explicitly told him to do. He blamed it on others before finally confessing. God already knew the truth of Saul's heart and the idolatry in his soul.

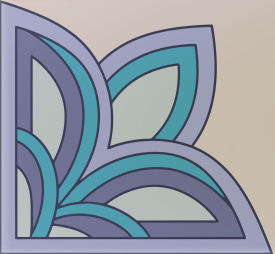
What opportunities does God give us to lead? We all know the responsibility that comes with leading anything much less the spiritual well-being of those in our protection. Do we cave to pressure? Probably. Do we love popularity? Yup. Do we imagine God changing His mind over His charge against us saying, "That's OK. Not a big deal"?

Every moment, God is ready to forgive us when we confess our sin. Rather than being welcomed back to cheering crowds, how much greater to be welcomed back God.

Prayer

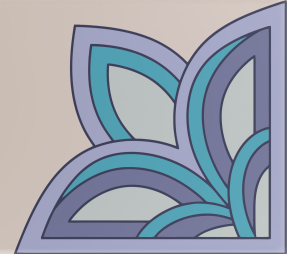
Lord, may your forgiveness be everything to us. Amen.

The Rev. Kim Dorr-Tilley is Pastor of First Presbyterian Church of Mountain View



SATURDAY, MARCH 14

PSALM 23



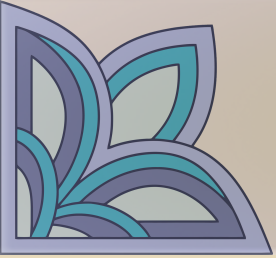
Anyone else feeling depressed right now? After the highs of Advent and Christmas, I'm feeling low when considering all that is going on in our country and the world. All of the examples of cruelty and discrimination that I am seeing each day in the news are coming to roost in my head, heart and soul. I find myself a little shorter in temper, a little less tolerant of even friendly kidding, a little more ready to growl and fuss. I'm ready to seek help.

Psalm 23 has become a daily blessing and meditation for me. I envision my connection with God as a blue beam of light that shines down on me as I go through the day, and it is my job to be as open to it as I can. Sometimes the clouds of my own anger, fears, and doubt block the light, but God's light is always there. I just have to let it in and trust that God will comfort and protect me.

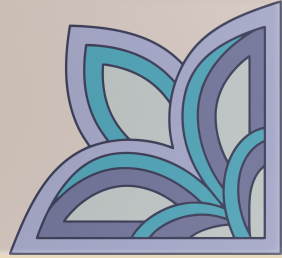
Prayer

If I let His light through, the images of "green pastures and still waters" allow me to hear God's guidance and feel God's hand. I am not always successful in this practice. Sometimes I find myself raising a black umbrella of depression to block that connection. But even on the worst days, I work to remember that the Lord is preparing a feast for me and that I just need to come to God. If I allow, God will bless me. Amen.

Dr. Chris Hasegawa is a ruling elder at First Presbyterian Church of Monterey



SUNDAY, MARCH 15 EPHESIANS 5:8-14



As I write this on February 3rd, we are hearing daily revelations of the abuse done to children by Jeffrey Epstein and the powerful men invited to his island. The scale of the depravity is mind-boggling. That depravity includes the abuse itself and the way so many people in power looked the other way and disregarded the testimony of the victims. As Paul says in Ephesians 5, “It’s embarrassing to even talk about what certain persons do in secret.”

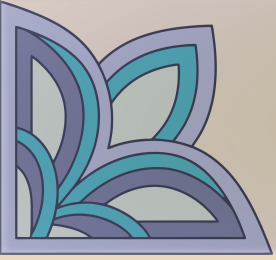
Passages like this one from Ephesians 5 have often seemed like hyperbole to me. They have seemed like Paul being moralistic in ways that aren’t really helpful for regular people. His dualistic thinking about light and darkness seems out of touch with a post-modern world where right and wrong can truly be subjective. With so many different cultures and traditions, and so much mingling and mixing, where do we draw the lines?

Then we hear testimony from the victims in the Epstein files, and it’s clear the perpetrators are truly living in darkness. We see masked government agents profiling and detaining people at will, tear-gassing crowds with children, and murdering people. The fact that they do these things in the daylight does not hide their darkness. We see U.S.-funded bombs blowing up Palestinian civilians, and we know exactly what it means to cross a moral line—to “participate in unfruitful actions of darkness.” None of this is hyperbole.

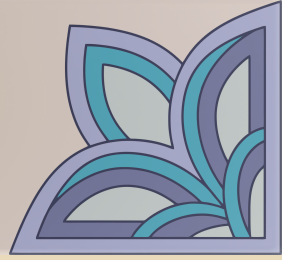
So what are we called to do? “You should reveal the truth about them.” We are called to shine a light upon what is happening, to witness it, and to testify to what we see. And notice the way Paul phrases the last verse: “Wake up, sleeper! Get up from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”

It does not start with Christ. It starts with us waking up to what is happening around us. Paul tells us to get up from the dead! And then, only then, does Christ shine on us. I know. I know. That’s not a very Reformed way to say it. And sure, Christ’s light, God’s love, and the Spirit’s grace all come first, theologically speaking. But in our lived experience, sometimes we can’t wait to feel the light and the love before we act. We have to act. We have to get up and step into the light, and so produce “every sort of justice, goodness, and truth.”

The Rev. Tom Harris is Pastor of First Presbyterian Church of Palo Alto



MONDAY, MARCH 16 PSALM 146



In his book *You Are Changing the World: Whether You Like It or Not*, David LaMotte writes that real change is not brought about by heroes but by ordinary, everyday people who are part of a movement. LaMotte criticizes a common “Hero Narrative” that teaches that the hero will make the change for us, rather than with us (LaMotte, 58).

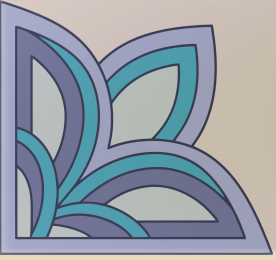
Likewise the Psalmist in Psalm 146 belts out a warning: “Don’t trust leaders.” Instead, we should hope in the Lord “who is faithful forever, who gives justice to people who are oppressed . . . who protects immigrants . . . but who makes the way of the wicked twist and turn!”

To be part of a movement is to join hundreds, thousands, even millions of others who make daily decisions to engage in some way in the struggle for justice. The best leaders are the ones who invite others to take part in this holy work. And the way to counter the leaders who lead destructive movements that target immigrants or anyone who is different is to double down in joining God in the movements for justice, trusting that, in the mystery of God’s timing, God will indeed thwart the destructive leaders and “make the way of the wicked twist and turn!”

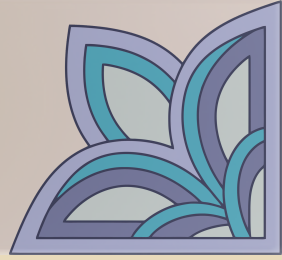
Prayer

Holy God, show me how I can join with others in doing your holy work of justice. Show me the next best thing to do right now. Amen.

The Rev. Dr. Jack Cabaness (he/him) is Pastor of Covenant Presbyterian Church in Palo Alto



TUESDAY, MARCH 17 ISAIAH 42:14-21



For a long time, God says through the prophet Isaiah, “I have held my peace.” And then, suddenly, God speaks and acts. God promises to lead the blind by a way they do not know, to turn darkness into light, and to make rough places level. This is not a gentle nudge or fine-tuning, but rather, it’s the beginning of something new.

The passage then turns quickly to idols, those things we trust to give us security, meaning, or a sense of control. Isaiah is not concerned only with carved images. Idols are anything that quietly claim our loyalty and allegiance and seek to shape our lives more than God does. They are often heavy things: fear, self-reliance, the need to be right, the habits and assumptions we cling to because they feel familiar and “safe.”

