

Lenten Devotional Booklet 2023



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Foreword

These Lenten Devotionals were written by members and friends of Central Lutheran in Lent 2023. Every one of them has a verse of scripture, a brief reflection, an image, and a prayer. The devotions became our guidebook on our Lenten journey of faith and meaning for who Jesus is for us today. It simultaneously is a way we share our story as Central Lutheran Church as a community of the body of Christ together, as they were written by and for members of the Central Community. I encourage you to use these devotions as an invitation to your own reflection and meditation in your life.

Week 1: Ash Wednesday

“You are dust, and to dust you shall return” (Genesis 3:19).



Sobering words to be sure, yet as the baptized people of God, we have the assurance that we share not only in Christ’s death, but also in his resurrection. And so, as we journey through Lent, mindful of our mortality and our sinful nature, may this be the prayer on our lips, “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me” (Psalm 51:10). Amen.

Pastor Laurie Jones

Week 1: Thursday

"On the day the Lord God made the earth and heavens, no shrub of the field being yet on the earth and no plant of the field yet sprouted, for the Lord God had not caused rain to fall on the earth and there was no human to till the soil, and wetness would well from the earth to water all the surface of the soil, then the Lord God fashioned the human, humus from the soil, and blew into their nostrils the breath of life, and the human became a living creature." Genesis 2:5-7

For all the sacred unknowability of God, still there is tender intimacy in the relationship between Creator and creation. On the journey of Lent, we remember that both the Spirit of life and the wilderness into which we are led are at once with and within us.



Let us pray. Creator God, you knelt in the soil to sculpt our bodies from the earth's clay. You breathed into our nostrils the breath of life. Restore to us the good humility of our of-earth-ness and imbue us with your spirit of love as we navigate the messiness of living. Amen.

Deacon Clare Josef-Maier

Week 1: Friday

“Look, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut.” Rev. 3:8a

This door with the glass cross within it reminds me of the way we reflect Christ’s light outward to the world and the way it can be seen through reminds me that Christ’s actions in this world are always present and can be seen in the world around us.



Let us pray. Gracious God, you continue to leave open the door of your mercy and forgiveness through your Son Jesus Christ and embrace us as your beloved children. Guide us to live out that life of faith and serve one another with open hearts to be your hands and feet in the world. Amen.

Pastor Ben Nickodemus

Week 1: Saturday

Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Rom. 12:12

Three commands. In Lent, we should be joyful in hope for the resurrection. Life is filled with tribulation and affliction but we are to be patient in waiting. Jesus never shied away from affliction. When we are afflicted or troubled is perhaps the best time to learn patience, to reflect, and to grow in the Spirit and in Christ. God is faithful to us. His call to us is to walk with him. We walk with Christ through prayer. Be in thoughtful prayer waiting for the crucifixion and the resurrection.



Thank you for this time to be joyful in hope on our Lenten journey.

Gary Wolfe

Week 2: Monday

For everything there is a season...A time to keep and a time to throw away.
A time to tear and a time to sew. Eccl. 3:1,7

This verse reminds me of our CLC quilting. Our members let go of fabrics no longer needed; with love, we cut, we stitch and something new and wonderful emerges.



Lord, open our eyes to the possibilities for renewal in the resources we share. Bless the givers and the doers. Amen

Jill Liedtke

Week 2: Tuesday

Now faithfulness is the concrete foundation (“sub-stance”) of things hoped for... (Hebrews 11:1)

There is a big construction project directly across from our apartment in Tübingen, Germany with currently three major features: an architect’s drawing (lower left) of the much-needed new apartment block, a couple of construction cranes, and a massive concrete foundation. Right now, the foundation is perhaps the most important component because it provides the “concrete” assurance that the building is coming. Likewise, our faithfulness to God—especially in times of uncertainty and waiting—is the present, concrete *substance* of the very real city that we long to live in, whose architect and builder is God (Hebrews 11:10).



Let us pray. Lord Jesus, pioneer and perfecter of faithfulness, help us to keep our eyes fixed upon you so that we too may live faithfully to God, and, in so living, that we may rejoice today in the precious things to come. Amen.

