

Lenten Devotional 2010

Lent is the 40 days before Easter, excluding Sundays. In the ancient church this was a time of teaching, learning, praying and preparing oneself for baptism.

In our contemporary world Lent is often overlooked by society. For those who do practice Lent it may be seen as a time to give up something like caffeine or chocolate. This giving up of something important to daily life is somehow thought to bring us closer to Jesus.

Here at CCSM we believe there is much more that can happen in Lent than sacrifice. We will be using the book, *An Alter in the World*, By Barbara Brown Taylor as a point to jump deeply into Lent on a spiritual level.

We have begun our Lenten journey. More than 40 individuals were given Scripture to read and reflect upon, and then share from their hearts and heads. As Lent begins we all have access to these writings in this booklet. Each day of Lent, as well as the Sundays in Lent, has a scripture passage to read, please read it. Then read the devotional thought that was written by a CCSM member or friend.

As I compiled these reflections, I was impressed with the depth and breadth of ideas shared. I trust that this Lenten devotional will help you to know others in the congregation better and more deeply put you in tune with Spirit.

It has been a whirlwind of joy to compile this booklet. Let the Journey begin.

Jerri Handy
Clergy Intern, CCSM

Matthew 6:6; 16-22

But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

When I read this scripture I think about my garden and about the coming of spring. Each year before our annual winter rains, I go out into the garden and spread fertilizer on each of the plants. The plants lie in their winter dormancy and are waiting for the “new life” of spring. The garden needs nourishment and we also need spiritual nourishment. We shut the door in winter and pray for our “new life” of spring. The season of Lent to me is about hope, the hope of spiritual growth and learning in the next year ahead.

And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly, I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Lent is a quiet time for reflection and getting closer to God on an individual level. It has always been interesting to me that people often say, “So what did you give up for Lent?” It’s as if it is a competition to see who can be the most Holy. I don’t believe that a person has to fast in order to get closer to God. However, I believe that it is an individual decision to fast and it is a pact that is made between one’s self and with God.

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there heart will be also.

This past week during one of our torrential rainstorms, we lost power at our home. We have lived in our home for eight years and this was the first time a power outage had ever occurred. We lead very busy lives with work and school. The power outage forced us to slow down. We lit a few candles, read out loud and enjoyed the quiet of the house and each other’s company. The only sounds were our voices and the flickering of the flames from the candles. When the power came back on at around 9:30 p.m., our daughter proceeded to walk into every room and turn the lights back off. We were given the chance to realize that the only important “contents” of our home are each other. My treasure is my family and that is where my heart lies.

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17

Alert! Alert! Alert! Warning! Warning! Warning! Stop preoccupying your mind with work and errands, chores on your lists... stop fretting about gossip and mundane issues...ignore the worrier on your shoulder that panics and shouts, "must have more, be more, do more, save more." Stop! Be still and listen!

The time has come to feel with your body the aches of hunger of those who go without basic needs like food, water, shelter, clothes, medicine and companionship. Fast to understand what so many go without every day because they have to, not because they choose to.

The time has come to feel with your soul the aches of sorrow from betrayal, loved ones lost and the many injustices that continue to plague society. Don't be afraid to cry -- give in to that grieving deep within your chest -- because God weeps with you and for you.

Return to God with your suffering and know God is forever patient with our shortcomings, merciful to our limitations, gracious even in our unkindness and always loving. Come together with the other members of our congregation, holding brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers, grandparents, children, friends and strangers in a community of faith to grieve together and lift each other up. God binds us together so that we may know God's endless mercy, grace and love.

Jennifer Cooke

Isaiah 58: 1-12 Feb 19

Isaiah's exhortation is right on target for Lent. God's covenant with his people demands not merely adherence to conventional forms—"Look, God, see how nicely I'm fasting, see me put my pledge in the offering basket"—but also practicing righteousness, daily, loudly, openly. To draw nearer to God means growing our personal circumstances through involvement, not shrinking them through self-absorption. God will be here for us when we allow the light within to shine brightly.

How is righteousness known? Not by coming to Church each Sunday and being moved by a thoughtful sermon. Righteousness is manifested through service to others. Isaiah says we must hear the call for social justice and answer it. Free the oppressed, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, become a part of the community. Act! Become visible. Speak up.

When we practice righteousness as it is defined in this passage, our focus is outward, not inward. Righteousness is changing the world through our giving to others. This act of participation transforms three things—the world itself becomes a closer reflection of God, other people begin to understand God's love through its reflection in our behavior, and we ourselves are transformed. Our actions bring us into relation with God, the covenant is fulfilled, God will guide us, and we shall be called "the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in."

We, each of us, have the power within us to become both the mirror and the lamp of God.

Karin Albright

Psalm 51, 1-17

Just as we are, we are fully accepted by God. As the season of Lent approaches, we are invited to present ourselves to God, just as we “are”.

At CCSM, we represent various walks and “stations” in life; we are well off, we struggle economically, we are women, we are men, we are young, middle-aged and old. We are gay, we are straight. Some live the “conventional” life, others have chosen the path of a “different drummer”.

No matter our place in this world, we are fully accepted by God, We share our common humanity and the fact of our inherent imperfection. Psalm 51 speaks in poetical terms of our “transgressions,” “iniquities” and propensity towards sin. The prophet Nathan begs God to: “Create in me a clean heart and put a new and right spirit within me”. To some this language may sound a bit “old school” and stark, perhaps reminding us of a meaner, more judgmental God.

Several readings and re-readings of this Psalm finally opened up a door to inner, more context-based meaning for me: Most of us seek to do good and hope we are following a loving path, at least as often as we are able.

And yet we do, at times, fail in this realm and then we fall down. Often we are very “hard” on ourselves and unforgiving of our “misses” and our failings. The beauty and reassurance offered by Psalm 51 may be captured in this prayer:

Dear God: We ask for your acceptance, with all of our imperfections and failings. We rejoice in the promise of this season of Lent and in the message of hope and light that follows the days of darkness. We know that it is you alone who hears our deepest longings and helps to “set us right” when we have fallen off our path. The promise of Easter, with the message of re-birth and eternal life assures us of your love. We know that just as you loved your son Jesus, you love us completely. We give thanks to you for each new day, giving us the chance to begin again and to follow the path of love. Amen.