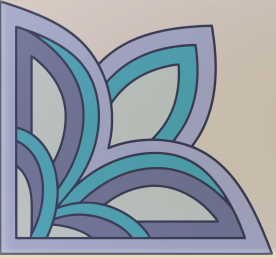
During Lent, we often talk about giving things up, things like chocolate, smoking, or other indulgences. But Isaiah invites us into a deeper practice. What if, instead of giving up what we enjoy, we set down what burdens us? What if we loosen our grip on the things that pull us away from God’s restoring work in us and among us? God’s promise to “make all things new” is not something we accomplish through discipline or effort. It is a gift.

Lent becomes a season not of earning renewal, but of making room for it, and trusting that God is already leading us toward life.

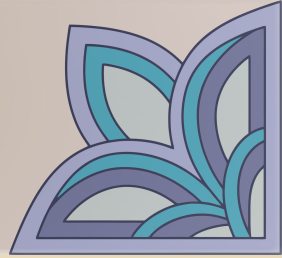
Prayer

Holy Father, we thank You for making us new. In this Lenten season, let the burdens we carry be made clear. Gently loosen our grip on what draws us away from you. Open our eyes, soften our hearts, and lead us in your way, that we may walk more freely into the new life you are already creating, through Jesus Christ our Lord. In His name we pray and say, “Amen.”

*Chrys Sahgal is a Commissioned Ruling Elder (CRE)
at First Presbyterian Church of Santa Clara*



WEDNESDAY, MARCH 18 ISAIAH 60:17-22



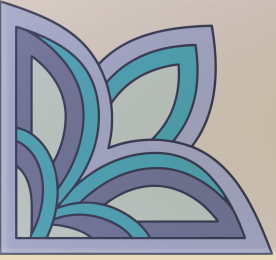
As we embark upon this new calendar year of 2026, it's a powerful opportunity to intentionally anchor our lives in the profound presence of God. I believe cultivating a consistent discipline of scriptural meditation is paramount; it's how we truly discern His whispers, recognize His ever-present hand, and embrace His divine guidance in our daily walk.

Just as the prophet Isaiah foretold, our God is actively working to transform our often-besieged world with an unprecedented era of peace, glory, and ultimate deliverance. We are assured that our diligent hardships and devoted service to Him are not in vain; they are accounted for and will be richly rewarded, ultimately culminating in a place of honor, far beyond any earthly "pedestal of gold" in heaven. This assurance reminds us that our present struggles, no matter how daunting, are but fleeting moments in the grand tapestry God is weaving – a tapestry that ultimately promises a future entirely free from pain, sorrow, and brokenness.

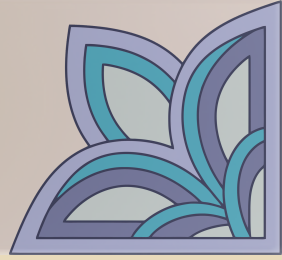
I've personally walked through seasons where my faith was rigorously tested, encountering situations so profoundly challenging that I questioned why God permitted such pain and disappointment to enter my life. There were moments of profound spiritual isolation, where I wrestled with feelings of abandonment, wondering if perhaps unconfessed sin was the cause. Yet, through fervent, earnest prayer, seeking deliverance from that heavy burden, the Holy Spirit sovereignly intervened. He empowered me with an unshakeable resolve to trust the intricate process, revealing His unchanging truth: God is always faithful and just. He miraculously clears paths where none appear, and He does so with impeccable timing. And true to His nature, He answered my prayers in ways that far exceeded my imagination, filling me with profound praise! He unfolded before me a vibrant new chapter of hope and abundant blessings, illuminating my path forward.

Today, I face each unfolding chapter of my life not with trepidation, but with serene confidence, because I know the Author. Our God is truly awesome in His power and boundless in His mercy; in the midst of life's most raging storms, every single believer's life is precious to Him, and His saving grace unfailingly lifts us to safety.

Continued on next page...



WEDNESDAY, MARCH 18 ISAIAH 60:17-22



Let this powerful truth resonate within us: we are beloved children of God. He has promised never to abandon us, nor to forsake us, in any and every dimension of our existence. It is our privilege to allow His radiant light to penetrate even the deepest shadows of this world, knowing that through the transformative power of the Holy Spirit, we are destined for victory in every struggle and trial we encounter daily. Let us resolutely refuse to dwell in the shadows of the past; once we genuinely repent, God, in His infinite mercy, not only remembers our past no more, but He makes us entirely new. He consistently offers us a pristine fresh start, His grace and boundless love proving more than sufficient to conquer any adversity this world may present.

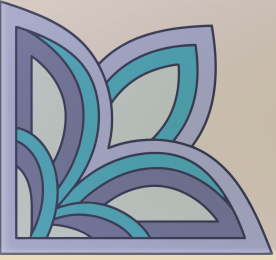
My encouragement to us all is to profoundly treasure the precious life God has entrusted to us, embracing it with unwavering trust and unshakeable faith. Let us passionately pursue our divine purpose here on earth, magnifying His unparalleled greatness through the authenticity and testimony of our very lives. With hearts overflowing with profound gratitude and thanksgiving, let us collectively raise our voices and hands in humble praise and fervent worship to our Heavenly Father, who reigns in glory.

Prayer

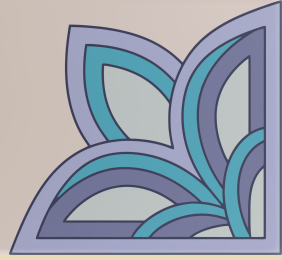
My heart overflows with adoration for our Heavenly Father; we instinctively trust and glorify Him, for He is the sovereign Creator, the architect of all existence. His boundless love and unfathomable mercy have not merely touched but profoundly transformed our lives, ushering in a blessed new beginning. Even in the face of our inherent unworthiness and countless imperfections, He has remained steadfastly faithful, restoring our spirits and sustaining us through every season.

We are continually humbled by the grace that lifts us each time we falter, gently guiding us towards repentance and extending the profound gift of forgiveness. As we journey forward, my earnest prayer is that every decision we make, every path we choose, would be perfectly aligned with His divine will, illuminated and guided by the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit. May our hearts and minds remain singularly focused on Him, strengthening our faith and solidifying our hope in the luminous future promised by His infallible word and boundless wisdom. From this moment forth, may our trust and obedience be solely directed towards Him, our God and our Savior. We humbly offer our very lives as living sacrifices of praise before His glorious throne, all in the magnificent name of Jesus. Amen.

Sonia Sabillo is a ruling elder at St. Philips Presbyterian Church in Salinas



THURSDAY, MARCH 19 PSALM 130



A God who is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love tastes sweet on our tongues. It feels warm and safe. We wrap ourselves in forgiveness and rest in our privilege knowing we are beloved. But the truth is bitter, as any prophet will tell you.

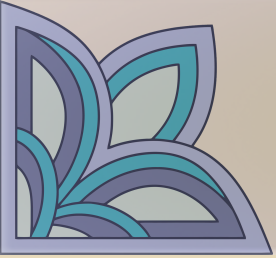
This beloved verse (Psalm 130:8) is set within a specific context of God's plan to work vindication and justice for all who are oppressed. God's grace and mercy is directly linked to God's love for the Israelites who were enslaved in Egypt. God's grace, mercy, and steadfast love, therefore, burns for those who are oppressed and marginalized. It is for those arrested on the streets and thrown into detention centers, those oppressed by white supremacy, the young forced to serve at the pleasure of the rich and powerful, and those denied gender-affirming care and used as pawns for political gain.