Dennis Lindsay

Week 2: Wednesday

“But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him.” (Luke 15:20)

In Rembrandt’s painting of the prodigal son, a dirty, tattered young man falls to his knees before his father. We cannot see his face but his body language speaks utter defeat. His elderly father bends over grasping his son’s shoulders. The father’s expression is one of deep love, pity and relief. It is, of course, the story of God’s unconditional love. The season of Lent is a time of repentance. The prodigal son reminds us that no matter how far we have wandered, our heavenly father awaits our return with love and compassion and with open arms.



Rembrandt, *The Return of the Prodigal Son*. Hermitage Museum, Russia. Image from Wikimedia commons, Public Domain

“And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into the time of trial, but deliver us from the evil one.”

Please view the beautiful, large print of Rembrandt’s *The Return of the Prodigal Son* which we have at Central. Take a few moments to contemplate this parable and Rembrandt’s interpretation of the story.

Karen Lindsay

Week 2: Thursday

“Now the whole group of those who believe were of one heart and soul.” Acts 4:32

We gather in different communities, not only at our Lutheran church, but also in various other communities that touch our lives.



Life in Community. *The Saint John's Bible*, Saint John's University, Collegeville, Minnesota USA. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

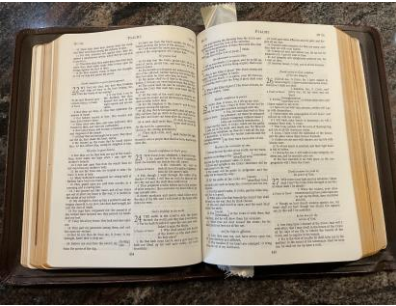
Dear Lord, Thank you for the gift of community - for your teaching, fellowship, liturgy, prayer, and healing - at Central Lutheran and at other communities we are part of and which touch us.

Elizabeth Uhlig

Week 2: Friday

Show me your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth, and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all day long.
Ps 25:4-5

In this Psalm, David provides us a model of the Christian life. This is a life of searching and learning to determine what is the will of God for us. It is a life of pondering Scripture, learning with each other, and praying for the Spirit's guidance. Let us use this Lenten time to allow the Spirit grow and enrich our faith.



Heavenly Father, we thank you for the Church, our fellow Christians with whom we can learn together. Give us the gift of the Spirit as we read your Word together so that we may know your ways and have strength to follow your paths. We ask this in the name of our Lord and your Son, Jesus Christ.
Amen

Chuck Dietz

Week 2: Saturday

The LORD will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail. (Isaiah 58:11)

During this time of such great sadness and turbulence in our world, each morning this verse causes me to pause. A calm descends reflecting on this image of an eternal source, our God and faith, which provides hope for the day.



Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your powerful presence in our lives. For the many promises in your word that carry us through hard times. And for the incredible joy we experience in the body of Christ as we care for each other. In Jesus name. Amen

Karen Kumpula Lacey

Week 3: Monday

"I have come as light into the world, so that everyone who believes in me should not remain in the darkness." John 12:46

It's at times of darkness that I am reminded of the great power of light and its promise. It fills me with hope and wonder for the adventure ahead.



(Approaching Beartooth Pass, Wyoming - Pilot and Index peaks in background, 2017)

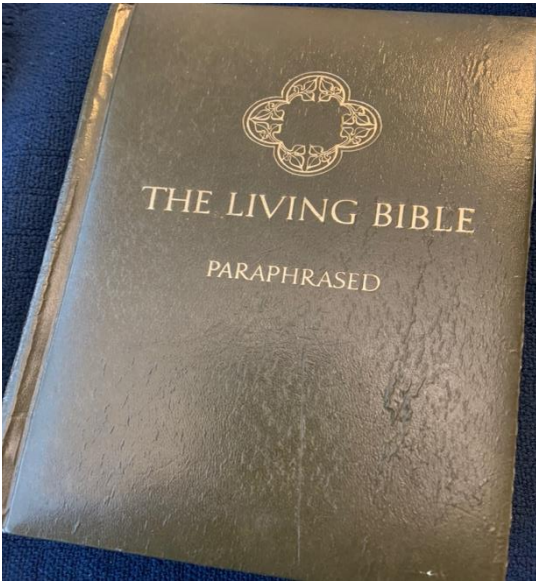
Let us pray. Dear Lord, we share prayers of gratitude for the gift of your only Son, Jesus Christ, who guides us through the darkness to the light of mercy, forgiveness, and your everlasting love. Amen.