Rebecca Ruedy

Dear Lord,

Let me mindful whenever I hunger or yearn for anything that I too must “not live by bread alone”. I must care for this body with which I have been entrusted with proper eating and exercise. So too must I nurture my mind with learning and growth, my spirit with mindful love and honor, my soul with forgiveness and charity.

Whenever I long for more money, more authority, more importance, more of the trappings of success, that the focus of my prayers must remain “the Lord, my God”, not in what gifts I seek but in simple devout prayer and service to You and what is good.

Let me not put You to the test by imploring for what service or gift You may give me, or burden You might lighten, but to simply to be equal to the task I am given, to fully utilize the talents and gifts with which I have been entrusted.

Though I may thirst or hunger, or yearn for more, let me be mindful that I too must be about my Father’s work, be that in helping others, easing burdens, using my gifts to enable others further. If I am entrusted to raise and nurture, or to teach or lead, or simply to share the light and warmth, may I do so in a way that honors the abilities and opportunities I have been given.

Let me honor the Father’s work be it in me and my fellow man, all other living things, and this beautiful fragile earth.

Tom Lewis

2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10

Here goes.....after some rare alone time late last night as rain was pelting our windows and the wind howling.....200 words? I didn't count but hope it works.

God is calling us together. It is when we come together and put forth our efforts together, we can reap and leverage the strength of many and overcome almost any adversity. Being together is a powerful feeling that can be shared with all.

Together, we the congregation are the messengers of Christ. As messengers, we make an earnest request to others to live in harmony with Christ. As messengers we understood that Christ knew no sin but gave his life for us. Although this was a gracious act, it turned out to be an act of saving us and protecting us from great harm and further risk. It was an act of salvation. God has listened to us and has helped us. It is up to us as servants or messengers to provide a greater balance of loving kindness through the calm and through the rough and raging times. Being alive is our gift and we are all fortunate to have life.

Ellen Palmer

Deuteronomy 26:1-11

The text encapsulates the Jewish story- Beginning with Abraham the “wandering Aramean,” the Egyptian bondage, the rescue by God using “terrifying display(s) of power,” and the entry into the Promised Land. But that drama is preface to the softer message, that of thankfulness for the bounty of the Lord, to be celebrated by a giving to the Lord the “first of the fruit of the ground.” And, for good measure, that gratitude and that worship are to be expressed, not only by the Israelites, but also “with the Levites and the aliens who reside among you.” Here is a message we can accept as our own, either as inheritors of the Jewish history, or as aliens to it who are nevertheless recipients of God’s gift of lands “flowing with milk and honey.”

What has this text to do with Lent? It seems more appropriate to Thanksgiving, or, with its focus on tithing, the stewardship season. Lent is a period of fasting and penitence in commemoration of Jesus’ fasting in the wilderness. The inscrutable authors of the Lectionary can answer, but I will not. Thanks be to the Lord!

Jim Ingwersen

Psalm 91

For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy way.

-Psalm 91: 11

Regardless of what each one may confront, I know God is with us to uplift and support us as we face whatever happens. What a blessed assurance that is.

Often in our prayers we ask God for ambitions or dreams we have, never realizing that perhaps the very things we wish for could lead us to disaster. God is too wise and too good to always grant exactly what we ask. But we can trust that God, who loves us more than we can fathom, will lead us in the way that is best.

We are always safe when we are in God's care as he leads us through a different path than we would choose through the storms of life.

We give thanks that regardless of the problems we face, you are always there giving comfort and support.

Elrae Bilsey

Romans 10:8b-13

My parents raised me as a Taoist. They thought Jesus was a nice man but could not understand how Christians could be “saved” by believing in him. Growing up in San Francisco, this perspective set me apart from most of my friends and classmates. What I craved for most of my life, was to be a part of the church community that welcomed me to learn about God and Jesus, and to feel spiritually connected to a religion that would open up my heart, not one that made me feel isolated.

My husband’s 40th birthday was a pivotal point in my life when he said that for his gift, he wanted for our children and us to go to church. I thought that we had everything - a house, careers that we both enjoyed, three healthy wonderful children, and each other. So what more could we want? He wanted us to be spiritual. When we started attending church at CCSM, we were accepted with open arms for who we were. It started with eagerly anticipating an inspiring sermon each Sunday for us, and the kids looking forward to having fun in church school. Then, we started getting involved in various committees, and volunteering in different ways whenever opportunities arose. Today, I think of all the wonderful people that we have become good friends with because of CCSM, and how fortunate I feel to be a member. The sermons and happenings in church keep me uplifted, thoughtful, and energized each week, as I feel God’s love and sometimes find answers by asking myself “What would Jesus have done?” I think of being saved as coming to better know God and Jesus, and as feeling blessed, as it has indeed opened my heart and mind, and enriched my life.

Lucy Lee

Psalm 114

What will God do for his people? Based on Psalm 114 we learn that he will perform miracles

What happened when the people of Israel left Egypt?

- God led them to the Promised Land,
- God led them through the Red Sea,
- God led them over the River Jordan.
 - Mountains and hills like Sinai seemed to jump like animals
- God gave them water from the rocks in dry places

What does this say for us today? When we are confronted by the seemingly impossible, we should consider how God led his people out of Egypt. The Egyptians had all the tools of power at their disposal and the Jews had little chance of leaving their bondage. Then God intervened on their behalf and made the impossible happen.

Could this happen for us during this Lenten Season? While we face a difficult time as a nation and a world, we are not in the dire situation faced by the Jews in Egypt. Because of their faith, God helped them. Because of our faith, God will hear our prayers.

While our mountains may be blocking our path in different ways than the Sinai, God can move mountains if we listen and follow his path.

Doug Henton

Mark 16:1-8

During the course of most lives, people experience times of great grief, strife and pain. There also may have been times when the path ahead may seem uncertain and sad with all hope gone. The good news from this bible passage is that in times of great strife Jesus will give us all the information we need to follow his path and find out good things that are in store for us.

In the bible verse, the women had come to the tomb to perform rituals of grief and burial, but there were not to be any tears that day as Jesus had left the tomb. Jesus had provided the hope that they needed to hear, but it was more than the women could imagine in their time of grief so they were afraid and ran away.

The next time you find yourself in a difficult and sad situation, try to stop and listen to the words of Jesus, find him, and do not be afraid. Do not lose hope. Listen to his words, take bold steps in the direction he leads you to and know that that the path ahead will be a good one.