The sweet words are meant to be bitter in our bellies because they are not a comfort for those with privilege and power. They are a condemnation of our power and complacency and a call to righteousness, to love and serve the ones God loves. To bless God, to fear God is to seek justice and combat any system or power (including our own) that seeks to oppress another. Our faith calls us out of safety and warmth and into the bitter reality of the oppression we intentionally or unintentionally condone.

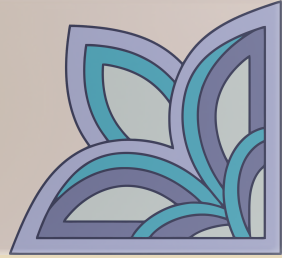
Prayer

May your justice and righteousness so shape our hearts and our lives, O God, that we may seek to serve rather than to be comforted. Amen.

The Rev. Kelly Wiant is Minister of Hybrid Worship at First Presbyterian Church of Palo Alto



FRIDAY, MARCH 20 EZEKIEL 33:10-16



The Bible presents us with questions and choices.

Will you follow the Lord, or follow other gods?(Joshua 24:15).

Will you seek the narrow way to life or continue on the broad road to destruction?

(Matthew 7: 13 -14). Will you choose life and blessings, or death and curses?

(Deuteronomy 30:19).

But if we don't really have a choice, these questions are meaningless. We are left wondering, "If our transgressions and our sins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how should we then live?" (Ezekiel 33:10).

Without God, without his promises, without his salvation, we are left without a real choice. We are hopelessly adrift in our sins, earning the wage of death that we are due (Romans 6:23). But we are not left so alone. God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live (Ezekiel 33:11).

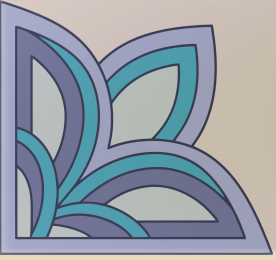
If we turn away from our sins, and cling to Christ we have made the only possible, the only meaningful choice. For we are all sons and daughters of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of us as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. (Galatians 3:26 -27). If we place our trust in Christ, he makes us new, and gives us new life. As for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall thereby in the day that he turneth from his wickedness. If the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die (Ezekiel 33:12,15).

Behold, he makes all things new. But remember the choice, and be sure to make it. For if we trust to our own righteousness, and commit iniquity, all our righteousnesses shall not be remembered; but for our iniquity that we have committed, we shall die for it (Ezekiel 33:13). Therefore, behold your iniquity. Behold your need for salvation. Behold the one who makes all things new. Behold your choice, and choose life.

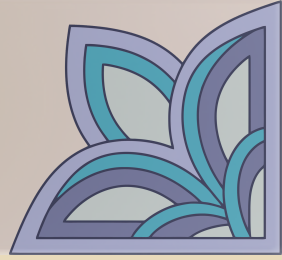
Prayer

Father in Heaven. Thank you for the seed of faith to make the choice to repent, and follow you, and be born again. Continue, we pray, to make us new. Amen

Aaron Mohamed is a ruling elder at Bonny Doon Presbyterian Church in Santa Cruz



SATURDAY, MARCH 21 LUKE 24:44-53



Jesus, just before his ascension to heaven, said to his disciples, “I have told you so much while I have been here, and I have explained the Law of Moses and the Writings of the Prophets and the books of Wisdom. Everything written about the Son of Man has been completed.”

Then He caused their minds to be able to see the meaning of the Writings of God. Then He instructed His disciples, and that includes us, to go throughout the nations of the world to tell others how God has forgiven all evil choices and tendencies. We do not have to do this in our own power. The Holy Spirit is present inside us and will lead us in this task.

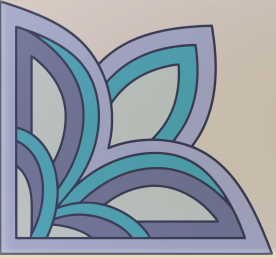
We might think we need to be educated, or trained, or even ordained to be one of the witnesses, but the disciples were none of those things. Each of us has a story to tell. It is not a theological story told in academic terms so much as a personal story we have to tell. It's our story of how we met and followed Jesus and all He has done for us. We are not the same person today because we met Jesus.

And we have the Holy Spirit within us. He is changing us, molding us, strengthening us, and using us for the glory of Jesus Christ. He gives us words to speak, ears to listen, arms to hug, smiles to brighten others' lives, and graciousness to support others in need. We, with the help of the Holy Spirit, become the hands and feet of Jesus, loving without judgment, forgiving without condemnation, and helping without compensation.

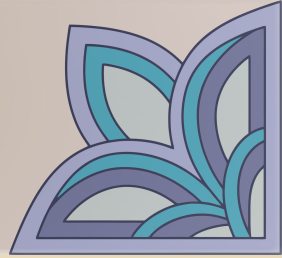
Prayer

Jesus, remind us of the story we have to tell, the things we have seen you do in our lives. And refresh us with the Holy Spirit to know we have the power within us to serve others in your name. Amen.

The Rev. Edd Breeden is an honorably retired minister and Presbytery Treasurer



SUNDAY, MARCH 22 EZEKIEL 37:1-14



In her recent book called *We Do Not Part*, Korean novelist Han Kang takes us on a journey to explore Korea's history of violence and loss under the rule of military dictatorships and United States colonialism. Kang uses many symbols that represent digging up a painful past. In one of them, the friend of a main character has accidentally cut off the ends of two of her fingers. To keep the re-attached flesh of the fingers alive, they are repeatedly pierced by needles so the blood will flow. The whole novel is suffused with the idea that uncovering painful memories is essential to promoting genuine life.

We in the church have long marveled at the miracle God works through Ezekiel's prophecy. New life from dead bones. But should we not be shocked at the act? The bones of the dead are meant to be buried, with respect and reverence. Calling out new life from dead bones means stirring up memories of pain and hardship. Bringing the dead to life means seeing their legacy in our present reality.

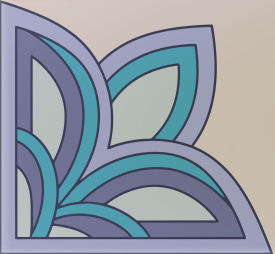
What histories do we need to literally dig up if we are to move from death into new life this Lent? Consider the divisions in our culture, the abuses of power by those in authority, the unease and the struggle of so many in our communities. How will we find ways to offer the new life of God's shalom, if we do not confront our old stories and patterns of pain and death?

Prayer

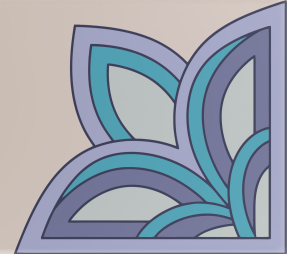
God of resurrection life,

You called Ezekiel to disturb dead bones so that the people might live. Help us to dig into our own painful histories with courage and hope, trusting that you can bring healing and new ways of being that will lead to wholeness and dignity for all. Amen.

The Rev. Hardy Kim is Senior Pastor of Sunnyvale Presbyterian Church



MONDAY, MARCH 23 REVELATION 20:11-15



“...I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Also another book was opened, the book of life...” (Revelation 12b)

God knows who you are. When you enter Heaven's gate you will not need a password, driver's license, social security number, or any other identification.

The Psalmist wrote that God knew every day of our lives even before there was one. Isn't that amazing?

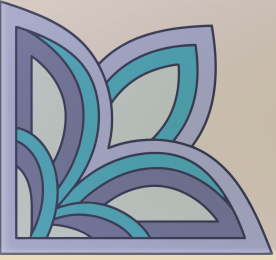
God knows your name and God knows everything about you...because with God there are no secrets—nothing is hidden from God. That says it all—you are special to God! We are even related to God and have been adopted into God's forever family—we are God's sons and daughters—that means that Jesus is our brother! (Let that thought sink in). God forged that relationship even before God began the work of creating the vast universe. (Ephesians 1:4)

We enter that relationship not by our good works but because of God's great mercy... and the gift of grace; therefore, our names are written in God's Book of Life!.