Chris Henry

Week 3: Tuesday

So if we're looking for "answers", are we willing to listen and let God lead the way? Luke 11:9-10

God has given me so many blessings. One of them is I can be troubled, be happy, or just questioning. At that moment, I can randomly open my Bible and inevitably find what I need IF I am open to what is being said.



"Dear Lord, please help me to always seek your guidance with an open heart to listen"

Kelly Brown

Week 3: Wednesday

Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.

Joshua 1:9

I've been lucky to hike many mountain trails. Sometimes we choose the paths we take; sometimes life chooses the path for us. Anytime we face something new, knowing that God is with us gives us courage and strength. His presence is confirmed with His sending of His son Jesus Christ, whose life and death overcomes all fear.



Father, we pray to be reminded that by choosing the path You have laid before us, with strength and courage, we should have no fear as You will be with us.

Gary Brown

Week 3: Thursday

“Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me.” Ps. 23:4

When something impossibly crushing overturned my life, I felt that God wasn't listening, and prayer was useless. A column from Pastor John Pavlovitz helped me rethink prayer not as a request for God to do something specific that I wanted, but as a request for help in living my life.



God, give me courage to face what I must face, strength to do what I must do, and faith to believe that you hear me.

Meg Hicks

Week 3: Friday

In peace, I will lie down and sleep; for You alone, O Lord, make me rest secure. Psalm 4:8

"Now I lay me down to sleep; I pray the Lord my soul to keep...." As a kid I prayed these words every night at bedtime, along with a similar prayer in Swedish taught me by my maternal grandmother. As an adult I basically still say the same prayer. Different words and no rhyming, of course. I add thanks for all the wonderful aspects of my life. Along with prayers for mercy and grace for those in need -- myself included -- I basically pray for "peace," a safe place to "lie down and sleep," and for "rest secure."



Dear God, We pray for those for whom sleep is a burden or a near impossibility -- those dealing with anxiety or health issues or personal loss. For all who have lost their homes and have no place to sleep -- the earthquake victims in Turkey and Syria and neighbors whose bed is a cold piece of concrete. We pray for rest secure for all. Amen

Larry Sutton

Week 3: Saturday

"Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel." Luke 2:29-32

Words of hope, words of comfort, words of salvation. What do you find encouraging? Like chicken soup or a warm blanket, God's poetry covers us and inspires.



Heavenly Father, We come to you thanking you for the comfort you allow each of us in our lives. We grow in the knowledge you care for us in All Ways. Grant each of us Your peace and understanding. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Judy Collins

Week 4: Monday

I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth. Psalm 121:1-2

Having always lived around beautiful mountains and hills, this verse is a favorite. Gazing upward casually or in contemplation, in joy or sorrow, exhilaration or despair, this verse is forever with me, reminding me that God is with me. God is my strength. It reminds me that Jesus retreated to the mountains to pray, communicate with his Father, and find strength. The strength to live according to God's will here on earth.



Let us pray. Gracious and ever-loving God, thank you for always watching over me and for giving me the strength of your all-knowing presence. Help me to treat others as you treat me. Amen.

Betsy Berg

Week 4: Tuesday

“Here I am Lord, it is I Lord, I have heard you calling in the night” Based on Is 6:8 and 1 Sam 3:4

This verse means to me that whatever the situation is, good or bad that the Lord is always near and will be there to help us.



Lord, when you are calling us help us to be able to hear what you are saying to us and to hear your answers to our prayers.