Joyce Montgomery

Luke 13:31-35

When first contemplating doing a reflection on a scripture verse for a Lenten daily reading, my thoughts were, "How hard can that be?" As long as it's from the New Testament and is supposed to be some remarks of Jesus? Whenever Jesus spoke of loving one another, or compassion for the 'marginalized' segments of society; oh, how that touches my heart. His calls for social justice; that certainly resonates with me! But here I am confronted with Jesus weeping for Jerusalem! Where do I go with that?! Oh, I can certainly understand his scorn of Herod, (that fox!) Your typical public official, power hungry and very, very leery of any imagined threat to that power. Jesus was never naïve when it came to the dangerous position he put himself (and his followers) in whenever he spoke out against corruption in high places. But here Jesus is seemingly condemning an entire city! I've got to think about that for a while O.K now, time is passing by I've really got to work on this! BUT, how can even be thinking about ancient, old Jerusalem when I am so upset over what has happened politically in Massachusetts! How could they elect to the Senate a man certain to vote against health care reform! Are the residents of 'Massachusetts that afraid of any change to the status quo? Are they that complacent because many of them do not have a dire need for this step in the right direction by the powers that be? Have self-serving politicians played upon their fears of seeing their taxes raised?

Could this be anything like what Jesus was feeling towards Jerusalem!?! Maybe I do get it after all! And I guess I'll just have to go on speaking up and out for the measures that benefit the community, whether it be my neighborhood, my state, the nation, the welfare of all globally at stake! And I continue to take it to the Creator in prayer knowing God never fails to be concerned for all people every where.

Tentatively submitted by *Joan Kilroe*

Romans 10:8b-13

“Walk in newness of life...” So often we hear that Christ “died for us,” but this passage puts it another way: “we died with Christ.” As so it follows that we are resurrected with him, too.

The passage gives me hope. We have it within us to shed our un-Christ-like ways of being and start anew on the path that God intended for us. The passage emphasizes our freedom from sin, but it’s the message of potential that is strongest for me. Potential to find a path of purpose and fulfillment.

I often think of my late grandmother who became a Head Start teacher in Mississippi at the age of 60. Before that time, with only an 8th grade education, she had been a mother, a wife and the owner of a small-town café. Throughout her life, she continued to make her life new and fulfill her potential as a child of God.

During this Lenten Season, I will reflect on what it means for me to “walk in newness of life.” How can I live in such a way to be more fully united with Christ? How can I experience a rebirth that guides and strengthens my purpose?

Judi Powell

1 Peter 4:1-8

The First Letter of Peter is a letter of hope. In this particular passage, Peter urges the reader to regard Jesus Christ's physical suffering as an example to follow in finishing a life of sin and living the rest of his or her life by the will of God.

But how does a modern reader arm him or herself with the intention to "suffer in the flesh" like Christ? Can we relate to having spent enough time living in "licentiousness, passions, drunkenness, revels, carousing, and lawless idolatry"? For me, reading the passage this way was a struggle.

Instead, I think Peter is trying to say three things. First, we are accountable for our actions. Yes, we are accountable to God, but we are also accountable to those around us. Second, life is short. And we should live life with the big picture in mind and not get lost in the day-to-day desires that we experience as human beings. Finally, love is everything. The love that we feel for those around us makes up for our failings as physical beings.

In this season of Lent, I hope we can all meditate on these lessons of accountability, mortality and love.

Chris Yeh

Matthew 27:57-66

In this Gospel passage a rich Man from Aramathea took the body of Jesus after the crucifixion and wrapped it in a clean cloth and laid it in a tomb that he had hewn for himself. He then rolled a large stone in front of the tomb.

Reading this passage I would say that this man had great devotion for Jesus in the way he attended to Jesus' body after his death. This section of scripture made me question my own devotion to Jesus separate from my respect for him. My knowledge of Jesus is after all... conceptual, coming as it does from many sources: the Bible, movies depicting his life, books I have read, sermons I have heard. I have great admiration for Jesus teachings, his "standing up to power," all-powerful ideas for his times and valid for us as well.

The rich man spoken of was living in "real time" as we call it now. He knew Jesus as a real material body and heard him speak. Devotion would come easier I believe under those circumstances. Unlike some Christians who can claim a personal connection to Jesus I have not had that experience.

My daily meditation practice opens me to experiencing the Holy Spirit Christ, the Tao and the God of many names. The most significant Bible verse for me is: Psalm 46:10 "Be still and know that I am God." Need there be more than this?

Bob Jarmuz

Hebrews 10:16-25

In today's reading, the unidentified author of Hebrews gives a wonderful guide for our Lenten journey. The reading begins with God's covenant with us. "I will put my laws in [your] hearts and write them on [your] minds." –a beautiful way of saying that God is within us all. God continues, "I will not remember [your] sins...any longer" So with God in our hearts and minds and blessed with God's grace, we move through Lent toward the resurrection, toward Easter. The writer reminds us that we have "...complete freedom to go into the Most Holy Place..." ourselves. What a radical concept! We don't need rituals or offerings to be connected to God. And yet we are not on this journey alone. "Let us be concerned for one another, to help one another to show love and to do good...(continue the) habit of meeting together, and encourage one another all the more..." So today I offer a prayer of thanks for our CCSM church family as we move individually and together through Lent toward Easter, mindfully encouraging each other all the more!

Lani Leydig

Isaiah 52:13-53:12

Isaiah wrote during a period of great upheaval for his people. They were in a seemingly constant state of war with neighboring kingdoms, and there was great suffering. Flash forward a few thousand years, and we find ourselves in a similar period of upheaval. Our own country is at war, we are still weathering the effects of a severe economic crisis and many people live in desperate conditions here and throughout the world.

In this passage, Isaiah tells his people not to give up hope because God still loves them and offers redemption. Isaiah portrays the suffering and eventual glory of God's servant as proof of God's love. God's servant is initially reviled by his community and suffers a multitude of physical afflictions, but he is ultimately redeemed and rewarded for his faith.

Although written many years before Jesus' birth, these words are especially resonant during Lent. This passage foretells Jesus' life and describes the sacrifice that God made out of great love for us. He offered the life of His son Jesus as a path to our spiritual peace. We are reminded to remain hopeful. Even though suffering is an inescapable aspect of life, we can take comfort in God's love for us.