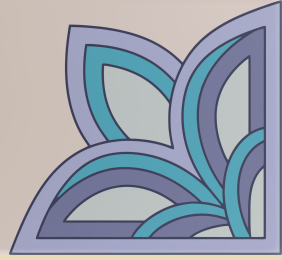
Our relationship with God, therefore, affects our everyday choices...”We are saved by God's grace through faith—and this is not from yourselves—IT IS A GIFT FROM GOD—not of works...for...we are God's workmanship in Christ Jesus to do good works...” (Ephesians 2:8-9)

The scripture text for today tells of God's judgment but the good news for those chosen by God is that Christ paid the price for our sins by His death on the cross. When the Book of Life is opened in Heaven and our deeds—good and bad--will be read Christ will become our Advocate, and though we all have sinned there is no condemnation for the believer because of God's gift of grace and Jesus's sacrifice for our sins on the cross!

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MONDAY, MARCH 23 REVELATION 20:11-15



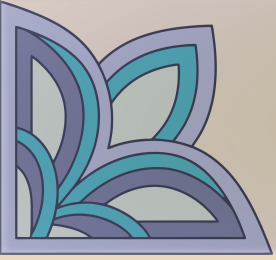
The greatest comfort for every believer in Jesus Christ is that He has gone before us to prepare a special place for us for all eternity. Everything will be in readiness when we arrive.

We will be greeted by God—and every tear will be wiped from our eyes...there will be no more death, mourning, crying or pain. Everything and every person will be made new and because our name is written in the Book of Life—we will live with God for all eternity—time will be no more.

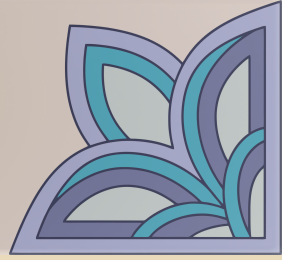
Prayer

We thank You, God, during this Lenten Season for the gift of Your grace. We praise You for Your mercy. We rejoice that when we arrive in Your Kingdom we will be welcomed and live with You for all eternity. Hallelujah! We pray this in the blessed name of Jesus—our Redeemer, our Brother.AMEN

*The Rev. Jack C. Longley is an honorably retired minister
and Parish Associate at the Presbyterian Church of Los Gatos*



TUESDAY, MARCH 24 PSALM 143



Lord, hear my prayer, listen to my cry for mercy;
in your faithfulness and righteousness, come to my relief.

When I went on my first Companions on the Inner Way Retreat in the early '90s, I was introduced to Taizé music. The first song I heard was “O Lord, Hear My Prayer,” taken from Psalm 143:1.

O Lord hear my prayer
O Lord hear my prayer
When I call answer me
O Lord hear my prayer
O Lord hear my prayer
Come and listen to me.

If you aren't familiar with Taizé music, it is repetitive and haunting, and it gently envelops your soul in beauty. Even now, I still feel connected to the songs I learned more than thirty -five years ago.

After we sang this song, I told the spiritual director that it sounded selfish to me — that it seemed to be all about me. He replied, “Isn't it wonderful that God gives us permission to bring God all our cares?” That sentence was deeply enlightening for me, and it is one I still return to.

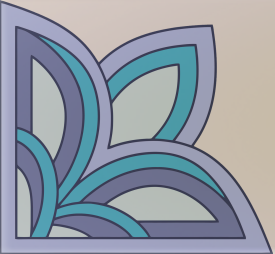
Prayers of joy, anguish, confession — whatever I am experiencing, God welcomes me and invites me into God's presence. David knew he could bring all his praise, worry, and fear to God. In this psalm, we see the movement of his prayer from despair toward hope as he cries out for God's mercy.

During this Lenten season, we, too, are invited to be vulnerable before God, trusting that even in the desert, we are being led toward the hope of resurrection.

Prayer

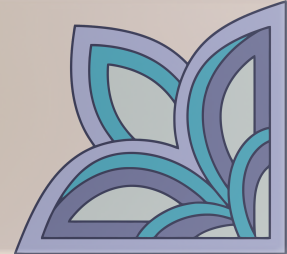
Thank you, God, for welcoming us into your presence and for giving us hope, no matter our circumstances.

Lynn Viale is a ruling elder of Gilroy Presbyterian Church and a past Presbytery Moderator



WEDNESDAY, MARCH 25

MATTHEW 22:23-33



I could still hear the exasperated voice of my maternal grandma in the other room, “Hey! Stop your foolish nonsense talk!” When I was about 6 or 7 yrs old, my two guy cousins and I were rascals in both deed and in word. Wrecking the apartment complex landscaping, picking on neighborhood kids, or speaking boisterously indoors, we drove our relatives crazy.

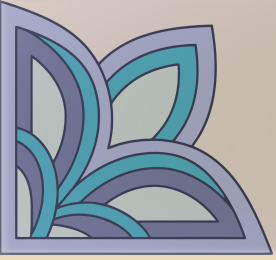
On one of these occasions, my cousins and I were debating about what heaven must be like, and which of our TV superheroes and villains would be there. Back and forth we went, discussing, debating, and to the point of yelling at each other. Our grandma, the good ol’ church lady who also taught Sunday School at our church, would have none of that “foolish nonsense talk.” And especially when that “foolish nonsense talk” caused us to fight and yell.

Jesus would have none of the Sadducees’ foolish nonsense talk. Who cares and what good does it do to ponder which of the seven brothers in the hypothetical would be the one rightfully married to the widow? First off, the track record of those Sadducees in the past was that they could care less about a woman, an unnamed woman, and the well-being of a widow and her widowers. That’s for starters. Second, they clearly didn’t care about Jesus, trying to ensnare him yet again with their foolish nonsense talk, philosophizing, and ruminating about a matter that has no consequence or relevance to the hungry, to the downtrodden, to the hurt and dying, to those needing comfort, to all those forgotten by society. None, whatsoever.

Jesus gives them a lesson about what God does care about. God cares about the living, and all of God’s children, including the patriarchs of the family tree of those same Sadducees and in whom Jesus also shares familial connection – don’t play around and play games with those who are in the eternal realm of the Ancestors because they are living. The Sadducees think they are making hypothetical mind games about dead brothers, but they are all living; they are dishonoring the dead because they are very much alive in God’s heart.

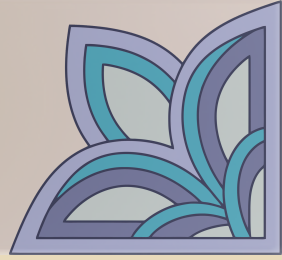
Instead what we need to be about is conversations that bless, that build up, that actually care for the living, the widows, the orphans, the bereaved, families, the childless. So, quit the foolish nonsense talk, and get about the resurrection work of Jesus.