Jeff Simas

Week 4: Wednesday

For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.
1 Cor. 13:11 - 13

I think we rarely "get it"; that full message so to speak so these and because I have been made to see and know that I am known, we can be ready to see the heart of the gift: Faith to hope we have His capacity for Love.



Lord, that is our prayer; we hope to have the faith to seek and to share the sweetness of unbounded Love.

Libby Kelly

Week 4: Thursday

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us. . . Hebrews 12:1

When I awake in the morning, God does not expect me to go out on a 10 mile training run, as I am sure these marathoners at the World Games have done many times. It is my job, however, to keep my eyes and ears open to the opportunities that the spirit will offer today to be of service to God and those around me. On a good day, I am alert to those possibilities. On a day when I am struggling , it is even more important for me to get outside myself and search for those opportunities. Being of service is the antidote to my difficulties.



*Gracious God, Awaken me to the things you have in store for me this day.
Give me the heart to overcome fear and to persevere to accomplish your will.*

Sally Diehm

Week 4: Friday

Solomon said

*But will God indeed dwell with men on the earth?
Behold heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You.
How much less this temple which I have built!
“Yet regard the prayer of your servant and his supplication,
O LORD my God, and listen to the cry and the prayer
of which Your servant is praying before You:
that Your eyes may be open toward this temple
day and night,
toward the place where You said You would put
Your name...”* 2 Chronicles 6:18-20

But, the Apostle Paul says,
“Hey you, Christian, yes you!”

*“Do you not know that you are a temple of God
and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?”* 1 Corinthians 3:16

and I say,
*“If God is your co-pilot,
may I suggest that you change seats?”*



Vern White

Week 4: Saturday

(In the night in which Jesus was betrayed, he told his disciples) “I have said these things to you while I am still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid. *John 14:25-27*

In his Gospel, John uses the Greek word *paraclete* to speak of the Holy Spirit, literally *one who is called to one's side to help*. It is often translated in our Bibles as Advocate, Comforter or Helper.



As I seek to do the difficult work of Lent, acknowledging that I have fallen short of the person God has created me to be and that I need a savior, the Holy Spirit is always beside me, comforting me and pointing me to the One who saves from a cross and empty tomb.

Holy Spirit of Truth, by your grace help me to keep my eyes on the cross.
Amen

Kim Eifert Krogstad

Week 5: Monday

Psalm 46:10 He says, "Be still, and know that I am God"

I came back up to my room long after the kids' bedtime, and found this snuggly little boy waiting for me. He had come to wait for me to comfort him, and in the meantime, he rested.



May we also wait and rest in the certainty that God will come to comfort us.

Aubrienne Anderson

Week 5: Tuesday

Rev 21:5a And the one who was seated on the throne said, “See, I am making all things new.”

Looking at the pictures my daughter Iris draws makes me think about how she experiences a world in which everything (moss, leaves, pinecones...) is new and delightful to her.



God, give us eyes to see and delight in your work in the world.

Holly Goodrich & Iris Nickodemus, age 3

Week 5: Wednesday

Then God said, "Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground." Genesis 1:26

"I really like that God likes to have other people in the world. And I just love that."



Let us pray: God loves us and we should love him; in all the world, we love him. Amen.

Maeve Josef-Maier, age 7

Week 5: Thursday

Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad; let the sea resound, and all that is in it. Psalm 96:11

This painting is my gift to Pastor Laurie. The three colors of my hands are; purple means ash, green means life and blue means water. In my picture the ocean and the earth are together surrounding Jesus. Jesus is on the cross, he loves us, and we should respect that. I am excited for Easter!



Dear Jesus, thank you for life, land and water in the earth, and to help us grow. Amen.

Signe Smith, age 8

Week 5: Friday

Job 12:10

In [God's] hand is the life of every creature and the breath of all mankind.



Dear God
You give us love
Amen

Paul Rodgers, age 5

Week 5: Saturday

Psalms 50:11

I know every bird in the mountains, and the insects
in the fields are mine.



Dear God, Thank you for
making winged birds everywhere.
Amen.