Melissa Wurster

Hebrews 4:14-16, 5:7-9

One day a young friend of mine told me, sadly, that her father did not like her, and that it was difficult to even have a nice conversation with him.

I sympathized with her, and told her that she has a loving heavenly father who was always available and ready to listen to her. This seemed to allay her pain and sadness.

In Hebrews 4:14-16 and 5:7-9, we read that Jesus Christ is our great High Priest. He understands our weaknesses. He has wept as we do. He knows all about our sorrows and is in all our tomorrows. He will listen to our every cry.

On the cross he bridged the gap that separated us from God. Therefore we come boldly, to the throne of grace and know for certainty that God hears our prayers.

Trust that, you are God's beloved! What an awesome thought.

At this Holy, reflective, season of the year, let us once more give ourselves to this one who loved us so much that he came down from his place in heaven, so that we might experience, not only some of heaven on earth but also everlasting life.

Draw near to God and God will draw near to you.

Marie Shepard

Isaiah 55: 1-9

*For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord.*

Some days I listen for God's voice and I don't hear anything. I try to listen harder—I'm not sure if that's actually possible, but I try anyway. I remove myself from distractions. Light a candle. Put on some inspirational music. Take a walk and soak in the nature around me. And still, nothing. That's what it's been like for me while trying to write this devotional. I've allowed the words to percolate and have waited attentively for insight to arise within me. When that didn't work, I put myself in the place of the writer to see if I could experience the text from his/her perspective. Thinking that I was over-thinking the whole thing, I put it away for a day and hoped that something in everyday life would spark an epiphany or at least create a good story I could relate. Nada. Nil, zip, zero. Sigh. So I started to bargain with God: Look, God—I'm going through a tough time right now and I could really use something that goes smoothly. I'm not asking to write a profound, moving meditation that brings a tear to a reader's eyes. I just don't want to completely fail or leave Jerri hanging on this project. So what do you say you just give me a little somethin' to jot down? [Deafening silence ... followed by crickets chirping in the distance.] And then it hit me: nothing. Maybe all God asks of me is to listen. He didn't necessarily guarantee there'd be a show, a sign, a directive, or an insight. Sometimes He's ok if I make up an answer or a path—as long as I keep checking in along the way to see if I need to make any adjustments. "Come to me heedfully, listen, that you may have life." See, there's not a word in this passage that says listening will result in an immediate answer—it offers something even better: life for one's soul. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways,' says the Lord." Yes, that's becoming very clear to me now.

Lynn Marie Coye

Psalm 63

In Psalm 63, written from the wilderness of Judah, David's song (psalm) speaks warmly of his longing for the soul of God. Even more, David speaks of the constancy of God's love, whether in sanctuaries or deserts, and is filled with joy and thanksgiving.

Here there is no bargaining with God; no "If you protect me, I will love you... or, please help me in my despair. There are no conditions... simply a warm, lively devotion.

...I will give you thanks as long as I live;
I will raise my hands to you in prayer.
...and I will sing glad songs of praise to you.

In the unsettled lonely wilderness, or even in his bed, the steadfast communion is felt:

...As I lie in bed, I remember you;
All night long I think of you because you have always been my help.
In the shadow of your wings, I sing for joy.

This joy in the longing for a personal connection to God is felt from early morning to nightfall; David's faith endures in the dreary outer wasteland. His inward joy is abundant with the calming meditations and devotion. True desolation is distance from God. While the believer will draw near to God and find refuge, misery will overwhelm the enemies who speak falsely.

The fellowship of communion in the temple, obeying the ordinances of God, is one way to find a relationship with God. But David's Psalm 63 shares the joy that can be found within one's soul in a personal connection to God. For that, it is known as one of David's sunniest songs.

1 Corinthians 10:1-13

No testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. God is faithful, and will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it.

(verse 13)

I learned this verse when I was very young and it has stayed with me through my more than “three-score years and ten”. Many times it has given me strength when I felt I had almost none of my own. When I lost a baby; while I was raising my three children, and coping with the many crises that occurred during those years; when my five-year-old granddaughter crashed through a sliding glass door, and needed more than five-hundred stitches to mend her lacerated little body; when I was diagnosed with a rare aggressive cancer; when I was nursing my husband of more than fifty years while he was dying from the lung cancer that ravished his body; and while I have been re-inventing my life and identity since he has been gone – all through the years, I have sensed the presence of the God who “is faithful”, and who has always provided a “way out” – an ability to endure, and even to find spots of peace and joy in the midst of the most severe “testing”. God is indeed faithful, and will be with us each day, as we continue on our Journeys.

Phyllis White

Psalm 22

Trust in God to be with you in all trials and troubles. There's no need to worry, trust God. When you see darkness only, pray. Troubles will always be around us, but so is God. Remember two words "have faith". When you have exhausted all ideas to overcome your troubles and have failed to achieve your desired results, have faith. God has chosen a different route for you to take and it's possibly not the path you thought it should be. God is always with you and loving you, no matter what you have done or what has been done to you. Pray for guidance and love. Pray for support to overcome your grief. Pray for strength in your faith and love of God. Surround yourself with a community of believers. Gain strength from their love for God. Support them during their time of need and they will return this love to you. Live with God daily and know God has always got your back! No matter what you are or what terrible things you have done, God will still love you and forgive you. Have faith and trust God to take care of you.

Linda Skromme

Day 23

March 11

Psalm 116:1-2

God gives us so much support, love and a listening ear. The Lord loves us and inspires us to love the Lord.

God's goodness is so great! We can give all our sorrows, complaints and even our joys to the Lord and our Creator will listen to them

The Creator is always there to lend an ear to us. God is always present in our day to day activities to hear us.

Tish Showen

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

There are places in the Gospels that record the events of Holy week. This supper is the last one Jesus ate with his Disciples before his crucifixion. The writer of this book, Paul, is telling us what has been passed on to him about the Last Supper. It is interesting to think about Communion as a memorable moment or ritual that has been past from person-to-person and generation-to-generation. Paul was not present for that meal, but he heard about it from the Disciples who were with Jesus and share the meal with him.

As I think about Lent, this meal becomes more meaningful. Jesus left his disciples, us, with a ritual. Jesus followers have been blessing and breaking bread and sharing the cup down through the years as a way to remember. We remember that Jesus is our friend and brother. We remember there is a way.