The Rev. Dr. Neal D. Presa is Executive Presbyter



THURSDAY, MARCH 26

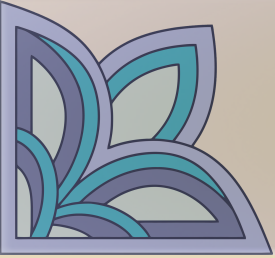
1 SAMUEL 16:11-13



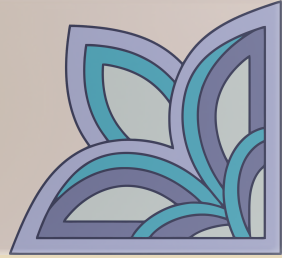
Most people read 1 Samuel 16:11-13 and take notice of the description given to the youngest of Jesse's sons. David was described as ruddy with beautiful eyes and handsome. All of these seem to appear as outer attributes. The word ruddy is an adjective used to describe a healthy, reddish color, most often in reference to someone's complexion. Beautiful eyes refer to eyes that are visually appealing or attractive. This term can encompass various attributes such as the color, shape, brightness, or the way someone's eyes express emotion. Commonly (but subjectively) admired features include clear, sparkling eyes, unique coloration, or expressive looks that captivate attention. Handsome is an adjective typically used to describe a person, most often a man, who possesses pleasing and attractive facial features and is usually considered good-looking, with a strong, appealing physical appearance. It can also be used more generally for things that are well-shaped or well-proportioned.

David may have been all those things, but I do not believe God was looking at David's outward appearance. I believe the Scriptures reveal that God used a different perspective. God's directional perspective was from the inside out. I believe God looked at David's heart and saw him as ruddy because he had a heart that bled for those who were marginalized. I believe God looked through David's eyes to see what caught his attention and saw that he had beautiful eyes because he had compassion for those who could not care for themselves. I believe God looked at how David was clothed with righteousness and deemed him handsome because of his spiritual cloak. In fact, "The Lord said, 'Rise and anoint him; for this is the one.'" I believe God saw David clothed as a man after God's own heart, which made him handsome. God sees us all from the inside out and knows exactly who we are.

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THURSDAY, MARCH 26 1 SAMUEL 16:11-13

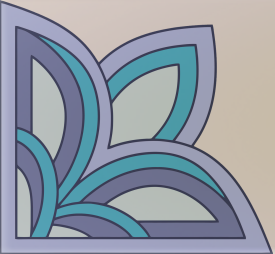


God sees us and, “Behold, God makes all things new.” God uses the directional perspective that starts with our hearts. When our hearts are aligned with God’s will for our lives, we will be anointed in the presence of our closest siblings in Christ, and the Spirit of the Lord will come mightily upon us from that day forward. During this Lenten season, find ways to align your heart with God’s will so that you, too, can be ruddy with beautiful eyes and handsome.

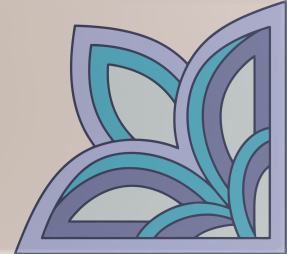
Prayer

Gracious God, whose vision reaches beyond outward appearance, help us to see ourselves and others as You see us—from the inside out. Shape our hearts to desire what is good and pleasing in Your sight. In this Lenten season, draw us closer to Your will, so that compassion, righteousness, and love may shine through our lives. Anoint us with Your Spirit, that we may walk in faith, caring for those on the margins and expressing Your love through our words, actions, and deeds. May we be clothed in Your grace, and may our hearts reflect Your own, today and always. In Jesus’s name, Amen.

*The Rev. Cecelia “Cece” Armstrong is Co-Moderator of the 226th General Assembly (2024-26)
and Associate Pastor of St. James Presbyterian Church in Charleston, South Carolina*



FRIDAY, MARCH 27 PHILIPPIANS 1:21-30



Lent is not a season meant to make us feel “more spiritual.” Rather, it is a journey that calls us to honestly face our brokenness, weakness, and limitations. We acknowledge that there are many corners of our lives that have not yet been renewed: wounds that have not been healed, fears we have not released, and anxieties and self-centeredness that still entangle us.

It is precisely in such a season that the risen Lord declares:
“See, I am making all things new.” (Revelation 21:5)

This is not an empty comfort pointing only to the future, but a work God is already carrying out—in history and in the depths of our lives. When Paul wrote the letter to the Philippians, he was not in a favorable situation, nor was he free. He was in prison. Yet from that place he spoke words that still shake us: “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.” (Philippians 1:21)

This is not a spiritual slogan used to escape pain. It is the testimony of someone whose life’s purpose had been renewed by Christ, spoken from a place of extreme limitation. The world tells us: “To live is success, achievement, and control.” But Paul says: “To live is to let Christ be magnified.” Lent invites us to ask ourselves again: If our sense of security, efficiency, and control were stripped away, what would remain? Would Christ still be the center of our lives?

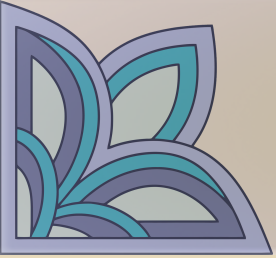
Prayer

Dear Lord:

On this Lenten journey, shine Your light upon the places in our lives that still resist renewal. When we are afraid of loss, afraid of suffering, and afraid to surrender control, help us to hear Your voice once again: “See, I am making all things new.”

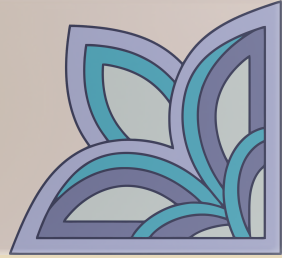
Renew our desires. Renew our values. Renew the way we live. Enable us, like Paul, to choose Christ as the center of our lives even in our incompleteness. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Rev. Lee Ting Yin is Pastor of Taiwanese American Presbyterian Church of San José



SATURDAY, MARCH 28

PSALM 31:9-16



Lent invites us into honest prayer —prayer that names pain rather than hides it. In Psalm 31, the psalmist cries out from deep distress. Grief touches every part of life: body, soul, reputation, and relationships. The psalmist feels worn down by sorrow, surrounded by whispers, and treated like “a broken vessel.” This psalm speaks not only of inner suffering but also of the pain of being judged and misunderstood. The speaker is scorned by others, avoided by neighbors, and left to wrestle with fear and self-doubt. Many of us recognize this experience, especially when hardship is met not with compassion, but with blame.

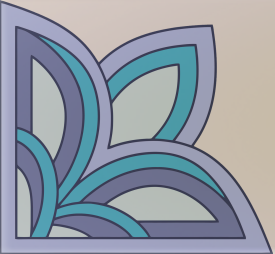
These words became deeply meaningful to me during a season of great loss. When I was going through a divorce in my first marriage, I faced not only grief but also the weight of cultural and familial expectations. In my Filipino family culture, divorce was not meant to be an option. Some asked me, “What did you do that you are getting a divorce?” The question assumed fault before understanding. Like the psalmist, I felt isolated and judged. Over time, those voices became internal ones. I began to believe that I must have done something wrong —that the failure was entirely mine. I carried shame and felt broken, as though I no longer belonged. Yet Psalm 31 does not remain in despair. In the midst of fear and accusation, the psalmist turns toward God: “But I trust in you, O Lord; I say, ‘You are my God.’ My times are in your hand.”

These words mark a turning point. Trust is not the absence of pain, but the decision to place one’s life in God’s care. Healing began when I surrendered what I could no longer carry and entrusted my burdens to God. Gradually, God lifted me from the pit of self-blame and fear, reminding me that my life was held not by human judgement, but by steadfast love. Lent calls us to surrender. We bring before God the parts of our lives that feel broken or misunderstood. We place our times —past, present, and future —into God’s hands, trusting that God’s love is stronger than shame and deeper than loss. It is then when we give our trust to God that we feel God shining on us.