Sam Rodgers, age 10

Week 6: Monday

The lawyer asked, "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" Jesus said to him, " 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' " Matt: 22: 36-39

Recently I was driving with a friend on a very cold and blustery day. We passed a person lying on the side of the street with his bicycle tipped over beside him. Half a block later my friend exclaimed, "We have to go back! We have to see if that person is all right! Go around the block!" So we drove around the block but the person on the ground was gone.

That request from my friend caused me to think. I hadn't given the person on the ground a second thought but my friend realized that he might have fallen, might even be injured, and she was willing to go out of her way to make sure he was okay. Our neighbors are the people God places in our lives who need our noticing and caring. I'm grateful to my friend for reminding me that the opportunity to love my neighbor might happen at any time and place.



Compassionate God, keep us alert to the neighbors you have placed in our lives with whom we can share your love and caring.

Merrily Sutton

Week 6: Tuesday

"To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven..." Ecclesiastes 3:1

We're fortunate to live in a place like the Willamette Valley where each season is distinct with its own kind of natural beauty. Just this past week, we saw the last snows of winter give way to the first signs of spring.

The third chapter of Ecclesiastes reminds us that our lives, too, are seasonal. All matters great (birth and death, war and peace) and small (planting and harvesting, conversation and reflection) have a place on God's calendar.

Dear God, open our eyes to the beauty of the changing seasons and guide us as we navigate the seasons of our own lives. Help us to recognize our purpose in Your grand design. Amen.



Footnote: Revisiting this passage, I couldn't help but hear the words as they were sung by Pete Seeger, who put them to music in 1959 with the song "Turn! Turn! Turn!". You likely know the song, too.

Drew Haugen

Week 6: Wednesday

“Do to others as you would have them do to you.” Luke 6:31

There are two reasons why this Bible Verse is very special to me. It was a verse my Mom instilled in me as a child and because of that it was the first bible verse I learned. In our world there seems to be a lack of respect for others. We also fall short of treating people how we would want to be treated. I find myself reflecting and using this verse now more than ever.



Jesus in our troubled world help us truly respect and care for each other as you have taught us. Please show us ways in our daily lives that we can share the kindness in our hearts to help our brothers and sisters. Amen

Suzie Johnson

Week 6: Thursday

Be pleased, O God, to deliver me. O Lord, make haste to help me. Psalm 70:1

I took this photo in the elevator at the Mount Angel Abbey Guesthouse. This verse is chanted by the monks at the beginning of every Liturgy of the Hours. We are reminded to offer this prayer throughout our day and that we can depend on God's assistance at every moment. The Lord will hear us, and we will know that God's protection is always present.



O God, come to my assistance. O Lord, make haste to help me. Amen

Elizabeth Uhlig

Week 6: Friday

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish, but may have eternal life.” John 3:16
My faith is about love. God’s love for me that I then share with the world.
Love is the guiding influence in me.



Let us pray: Thank you for your love. Let me love as You love me – Loving everyone including those who are different and hard to love.

Gary Wolfe

Week 6: Saturday

Luke 1:37 “For with God nothing shall be impossible.”

I like this Bible verse because it’s a good reminder of how God is always with us, and as long as we trust in Him and act out of faith and not fear, all things are possible. Especially in this time in my life where I’m just about to graduate college, it can feel scary going through this big transition and not knowing what’s around the corner, but it helps so much to be grounded in faith and knowing that no matter what I will have God and my loved ones by my side.



Dear God, in this season of Lent, help us to lean into our faith and live fully the life you have so graciously given us. May we use this season as a time of self-reflection and growth.