Here at CCSM we celebrate communion and offer a blessing in hopes that each one of us is encouraged, strengthened, and embraced in love. We celebrate communion because someone shared this important meal with us and now we pass on this meaningful ritual to others as they join us on this faith journey.

Jerri Handy

Luke 13:1-9

I'm struck by how hard it is for me to repent. I am driven in both my personal and professional life by a sense of duty and an experience of falling short in fulfilling that duty.

Several years back, on a mission trip to Mexico, I had an experience of timelessness. After days of hard work and bruised knuckles, a nasty beardlike growth on the chin and no comb, I happened to see myself in a mirror for the first time all week. I didn't recognize myself. I realized I'd been caught up doing what I should be doing and had let go of my petty thoughts and forgotten about myself. Peace, joy and calm washed over me just then. I think I had repented, at least for a moment.

Often I wonder if what I'm doing is enough, or doing right. Did I say the wrong thing? Could I have done more? I'm fairly brutal on myself, especially when those who love me tell me to give myself a break.

So, I'd like to repent. I don't seek repentance via punishing regret or repentance driven by fear. I do seek a return to that sense of timeless grace. I'd like to shut my mind up and reconnect with my God.

Pete Roddy

In order to understand this story you have to understand who is present when Jesus tells the story. In the room were not only the sinners and tax collectors but also the self-righteous, the hypocritical, the Pharisees.

The story begins with a father who feels blessed in having two sons, in the old world it was a blessing to have just one, imagine how proud the father felt in having two. One day the youngest of the sons asks his father to give him his half of the inheritance so he can leave the farm and make a life of his own in the big city.

After being in the city for just a short time, the son squanders away his money and has to go back home. He thinks he can work like one of his father's slaves to be accepted, he does not believe his father will take him back in due to the sins he has committed when leaving home. To his surprise, the father welcomes him in with love and celebrates his return because it was like his son coming back from the dead. This party angers the other son but the father tells him, I love you both the same no matter what you do in your life.

Jesus is saying to the Pharisees that the destitute and morally corrupt stand in the same relationship with God as they do.

Evelyn MacDougall

Psalm 32
(The Joy of Forgiveness)

Happy are those whose transgression is forgiven . . . in whose spirit there is no deceit; . . . while I kept silence, my body wasted away . . . then I acknowledged my sin to you and I did not hide my iniquity . . . you surround me with glad cries of deliverance.(NRSV)

I was struck with the forgiveness image expressed in this Psalm. Speaking to God, David describes what it is like for him to “own up to” a transgression and then receive forgiveness for it. While keeping silent about an injustice he has committed, “[his] body [wastes] away;” but once he admits his “iniquity,” asks for forgiveness, and receives pardon (my favorite definition of “forgiveness” is “to no longer seek revenge”), then the very source of his “wasting away” becomes his “hiding place” and he is “[surrounded] with glad cries of deliverance.”

In my experience, when I have transgressed against someone, I have often failed to admit it out of fear of retribution, embarrassment, shame; and I have encountered the heaviness of guilt. But on those occasions when I have summonsed the courage to be truthful, more often than not, I have found that my fears were unfounded, that forgiveness has been eagerly, willingly, and generously granted; and I have been welcomed into the embrace of reconciliation.

But even as I read this scripture and acknowledge how wonderful being forgiven is, I notice how equally wonderful it is to be the instrument of such “glad cries of deliverance” for someone else . . . to “no longer seek revenge” . . . to inspire trust and offer steadfast love. Therefore, whether on the receiving or granting end of forgiveness, happiness and joy thrive.

Marge Boyd

Joshua 5: 9-12

While the Israelites wandered in the wilderness, God sent manna to sustain them. When they reached the land of Canaan they were able to eat the produce of the land and they were no longer given manna. God has provided us with all that we need to sustain us. We need to use what has been provided to take care of our own needs and to help those in need. Our guiding principles state that we should feed the hungry, Care for the sick and house the homeless. God has given us manna when we were in need. Now we need to take care of our own needs and those of our neighbors all over the world. The recent tragedy in Haiti has reminded us again how fortunate we are. We have hungry people in our own neighborhood as well as in other parts of the world. We need to send our manna to all who need it.

Creator, we pray that with your help we will be able to share our abundance with those in need here and all around the world.

Shirley Mc Kinnie

2 Corinthians 5:16-21

What does it mean to be a new creation? In this season of gathering darkness, how can we be new? We are asked to open our hearts and our minds to be God's new creations. We are not asking God to come into our world – we are part of God's creation, and God wants us to realize this and act upon that knowledge. God wants us to come to Him.

We join in God's creation from the inside out. Open your heart, open your mind! That little crying child is part of god's kingdom – can you help soothe her? That slow-moving elderly man is part of God's kingdom – can you smooth his path?

No one is here by accident; we are all small parts of God's creation. When we act as new creations, we join with all creation in God's reconciling us to Him. As Christ's ambassadors, be watchful; be searching for ways to join in the great reconciling of creation.

Thanks be to God that Christ loves us, died and rose for us. What can you do today as a new creation?

Pam Larsen

Job 14:1-14

For there is hope for a tree, if it is cut down, that it will sprout again, and that its shoots will not cease.

Job 14:7

Each year, when I purchase my Christmas tree, I also purchase and pot an amaryllis bulb. I find great pleasure in watching the bulb sprout and the stalk grow taller and taller until finally the glorious blossoms burst forth. This year I watched and waited, and watched and waited, but the weeks passed and nothing emerged from the bulb. Friends, teasing and laughing at me, said I should return the bulb and ask for another.

After some time went by, I considered this and went so far as to drive to the store, but found I couldn't reject the bulb I had. Returning home, pot in hand, I continued to wait.

Alas, MANY weeks later I saw the first tiny show of green, and now, long past the holiday season, the stalk has grown tall, and though still not in bloom, the tip is swollen and the promise of beautiful blossoms lies just below the surface.

Even as in Lent, we wait and prepare, and finally, as we get through the darkness of Good Friday, God's promise remains true.

Help me to become more intentional in my faith, and to trust in the knowledge that when darkness, despair, or doubt come, God is there, and, as I wait, hope, and yes, joy, will sprout forth again.