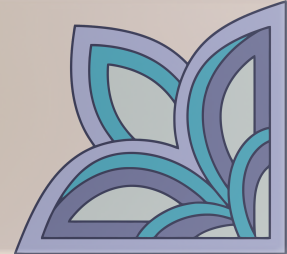
Prayer

Gracious God,
in our distress, be near us. When we feel judged, broken, or alone, remind us that you are holding us. In this Lenten season, teach us to surrender our burdens and to trust in your steadfast love. Let your face shine upon us, and lead us in the way of healing and life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Rev. Neneth Ross is Associate Pastor of Westminster Presbyterian Church in San José



PALM SUNDAY, MARCH 29 ISAIAH 50:4-9A



Palm Sunday brings us to the edge of Lent's journey. We have walked these weeks in prayer, reflection, and repentance. Now we stand with the crowds who shout "Hosanna," even as we know the road ahead leads to the cross.

One line from Isaiah stays with me: "I gave my back to those who struck me." These words are hard to hear. They speak of pain and rejection. Yet the servant does not turn away. He says he did not hide his face from insult. He trusts that "the Lord God helps me." There is a quiet strength here —not loud or defensive, but steady.

As a community, this passage invites us to consider what faithfulness looks like at the end of Lent. It is easy to praise God when hope feels bright. It is harder to remain faithful when love costs something. Palm Sunday reminds us that following Christ means staying present —not only for the celebration, but also for the suffering.

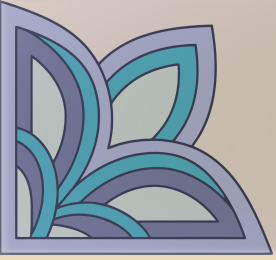
Throughout Lent, we have been learning to listen more closely to God. Isaiah says the servant is awakened "morning by morning" to hear a word. Perhaps that is our calling too: to wake each day ready to listen, ready to respond with trust, even when the path is unclear.

As we enter Holy Week together, we hold both praise and sacrifice in our hearts. We remember that God stands near. And we pray for the courage to walk with Christ all the way.

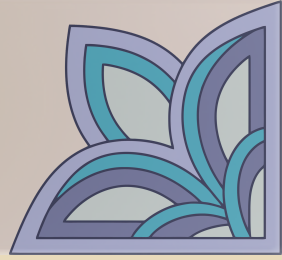
Prayer

Gracious God,
As we move into Holy Week, keep our hearts steady. Help us to trust you when the way is uncertain. Teach us to listen for your voice each day and to follow Christ with courage and love. Stay near to us, and guide us in your peace. Amen.

Colin Richardson is the Presbytery Communications Coordinator



MONDAY, MARCH 30 HEBREWS 9:11-15



As this week unfolds, we stand between Palm Sunday with the triumphal entry of Jesus and His upcoming death on the cross. This is the week that God fulfills the old covenant and ushers in a new one.

Looking at the details of the first covenant, there were rules about how the worship of God was to be carried out. It included the Holy of Holies in the temple, with the lampstand, the curtain, the golden altar, the ark of the covenant with the jar of manna, the stone tablets, and the budding rod of Aaron. But the author of Hebrews says, “we only know these things because of what we have been told, since we can no longer see them.” Jesus became the great High Priest of all future worship. When He was then raised up to heaven, entering into the heavenly temple, He entered with the blood of His own sacrifice, once for all time, bringing eternal forgiveness to humanity.

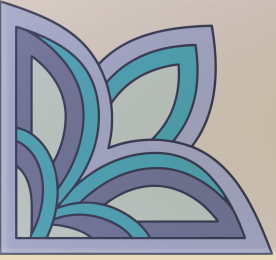
By His sacrifice for us, we are cleansed on the inside, and we can set aside our futile attempts to obey the Law to win God’s favor and begin a new life of serving a loving and living God.

This is the gift God gives us as we remember Jesus, His death, and His resurrection. During this final week of Lent, remember why we need to be forgiven, and remember the love of God that came to us in Jesus so we could be set free from our sin.

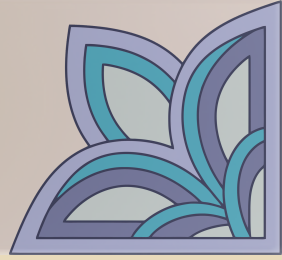
Prayer

Jesus, gently remind us of our need for You, and fill us with thanksgiving for all You have done. Renew within us a new spirit, that we might go forth and serve You with gladness. Amen.

The Rev. Edd Breeden is an honorably retired minister and Presbytery Treasurer



TUESDAY, MARCH 31 1 CORINTHIANS 1:18-31



In this passage from Corinthians, Paul speaks into a messy, divided church and flips the script: what looks like foolishness—weakness, vulnerability, the scandal of the cross—is where God’s work happens. “Behold, I make all things new” is an invitation to see renewal right where we are.

We live with systems that say they protect us but often do harm. The widening powers of agencies like the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) remind us how fear and bureaucracy can crush human dignity. Families are split, asylum seekers are caged, and people are murdered. That’s the hard reality—and it’s why the cross matters: it exposes power that wounds and points to a different way.

Lent asks us to notice that different way. It asks us to stop pretending that strength is always force, and to recognize that God’s power shows up in humility, welcome, and solidarity. Paul reminds us that God often chooses what the world dismisses—weakness, loss, the overlooked—to reveal what’s true.

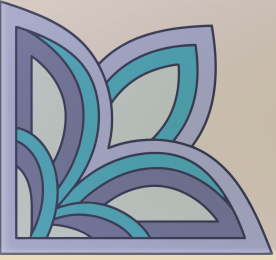
So what might renewal look like today? It might be listening to the stories of newcomers, pushing back against policies that dehumanize, offering hospitality where systems exclude, and letting our compassion shape our civic choices. Small acts joined together change the air we breathe.

As Easter comes, we carry a hopeful stubbornness: resurrection starts in the here and now. God is making things new—our hearts, our neighbors, our communities. May we live as if that promise is true, daring to welcome and repair, trusting that love will outlast fear.

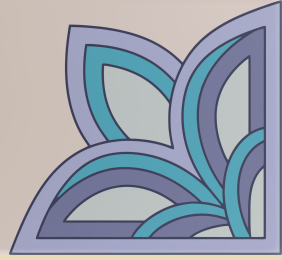
Prayer

Gracious God, meet us in our weakness and teach us Your wisdom. Help us choose humility over force, compassion over fear, and love over easy answers. Renew our hearts, our communities, and our hopes, until Your newness blooms in us and through us. Amen.

The Rev. Evie Macway is an honorably retired minister and member at large.



WEDNESDAY, APRIL 1 HEBREWS 12:1-3



We live in a world of instant gratification. Texting and messaging apps allow for instant communication. Artificial intelligence programs give immediate responses to our queries. Marketers inundate us with “hacks” reputed to quickly improve our lives, be it in food preparation, weight loss, exercise, personal finance, etc.

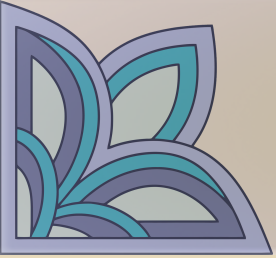
But the spiritual life does not lend itself to fast solutions. As a runner, I have always been drawn to today’s passage in Hebrews 12:1 -3. Spiritual development is a race of stamina, not speed. When doing a long run, I have to pace myself. If I start too fast, I will crash and burn. I have to be patient. I have to recognize that there will be easy patches and hard patches. I have to be resilient, bouncing back from setbacks.

All these principles apply to our faith journey. Although running “with perseverance the race that is set before us” may not always seem easy, God has given us some guidelines and aids. We need to “lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely,” so we can run the race without undue encumbrance. We can be encouraged by “so great a cloud of witnesses,” the saints who have preceded us and who testify to God’s faithfulness. And we can look to Jesus, “the pioneer and perfecter of faith,” as our model. Thinking of what Jesus suffered can inspire us not to grow weary or lose heart during difficult times.