Liesl Benda

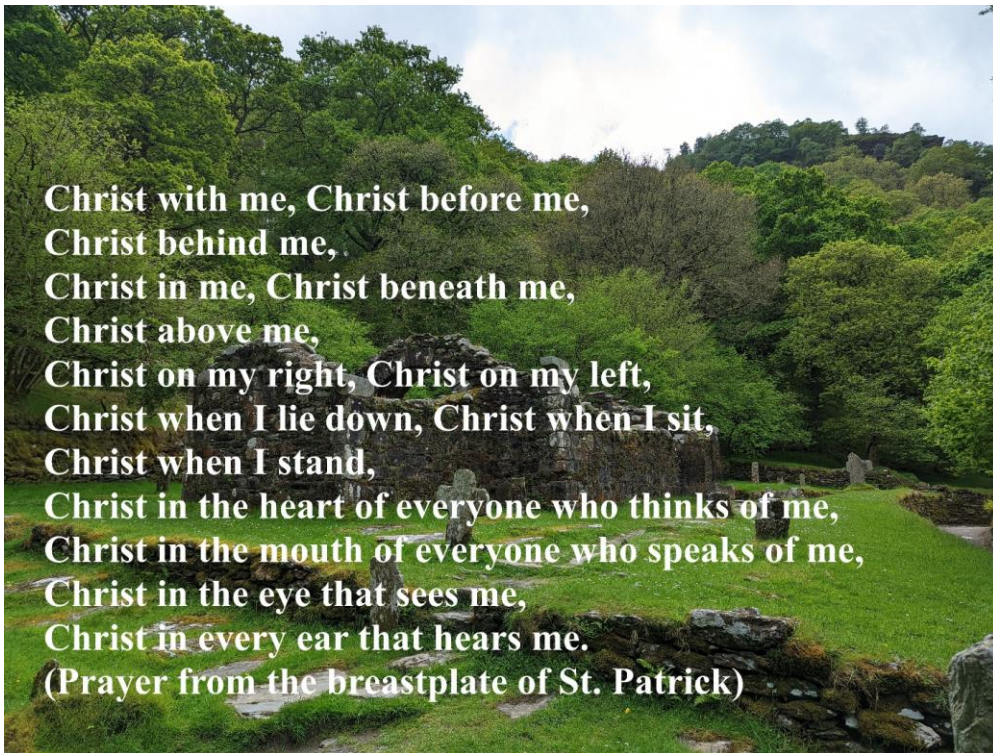
Week 7: Monday

"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Philippians 1:21

After my stepfather received a terminal diagnosis in January, he said with certainty that he was at peace and ready to go. I asked what made him at peace and he said "God. God gave me peace."

Then he said, "Ready to go, but hate to leave." As he spoke, I realized his words echoed both the tension and longing of this verse, and I was glad for the sighting of God's mystery and grace.

For me to live is Christ (so I hate to leave), and to die is gain (so I'm ready to go).



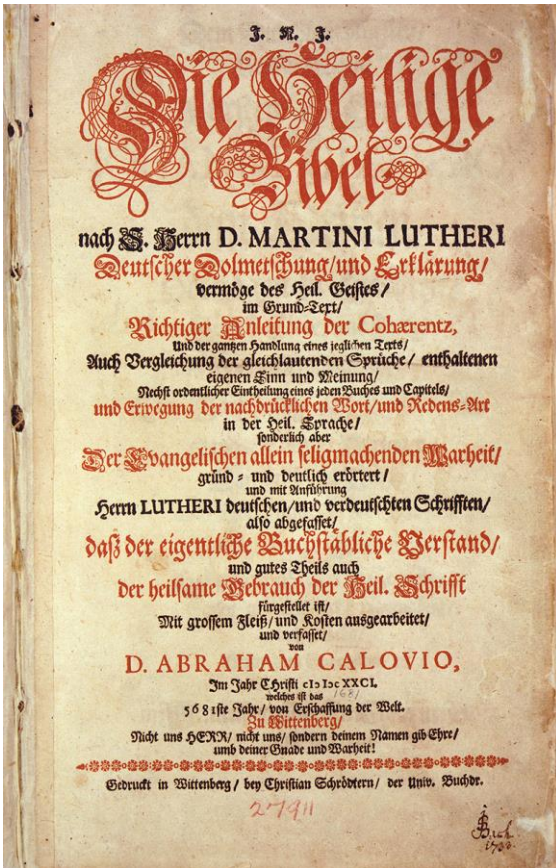
Becky Shurson

Week 7: Tuesday

I will sing of your love and justice; to you, O LORD, I will sing praise. Psalm 101:1

Martin Luther said that "*next to the Word of God, music deserves the highest praise...the gift of song was given to man so that he may proclaim the Word of God*" and I agree! Music is a balm for my soul that I cannot logically explain—I feel peace, harmony, and reverence when I sing.