Dorothy Gorman

Lamentations 3:1-9, 19-24

Late into the night, men and women stand on the rubble of their homes and cry. One man, exhausted from a day of desperate digging, sits leaning against the shattered remains of the marketplace with his blistered hands covering his face. He is mute as he tries to remember the smell of his daughter's hair, her last birthday, the last dress he was able to buy her. Nearby, his neighbors hear echoes of women singing.

From a dark tangle near a tree, a woman inhales deeply and cries out, "how like a widow Jerusalem has become." The echoes of singing rise as others join in song. The dust inflames their throat, but many neighbors join in. "God's mercy never fails," they sing. Having lost all they have known, they must.

Mighty Jerusalem is laid low and its lament echoes through time. Port-a-Prince laments its legacy of affliction, but bears witness to the capacity to survive by faith. Inevitably, each one of us meets suffering and affliction through loss, pain, or illness. Even as this reading from Lamentations describes the destruction of the great city, it is the voice of personal despair. Through our body we experience brokenness, and it is from our body that we find hope and transformation.

Whatever the shape, content or degree of your affliction, respect it. Give voice to your journey and know that you are not alone. Meet the day in prayer, and have faith that God is present in steadfast love.

David Cowell

Psalm 31: 1-4, 15-16

No book in the Old Testament is more Christian in its inner sense or more fully attested as such by the use made of it than the Psalms. In these verses David-King of Israel who is also known as the “sweet psalmist of Israel” is describing the trust he has in the Lord. The message of verses 1-4 attest to our dependence on the Lord. Any person of faith who has endured trials, persecution or any other misfortune caused by the hand of an enemy should find solace in the knowledge that if he builds a foundation upon the rock of our Lord rather than building upon the sand that person will have the strength to withstand the storms of life, for they shall surely come and beat upon our house.

If I were to liken or compare these scriptures to a personal life experience it would be my battle with ovarian cancer. Through this trial I had to rely on the merits of our Lord. Never before have I prayed so fervently and with such faith than at this time in my life. Our Lord and Father in Heaven is actually showing us mercy when he gives us trials. Trials come in life and through them we can draw closer to the Lord. Trials are given to us for our experience and good and if we allow them to they can purify us rather than defeat us. They can teach us to have endurance, patience and charity.

In verse 15 David makes reference to his time being in the Lords hands. How reassuring it is to know that our days are known to the Lord and that our years shall not be numbered less than what has been appointed to us before we return home. In verse 16 David prays that the Lords face would shine upon him. It is truly a blessing it is to have the Lord’s countenance shine upon and through us. It could be a spiritual gauge of sorts knowing that we are living in a way that is pleasing to God insomuch that His Spirit would strive with us constantly.

Rosemary Pero with help from son Joseph Smith

Isaiah 43:16-21

Let's jump from Isaiah to the English version of American Idol. Susan Boyle was born in a small village in Scotland and went through poverty and struggle in a difficult childhood. She gave her life taking care of her ailing mother while working in a post office. As her mother was dying, she encouraged Susan to pursue her dream of singing. Impossible! And Isaiah said, "Do not remember the former things or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing, now it springs forth, do you not perceive it." And Susan listened and did something about it.

We were totally shocked when we saw this ordinary, modest woman sans makeup, fancy hairdo, glitzy clothes and definitely not anorexic, on the English version of America Idol. She moved us all with her glorious voice and her humility.

This story makes each of us ask what voice have we been hearing that wants attention, risk and becoming. Perhaps we have neglected an interest or a hobby we have never pursued because of other demands and/or because we thought we weren't good enough. Make a list - risk! Sing loud - the most important person who hears your voice will be you.

Clare Nagle

Psalm 126 is an acknowledgment of the wondrous gifts given to us from God.

Fortune is not measured by money but it is the ability to see what God has created for us. From the beauty of a setting sun to the richness of a loving family. From the taste of a glass of cool water to the miracle that is a new born child.

No one has a perfect life and we all have periods of sadness, sorrow, pain, disappointment and failure. We all ask "Why". Perhaps it is because when we are the weakest, we move closer to God. We know that His love is constant.

Footprint in the Sand by an unknown author says it best:

One night a man dreamed he was walking along the beach with the Lord. As scenes of his life flashed before him, he noticed that there were two sets of footprints in the sand. He also noticed that at his saddest, lowest times there was but one set of footprints. This bothered the man. He asked the Lord, "Did you not promise that if I gave my heart to you, that you would be with me all the way? Then why is there but one set of footprints during my most troublesome time?" The Lord replied, "My precious child, I love you and would never forsake you. During those times of trial and suffering, when you see only one set of footprints, it was then I carried you."

Michele Moffitt

Philippians 3:4b-14

*Compared to the high privilege of knowing Christ Jesus as my Savior,
everything else is insignificant.*

Today is the thirty-fifth day of Lent, March 23. Palm Sunday is just around the corner. We have been preparing for a while now, getting ourselves ready for Holy Week and Easter. Yet, this scripture reminds us that it isn't who we are or even all the things that we do that that brings us closer to God. It is in receiving the original grace that Penny talked about. That is confirmed in this scripture. Paul, in writing to the Church community in Philippi, is realizing that it is NOT because of his credentials that he knows God. Rather it is the opposite. It is in the shedding of his credentials, the shedding of his power self, that he becomes open to God. And then he realizes that all else is insignificant.

So today is a day of receiving. Know that God loves you just as are. The only preparation needed is the shedding of the expectations and being open to God. So take a moment and get comfortable. Close your eyes and open your hands. Be open to receiving God's spirit today. Be open to God's spirit moving in your life. Be open to the assurance that God loves you. Amen.

Betsy Woodward

John 12:1-8

What a beautiful story John gives us; the story of Mary anointing Jesus. In the home of Lazarus, whom Jesus had raised from the dead, six days before the Passover, Mary uses a pound of costly perfume to anoint Jesus' feet, wiping them with her hair and filling the house with the fragrance of perfume. When Judas Iscariot scolded her, questioning why she spent money on this extravagant gift rather than giving the money to the poor, Jesus intervenes. Mary's gift, of the perfume, was a sign that she knew of his coming death. She loved Jesus, as he loved her and her sister Martha, and her brother Lazarus. Jesus saw her gift as a gift of extravagant love and told the people that the poor would always be with them but he would not be there.