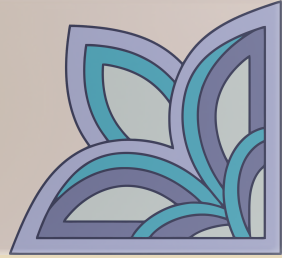
Prayer

Lord, thank you that you are constantly with us, shepherding us through the ups and downs of life. Help us to always turn our hearts to you. Give us strength and endurance. Amen.

David Burgess is a ruling elder of Westminster Presbyterian Church of San José



MAUNDY THURSDAY, APRIL 2 1 CORINTHIANS 11:23-26



“Do this in remembrance of me”

On the night of His arrest, fully aware that He was about to bear the burden of a sinful world, Jesus invited His beloved disciples to the bread and the cup. In that moment, He established sacred sacraments to be kept, followed, and shared among the saints for the next two millennia. Lifting up the bread and the cup was His command — given so that we might remember Christ and His passion for His sheep.

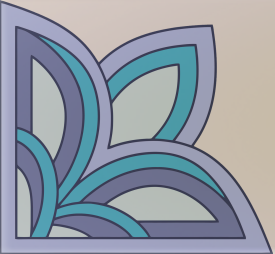
Reflecting on Israel's recommitment to celebrate Feast of Tabernacles, a long lost tradition, after returning from the exile and rebuilding the wall, Derek Kidner in Ezra and Nehemiah points out that, “custom, as happens so often in religious history, had overlaid and modified ‘the faith once delivered to the saints’, so that the freshly studied Scripture, like a cleaned painting, now revealed some long-forgotten colors.”

As we near the end of this annual Lenten season; as we look ahead to the Communion we will share again as a Church on Good Friday and Easter; and as we reflect on our lives filled with countless —and perhaps dull —traditions, we are reminded and challenged not to discount the tradition itself. Instead, we are called to press beyond it, remembering that we do these things in remembrance of Christ.

May we dive deep into the Holy Scriptures —the Spirit-breathed words of God — trusting that He will lead us to clear understanding and holy conviction.

May the Spirit pour out a fresh wind and fresh fire upon our souls, our families, and our church, as we seek to remember and ‘proclaim the Lord’s death, and His resurrection, until He returns’.

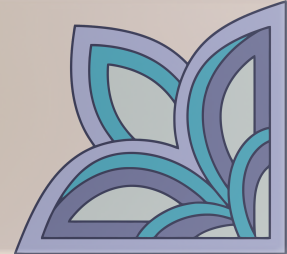
Junghan “Blaine” Kim is a ruling elder of Cornerstone Church of Silicon Valley in San José



GOOD FRIDAY, APRIL 3

PSALM 22

(FIRST REFLECTION)



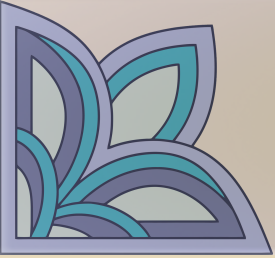
This has been called “the Passion Psalm” because Jesus quoted its opening words in the agony of the Cross and much of the language parallels the gospel account of Christ’s suffering and those of the psalmist. Perhaps the greatest of personal laments in the Psalter, many writers note affinity with the Book of Job (30:9 -11) and with Isaiah’s Servant of the Lord (40:55)

The psalm starts out as a cry for help ‘Why have you forsaken me?’ Christ asks. He appeals to the saving acts of God in the history of Israel –why now, why not come to my rescue as you did to our fathers who trusted you? He feels as insignificant as a worm and is scorned and despised by men. He remembers the brutal assault on his body and scorn and beatings he has received at the hands of his enemies. He cannot understand God who has been a Father to him since his birth, and begins to enter the realm of death, picturing his enemies as a company of evil doers who gloat over his diminished condition and divide his clothes in anticipation of his death.

But perhaps most disturbing, the psalmist feels distance from God. “Be not far from me,” “be not far off” - the absence is unbearable. For someone who has spent his whole life in close communication with his father, He is now begging for deliverance from a violent death, and from his enemies who are described as a dog, a lion, and a wild oxen (vs. 20 -21)

Then suddenly the mood changes and the lament transforms into exhilarating praise and thanksgiving. God has used the psalmist’s honest revealing of his sorrow to work such a catharsis that he now knows whom he has believed. He vows to praise God for his deliverance in the midst of the assembled congregation and ask that they join him in thanksgiving. God is the author of his praise and pays his vows with thank offerings at the temple, inviting the poor to dine with him and offering a blessing. The psalmist no longer dwells on his concerns but a wider concern for the hungry and poor within the congregation of his community. He glimpses the kingdom of God and the mass conversions of people from the ends of the earth to worship Yahweh, Israel’s God. The proud and the dead shall bow down in worship before him.

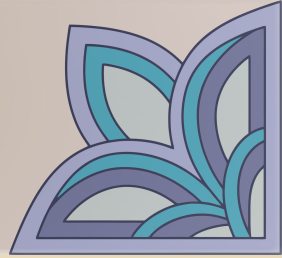
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GOOD FRIDAY, APRIL 3

PSALM 22

(FIRST REFLECTION)



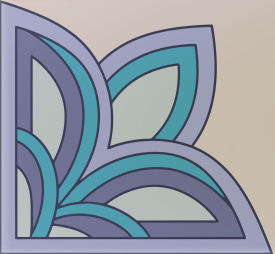
As I meditate on these words, I remember the suffering our Lord must have endured on what we call “Good Friday.” And yet in the midst of his suffering, he remembered the future kingdom where the good news of God’s salvation would be proclaimed to the generations yet unborn.

Despite his separation from his Father, despite the agony, he could see the great commission fulfilled, in Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the world.

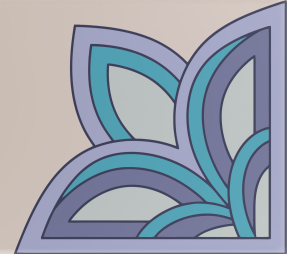
Prayer

Dear Gracious God, We praise you for loving us so much that your beloved Son gave up his life so that we might be forgiven and know eternal life. May we each day awake with thanksgiving in our hearts for the gift of this sacrifice and the power of the resurrection. Amen.

*The. Rev. Dr. Libby Boatwright is an honorably retired minister
and the immediate past Moderator of the Presbytery*



GOOD FRIDAY, APRIL 3 JOHN 18:1-19:24 (SECOND REFLECTION)



In John's gospel, the account of Jesus's passion is quite different from the other gospels. It is not a story of a victim caught in tragedy, but it is a story of someone in complete control of the narrative. From the moment the soldiers come to arrest him in the Garden to his last breath on the cross, Jesus is in control.

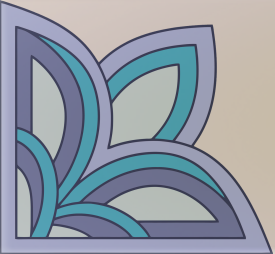
When the soldiers and the chief priests and Pharisees come to arrest him, he doesn't hide; he doesn't deny who he is. Indeed, when they say that they are seeking "Jesus of Nazareth," Jesus boldly proclaims, "I am he." His words are so powerful that they knock the soldiers off their feet. And then Jesus tells them to go ahead and arrest him, but to leave his followers alone. Even when Peter tries to fight for Jesus, he again shows that he is in control of the situation: This is what I am here to do, he tells his friend.

When Jesus is dragged before Pilate, he again shows that he is truly the one in control of the situation. Most people would tremble in fear when faced with one who had their very life in his hands, but Jesus boldly answers Pilate that he is indeed the king, and that he was sent to bring truth to the world. Then Pilate asks, "What is truth?" Not like Tom Cruise's character in "A Few Good Men" thundering at Colonel Jacobson on the witness stand "I WANT THE TRUTH!" No, Pilate, the mighty ruler, the one supposedly in control, mutters "What is truth?" while looking directly at the one who is the Truth.