As a devotee of Martin Luther, the master, J.S. Bach says it best: "*I play the notes as they are written but it is God who makes the music...The final aim is the glorification of God and the refreshment of the Spirit*".



Singing praise to God is my favorite thing because I know our echoes are intangible pleas for justice, peace, and love in the image of Christ. Whether it's Bach, Rutter, or a simple yet ancient Gregorian Chant—I feel the Spirit of God within me while I sing His praises and feel genuine joy in exalting the mystery and beauty of Faith.

Alyse Jamieson

Week 7: Wednesday

God **SO** loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16



This plaque hangs above the door into the organ loft from the Nicki Hanson Music Room to remind us all of the importance of our musical efforts touching the souls of those worshiping. The rehearsal room is named for Nicki Hanson who with her husband, George and family, were long-time members here with Nicki leading and singing in various choirs and playing piano, trombone, and organ. As a student, she was the student director working with the director of the famed St. Olaf Choir, a position that many

aspire to, but few receive. Nicki had a tremendous musical ability, it literally seeped from her finger tips. She was a petite lady who in front of the choir became a dynamic colossal, quite a remarkable transformation. Within a few years of my arrival, she was diagnosed with early onset Alzheimer's in her 50s. We all gradually watched as she tragically descended into darkness. Still before she died in 2002, while there was very little that her brain was able to do, she could still harmonize perfectly on pitch when she heard singing; music was so deeply embedded in her brain. She gave so much musical commitment to Central over the years that we were honored to put her name on the Music Room. As Luther said, Next to the Word, music is the greatest gift from God. For as God SO loved the world that he gave us his Son, we, as Nicki did, always try to bring our best efforts to God in making our music touch and nourish people's souls.

Dear God. We thank you for your Word and the visual and musical arts which allow us to express and witness the majesty and beauty of your love for us. May we treasure this great gift from you and may we share it with all and with love as you have loved us and have shared your son. Amen.

Andrew ElRay Stewart-Cook

Organist/Choirmaster

Week 7: Maundy Thursday

"Jesus said, 'Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. ... I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.'" John 13:31b, 34-35

One meaning of our English word "glorify" is to "light up brilliantly." This passage invites reflection today on the illuminating power of servant-love: to "light up brilliantly" Christ, God in Christ, and the disciples of Christ.



Let us pray: Holy One, shine through our love for one another. Mold us to the servant heart of Jesus, that we may be light for the world. Be with us through the darkness of these Three Days - we trust in your promise. Your faithfulness endures. Amen.

Deacon Clare Josef-Maier

Week 7: Good Friday

You are indeed my rock and my fortress; for your name's sake lead me and guide me, take me out of the net that is hidden for me, for you are my refuge. Into your hands I commit my spirit; for you have redeemed me, O Lord, faithful God. Psalm 31:3-5

The last line of this verse is what Jesus quotes on the cross in Luke 23:46 and then breaths his last. You see above he is quoting Psalm 31 which is not about dying but rather living. The life we lead is every day the life of recognizing God is our redeemer and God is faithful even through death as we observe today on Good Friday.



Let us pray: Help and guide us this day, O God, to put our trust and our life in you as our refuge and our redeemer. Amen.

Pastor Ben Nickodemus

Week 7: Holy Saturday

I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I hope. Psalm 130:5

Waiting is hard. Whether we're waiting for signs of Spring to break in around us after a long, dreary winter or waiting for exuberant shouts of "*Alleluia! Christ is Risen!*" after another 40-day journey through Lent, waiting is hard.

And yet, we wait with eager expectation. For in God's word, there is hope. Always hope. Resurrection hope. Easter is coming...



Gracious and Merciful God, in times of waiting may we remain steadfast in your word and assured of your promise and presence in, with, and among us, not just in Lent, but in each and every season of our lives. Amen.

Pastor Laurie Jones