In Luke 10:42 he says Mary has chosen the good path. The story is told also in Matthew 26:6 and Mark 14:3. In Mark, Jesus is quoted as saying, "For ye have the poor with you always, and when ever you will, you may do them good, but me you have not always." Mary's gift was a gift of thanksgiving and honoring. In our church here at CCSM we believe God is a spirit of love, that Christianity is as much about the heart as it is the head." We have taken Jesus' words to guide us in our outreach to "do them good" that are in need. But we also extend our work in extravagant spiritual love in our prayers.

*Lord, whose love through humble service bore the weight of human need,
Who upon the cross, forsaken offered mercy's perfect deed.
We, your servants, bring the worship not of voice alone, but heart,
Consecrating to you purpose every gift that you impart.*

Words by Albert Bayly
United Methodist Hymnal

Anonymous

Psalm 31:9-16

Dear Lord, we pray to you when distressing news comes to us about a loved one or about ourselves. We can be in deep sorrow and have great feelings of despair that make us feel as if we are alone and just wasting away. During this time of distress, you can also feel isolated from your family, friends and acquaintances for they fear your fragility or just are unsure of how to treat you or what to say to you. They are at a loss and so avoid you and often just stay away. During this time you have a feeling of being less than whole or like a broken person, often being afraid to step out and become involved with others, or beginning something new in case your time runs out. Some may whisper about you, your illness or some news they may have heard about you, causing you to feel shunned and alone. As we think back, we remember that most of the feelings we experience are caused by fear.

We must then put our trust in the Lord. Give our fear and misery up to God's steadfast love of us. Only he can truly know what is best for us. Through our prayers is the only way to be saved as we put all our trust in the Lord my God.

Zee Larrew

Luke 22:14-23,56

In this Gospel, we learn of a new definition of Passover. Traditionally, Passover is a holiday commemorating the “passing over” the homes where the Israelites were spared of God’s tenth plague of killing Egyptians’ firstborn. Egyptian Pharaoh had earlier refused to listen to Moses’ message from God of: “Send forth My People, so that they may serve Me” as the Israelites were subjected to hard labor and horrors. The sparing of the children of Israel broke Pharaoh’s resistance and allowed Israelites to leave Egypt. In celebration of this holiday, the Jewish people gathered together and ate Passover meals.

Jesus celebrated Passover with His apostles on the eve of His death. Jesus showed us great courage as He sat on the table and shared His Last Supper facing His destiny of suffering. He broke bread and poured wine as a reminder of His body and blood given up to create a new covenant between us and God. Jesus’ last celebration of Passover reminds us of the ultimate sacrifice of God’s only son to save us. The Last Supper celebrates our Passover, our release from slavery of our sinful world, to be freed and to serve God.

As we receive communion, it reminds us of not only how He suffered a painful death but also how He lived. It reminds us of Jesus who was kind and gentle to all, and who did not discriminate. Receiving communion is taking in Jesus so His spirit may live within us and follow His teachings.

Christine ‘Leleh’ Monta

Psalm 118

A profound psalm of praise rejoicing in the assurance of God's everlasting love, Psalm 118 contains a sentence which piques my curiosity and contemplation. The psalm begins by promising salvation to the "righteous," which leads me to wonder about the definition of "righteous," depends on what religious or political power is doing the defining, as we have seen during the Inquisition or the Holocaust.

Then there is this line: "The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone." What a refreshing and revolutionary idea--that the individual appearing least likely to be chosen may emerge to turn history in a new direction!

As we look back at the knife of history slicing down through time, we can see that the great religious leaders have indeed been "the stones rejected by the builders." Jesus, rising from an obscure Jewish village and condemned by the Roman power structure, became the cornerstone of Western civilization. And there are others. Mohammed, Buddha, the Dalai Llama were all at one point "rejected stones". Intellectual and political leaders like Susan B. Anthony and Nelson Mandela, also, overcame persecution to lead the festal processions of their people forward.

So who, we need to ask, are the "rejected stones" in our present and future? And whom do we choose to be the builders? Who will lead the festal processions of future centuries so the peoples of the planet can continue to give thanks to the Lord, assured that "his steadfast love endures forever"?

Nancy Lee Jalonen

Luke 19:28-40

Jesus enters Jerusalem and his disciples find themselves moved to cry out his blessedness, and to cry out for peace. This is not what the Pharisees want to hear so they tell Jesus to quiet his followers down. But this message has to come from somewhere. “If these were silent,” Jesus tells the Pharisees, “the stones would shout out.”

As Lent draws to a close, we might reflect on what message we are being called to proclaim. What has been brewing and simmering in us during this season? Is there some message that has to come from somewhere? That the stones and the pavement and the cars and the trees are struggling to shout out, the budding flowers trying to articulate, but which it is our job to convey? Is there some matter of truth, some issue of justice that needs our voice right now? Each of us will answer these questions differently. Each of us will find our voice in different ways.

The disciples called out Jesus’ blessedness. In Jesus’ life and works we can hear the proclamation of God’s love for us, even all these centuries later. We can rest assured in that message even as we discern what it is we are being called to say in the world and continue to listen for what God has to say to us now.

Valerie McEntee

Isaiah 50:4-9a

God calls us to His presence, that we may listen and learn, then teach by our words and actions what we have learned from Him. As a child I listened as my grandfather, Vovo we kids called him, told us stories about a marvelous blue goat named Billy. This mischievous Blue Goat was always in trouble, always escaping, fully loved by his human family. Later I learned from my mom, Vovo's daughter, that as a younger man he had a terrible temper that caused much pain to his family. Even earlier, as a teen-ager, he had carelessly and accidentally shot and killed a friend with an "unloaded" pistol. At some time in those early years he also began to hear God calling him through Jesus' life and teaching. Somewhere along the way the Lord "opened his ear; he was not rebellious, he did not turn backward."

The stories Vovo told his grandchildren endeared him to us. He told of trouble, forgiveness and redemption. We later learned of his own earlier troubles, his rebelliousness, followed by repentance and God's forgiveness and grace. Through his stories and through "the God who vindicates," he taught us how to seek God, to listen for the Teacher's words, and then to use them to shape our own lives. He showed his grandchildren how God can even change an angry man into a gentle, loving human being.

Today, fifty years after his death, I know I have heard God's voice, am hearing it still. It has the sound of a loving grandfather – my own Vovo.