And as his life on this planet comes to an end, Jesus does not cry out in defeat. He declares, "It is finished." This isn't just the end of a life; it is the completion of a mission. In John's Greek, this phrase means a debt has been paid in full and a work has been perfectly accomplished.

So how can we apply these truths to our lives this Lenten season? First, we need to trust Jesus's control. When your life feels like it is "spiraling out of control," remember the Jesus of John 18. He is never a victim of circumstance. If he could order the events of his own execution for your salvation, he can certainly handle the details of your day. Second, we need to give up our desires to "do it ourselves" as a toddler might say. Peter tried to solve the problem with a sword. We often try to solve our own spiritual problems with the "swords" of anger, or control, or human effort. Jesus tells us to put them away, to surrender our problems to the One who is really in control. And third, we need to rely on the promise that Jesus is our Lord, the source of our salvation.

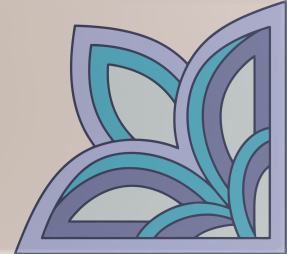
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GOOD FRIDAY, APRIL 3

JOHN 18:1-19:24

(SECOND REFLECTION)

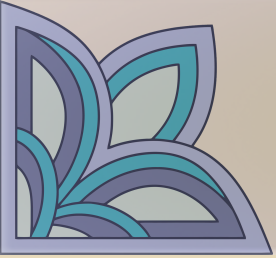


Pilate wrote “The King of the Jews” in three languages on the cross so that everyone would know who Jesus was. Have we forgotten that Jesus is indeed Lord of our lives, and that we can surrender control to him?

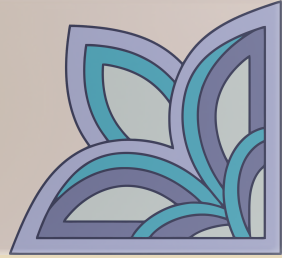
Prayer

Lord Jesus, thank you for stepping into the garden for me. Thank you for choosing the cross when you had the power to stop it. When I feel overwhelmed by the "Pilates" and "soldiers" in my own life, remind me that you have already declared, "It is finished." Help me to walk in the freedom of your finished work today. Amen.

The Rev. Andy Rausch is Pastor of Northminster Presbyterian Church in Salinas



HOLY SATURDAY, APRIL 4 MATTHEW 27:57-66



You don't have to go to streaming videos on Amazon Prime, Netflix, Apple TV, or Hulu if you're looking for cloak & dagger intrigue, plot twists, sedition and treachery, and securing a secret weapon of unimaginable force. This is not a CIA spy thriller. Welcome to the end of Holy Week, and the dark, quiet, death void of the tomb.

Today's text, when combined with the account in John 19:38-42, we see the fuller context of Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus (remember him from his secret shadow conversation with Jesus in John 3?) preparing Jesus's dead body for burial. As both men, who are wealthy members of the Sanhedrin, ceremoniously care for the sacred body of the Rabbi, their friend, the Savior of the world, the Pharisees are hatching a plot. No longer seated among the chief priests of the Sanhedrin, Joseph and Nicodemus are honoring Jesus as they recognize his remarkable ministry. Jesus's life and teaching have cut to their heart. They can do no other. They are committing a treacherous act against the religious council that sought to quiet Jesus. The Pharisees don't know what to make of Jesus and his followers. They just know that if his body were to disappear, if Jesus's earlier talk about raising his body three days later was to come to fruition, the Pharisees, the religious and political authorities, would certainly have an insurrection in their midst.

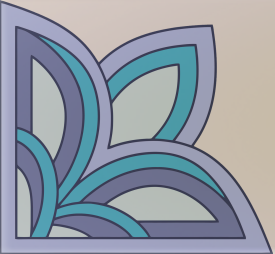
We know what's happening as we read this. So much intrigue, so much planning, so much mental gymnastics to shut out the will and way of God. And what's the Savior doing? He's quietly dead. God the Savior is silent. Holy Saturday's sacred power is the silence. The utter void of the dark tomb. No life. No voice. No light. Just death.

The Pharisees, the Sanhedrin, and Pilate are beside themselves. What do you do with silence? There's power in silence. Those of us who play chess know that palpable force. You know and anticipate two or three moves ahead. You stay silent. You know it's a checkmate. Victory is coming. The Holy Spirit is on the move. God's secret weapon of unimaginable force is coming. Tomorrow, resurrection power and life will emerge. Death and evil will be vanquished.

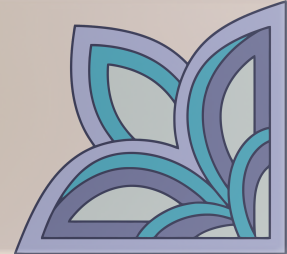
Prayer

Quiet our lives, crucified Lord Jesus. Help us rest in You. Amen.

The Rev. Dr. Neal D. Presa is Executive Presbyter



EASTER SUNDAY, APRIL 5 **ACTS 10:42-43; PSALM 118:24**



He Is Risen. He Is Risen Indeed! Today, Easter Sunday, the most important day for Christians throughout the world, is cause for joyful celebration, and unfailing gratitude.

“The Lord has done it this very day; let us rejoice today and be glad.” (Psalm 118:24) Jesus’s resurrection is for everyone, Jew and Gentile alike, from every corner of the world. As true today as it was in the first century. For you, for me, for every person. God’s revelation to Peter that God is impartial on all levels, geographical, financial, societal standing, power, lineage, etc., is profound. ALL are welcome. And we are called to “...testify that he is the one ordained by God “and “that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.” (Acts 10:42 -43). As followers of Christ, we have the obligation to tell ALL the Good News.

Peter’s visit to Cornelius’s house? Scandalous, a Jew visiting a Gentile soldier, a centurion, a so-called oppressor, but Peter went without hesitation, without fear, filled with the confidence that he was fulfilling what was told to him by God, that no one is profane or unclean. How can this not apply to the world today? How can we not extend our love to all, no matter which country a person may come from? No matter their “position” in the world? As brothers and sisters in Christ, one sure thing is that we all enjoy the same “position” through Christ. Equals. Unworthy, and saved only by the grace of God.

Where would we be today without the resurrection? What if the story ended with Jesus’s death on the cross? Would we be followers of Christ? Would we have even heard the name of Jesus, or would he be a historical footnote, lost to the ages? If the resurrection hadn’t happened, would the Good News be the greatest hoax in human history? Thoughts/questions to ponder? No, don’t waste your time. For there is no doubt that the resurrection happened. We have first-hand accounts of Jesus appearing to not only the apostles, but to others, and even 500 at one time. The Apostle Paul himself saw the resurrected Jesus and dedicated the remainder of his life telling the Good News.

If you’re reading this, I know that you know, and feel the Holy Spirit stirring within you to tell the Good News. Jesus died for our sins and God assures us of spending eternity with God. God is love, and God’s love endures forever. “I will not die but live, and will proclaim what the Lord has done.” (Psalm 118:17)

Prayer

Lord, we are thankful, grateful, and humbled that you sent your son, Jesus Christ, to atone for our sins, to allow us to spend eternity with God. Let us see our shortcomings in ourselves as you see them, and give us the strength and confidence to make the changes to bring us more closely aligned with your will. He Is Risen. He Is Risen indeed! Hallelujah!

*Tim Parmentier is Commissioned Ruling Elder of Trinity Presbyterian Church of San José
and Presbytery Moderator*