Mike Mullery

Philippians 2: 5-11

This passage is reminding us to live our lives, each day, as if Jesus were here with us walking by our side. How would he ask us to live our lives? I think he would want us to live humbly and to not consider ourselves above anyone else. Live a life full of humility, grace, love, and openness. Live a life serving and respecting others and to lead by example. Teach our children so that they may, in turn, teach their children how to live a life of humility and service. The passage also reminds us to follow our beliefs and not allow ourselves to be influenced by others-challenged, of course, but don't allow ourselves to be forced to change what we believe in order to "fit in." This reading is also reminding us that we can ALL live our lives in this manner- this is an opportunity for each one of us.

Alison Schwant

Exodus 12:1-4, 11-14

Imagine you have the opportunity to participate in your redemption. In this scripture, God says to Moses and Aaron that God's people have the opportunity to participate in their own redemption if they have faith and act on where God's spirit is leading them. Times have changed since this passage was written (of which I am thankful for) while the lessons remain true. I am thankful I do not have to participate in the challenge of eating lamb while holding a staff in one arm. However, we do need to be mindful of what we consume, making sure there is enough food for everyone and not wasting what we have in excess. We may not be required to spread the blood of the meat we are eating for dinner across our door, but we do have to acknowledge that we hear God's guiding voice and act on where it is leading us.

We may not have Moses' presence with us now, but make no mistake; God is still speaking! In acting on God's guiding voice, we will walk into the ocean of redemption where God will strike down our inner demons, give us the strength to stand up for justice, and offer us the humility to turn the cheek of non-violence as we face our enemies. This redemption is our festival of the Lord. When the Spirit of God passes over and through us with the help God's grace, we have done the work to mark our souls as God's children. Through this powerful Spirit we can cling on to what is true and of love in ourselves and let God strike down that which is inside of us that hinders our connection God.

Steven Naylor

John 13: 1-17

John records for posterity the events of the last supper as essential lessons for all truth seekers to understand and emulate. There is utter consternation when Jesus tries to wash the feet of his disciples, a lowly task at best. Jesus washes the feet of all his disciples and gently explains that he has cleansed them except for one thus hinting of his betrayal. Until he speaks, they do not understand his message of humility and equality. By washing their feet, and acknowledging himself as their Master and Savior, Jesus sets an example that his disciples too must show true humility in their acts of service.

He exhorts his disciples (and us) to cultivate humility, to serve others as equals, to remember his teachings, to obey them and be blessed.

John 31b-35

Jesus speaks obscurely of his death and his glorification by the blessings of God and hints that he will not be on this earth much longer. Then Christ gives the sublime and most noblest of commandments to "...love one another....Just as I have loved you..." He speaks of his love for his disciples, accepting their human frailties and giving them his unconditional love, the divine love of the Infinite Christ. In my opinion, to emulate Jesus Christ's love we need to expand our consciousness and saturate our hearts with love not only for our family and friends and our nation, and to also encompass the whole earth, the galaxies and beyond.

Christ's followers will be known by obeying and expressing his message of divine love in thought, word and deed.

John 18: 1 – 19: 42

Often when we face a trial or unpleasant task, we go to a favorite place in preparation—by taking a walk in a beautiful wood or along a beach, we find strength and comfort. We fortify ourselves for what lies ahead by seeking the familiar and coming again to a spot where we have known joy, hopeful that by returning to a special setting, such contentment, as we have known will balance anticipated fear or sorrow. “Surely the presence of [God] is in this place.” Jesus did the same as he knew the hour of his betrayal was near; “he went out with his disciples across the Kidron valley to a place where there was a garden . . .” and in that garden, that sanctuary where he often had known peace and had experienced community with friends, he filled himself with the strength to face his betrayer and accusers. And “knowing all that was to happen to him, [he] came forward. . .” to accept his fate. On this Good Friday, this observance of Jesus’ crucifixion and death, it is appropriate and necessary to identify our “gardens”—those places where we gather resources allowing us to “come forward” into our own challenges, our fears, our unfamiliar territory, our sorrows, our despair, with courage and determination. These places do not deliver us from our trials; they simply put us into God’s presence, allowing us to walk in good company, no matter what we meet along the way.

Marge Boyd

John 19:38-42

In this account, we learn about the removal of Jesus' body from the cross and its subsequent burial. Given that Jesus was crucified as a traitor, the custom of the time would have been to leave the body on the cross to be scavenged or perhaps buried in an unmarked grave. However, this story describes the loving actions of two men, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, who took the body, lavishly anointed it and prepared it for burial according to Jewish customs, and placed it in a brand new tomb. So there is an amazing contrast between the brutality of Jesus' death and the great love, care and honor bestowed upon him by these two men at his burial. Another striking aspect to consider is that Joseph and Nicodemus were both secret disciples of Jesus despite the fact that they were wealthy members of the Jewish ruling class. Although they did not have the courage to openly follow Jesus or speak out in his defense while he was living, they were mobilized by his death and ultimately gained the courage to act. They thus become important examples for each of us – that we, too, can find the courage to act decisively and with love, even if we have failed to do so in the past.

Carole Melis

John 20: 1-18

Easter Sunday Morning! The Journey through Lent has ended with the rising of the “son.” Our Scripture for today tells of Jesus, the one who had been put to death for his revolutionary ideas of the Kingdom of God, who now lives on. Easter is such an important time in the life of the church. Through the season of Easter we understand just a bit more about what it means to live into a faith journey that is alive. Marcus Borg says, “Believe whatever you want about whether it happened this way; now let’s talk about what the story means.” “What it means is that you won’t find Jesus in the land of the dead.”

John’s account of the resurrection tells us that many women and men went to the tomb that morning and were confused by Jesus’ body being gone. However Mary stayed with it just a little longer. She waited, she cried, and she saw angels. She questioned and came to a moment where she also saw Jesus.

In our joyfulness and excitement of this Easter, can we stop just for a moment to catch a new glimpse of Spirit at work in our lives? Can we walk away from this Easter morning renewed and our hearts open just a little more? And if we can, I wonder what differences we might see in our lives, our families, our church and our community.

It has been a joy to work with you in compiling this year’s devotional. I trust that this shared journey has blessed you and helped you to know members and Friends of CCSM a bit better. With a grateful heart, thank you for walking this path together.

Jerri Handy