



# Lenten Devotionals 2012

## *From Ashes to the Tomb*



*A publication of Highland Park United Methodist Church,  
Stillwater, OK*

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Dear Friends,

It is with great pleasure that a collaborative effort of our church family comes together in this wonderful collection of Lenten devotionals for you to use during this season.

Lent is a season of personal introspection. It is a spiritual journey that begins with the imposition of ashes and the reminder that we are dust. The glorious culmination is on Easter morning when we gather at the empty tomb and celebrate the risen Christ. In between, we pray that these pages are uplifting and nourishing.

Each day, as you read the scripture reading, devotional message and prayer, listen for the voice of God speaking to you. When I think about this, I recall the chorus to one of my favorite hymns:

*"Here I Am, Lord, Is it I, Lord? I have heard you calling in the night.  
I will go, Lord, if you lead me, I will hold your people in my heart."*

Please use this booklet prayerfully and faithfully. And listen – God is calling to you in the night. God is calling you to go on a journey that will lead you to some places you simply do not want to go. There will be unexpected stops along the way. But in all times and places, God will provide the way forward if we are only tuned in enough along the way to pick up the signal.

Let this Lenten season be a time of tuning in to God and listening for God's call on your life. May God grant you grace and peace on the journey!

*Pastor Derrek*

### **A Guide to the Devotion Booklet**

- Each devotion was written or produced by a person in or affiliated with our faith community. We thank each for the wonderful contribution. You will be richly blessed by them all.
- Devotions for each Saturday are focused on a symbol, which will be lifted up and discussed in the children's sermon on Sunday morning. Read them with the mind of a child!
- Pastor Derrek has written the devotion for every Sunday leading up to Easter focusing on the appointed Psalm for the day.
- We have also included six devotions from a 1981 Lenten devotion book written by members of our faith community, most of who are now deceased. We hope you find these uplifting and meaningful since they are a part of our collective history.

## ASH WEDNESDAY • FEBRUARY 22, 2012

*Ash Wednesday is the first day of the Lenten Season. On this day, we are reminded that we are fragile beings, created from the dust of the ground and knowing that we will go back to dust at the end of our days. As this season begins, read the following scriptures designated for Ash Wednesday:*

- \* Joel 2:1-2, 12-17
- \* Psalm 51:1-17
- \* 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 5:20b-6:10
- \* Matthew 1:1-6, 16-21

*On this day, we also begin to think about things from which we will fast during Lent. Read the following stanzas and think about how you can fast from some things and feast on their alternatives during this season:*

- Fast from gossip; Feast on the Gospels.
- Fast from junk food; Feast on the Bread of Life.
- Fast from bad news; Feast on the "Good News."
- Fast from darkness; Feast on the Light.
- Fast from the secular; Feast on the sacred.
- Fast from despair; Feast on hope.
- Fast from revenge; Feast on forgiveness.
- Fast from tears of sorrow; Feast on tears of joy.
- Fast from getting; Feast on giving.
- Fast from complexities; Feast on simplicities.
- Fast from horror; Feast on humor.
- Fast from listlessness; Feast on laughter.

— written by Rev. James Gillespie

*Prayer:* Gracious and Merciful God, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, receive us as we confess our sins with broken spirits. Create in us a new desire to give ourselves to you so that we may become all that you want us to be. Amen.

## THURSDAY • FEBRUARY 23, 2012

Read Mark 1:1-15

### The Ashes

*The following devotion was written by Rev. Beth Richardson. She beautifully writes about the old tradition of burning the previous year's palms for the Ash Wednesday service.*

I'll never think of the ashes for Ash Wednesday in the same way again – ever since I asked our confirmation class members to assist me in burning some dried-out palm branches in preparation for the Imposition of Ashes.

Our small church doesn't have a confirmation class every year – not enough kids. And we hadn't needed any new ashes for a few years – a few ashes go a long way. So I explained to the class that this was perhaps a once-in-a-generation experience – to be the confirmation class that is chosen to burn the palm branches saved up from several years of Palm Sundays.

We started in the classroom discussing the seasons of the Church year. We talked about how the first Sunday of Advent is New Year's Day for Christians; about how Advent and Lent are both seasons of preparation for the special celebrations of Christmas and Easter. We reviewed the importance of the imposition of ashes on Ash Wednesday, how the ashes remind us that we are mortal -- that we are God's creations.

Then we moved outside to the parking lot and stood in the cold around a little grill filled with dried palm fronds. We each took a long match and, in unison, lit the matches and held them to the palm leaves.

Whoosh! Dried palm leaves went up in flames. All solemnity vanished as clouds of thick smoke penetrated our clothes, hair, shoes, socks ... We added more palms to the fire and talked about Maundy Thursday and Good Friday – and camping and marshmallows.

I was struck by the absolute joy that infused this burning of the palms. There was laughter and dancing, joking and prancing. Whatever expectation I had of a somber, quiet ritual was transformed by the smiles and giggles of young people, fully present, enjoying the moment, burning palm leaves in the service of God.

When the palms were all burned, we pulled ourselves together for a closing prayer. Standing in a circle around the grill, we held hands and gave thanks for the presence of the Holy Spirit in that fire and in those holy moments. We asked God's blessing for each person there, servants of God, and on the ashes that would be signs of God's love for each person who received them.

The Ash Wednesday ashes are now infused with special meaning. Sure, they are an outward symbol of the Lenten journey of repentance. But they are also infused with holy laughter and blessed with the full-of-life spirits of now-confirmed, young Christians.

When I receive the ashes, I think of Jesus' words, "Repent, and believe in the good news" (Mark 1:15, NRSV). And I believe in that good news with all my heart.

## FRIDAY • FEBRUARY 24, 2012

Read Mark 8:27-38 and Galatians 5:13-26

### A Time to Tremble

To be fully honest, I think that this Lenten season is my least favorite time of the year. I like to believe that life is about me; yet this journey to the cross reminds me that I have been called to live differently. If Lent were a smell, perhaps it would be pungent, not pleasant. I might sound a bit negative for a 'good morning' devotional... but, if you're like me, Christmas makes me *feel* good, whereas, Lent reminds me what it means to *be* good. The baby of the manger grew up, and He is asking us to follow Him.

**Have I come too casually? Because it seems to me that there's something I've neglected. How does one approach a Deity with informality and still protect the Sacred? 'Cause You came and chose to wear the skin of all of us, and it's easy to forget You left a throne. And the line gets blurry all the time between daily and Divine, and it's hard to know the difference. Oh, let me not forget to tremble. Face down on the ground do I dare to take the liberty to stare at You? Oh, let me not forget to tremble. It's a shame to think that I'd appear even slightly cavalier in the matter of salvation. Do I claim this gift You freely gave as if it were mine to take with such little hesitation? 'Cause You came and stood among the very least of us, and it's so easy to forget You left a throne. But, the cradle of the grave could not contain Your Divinity, neither can I oversimplify this love. Oh, God, let me not forget to tremble.**

— Nichole Nordeman from the song "Tremble"

*Prayer:* Christ Jesus, teach us what it means to love You and to love those in our midst who are hungry, hurting, and forgotten. May the sweetness of Your grace and love not overshadow the pungency of the suffering You have endured and that You have called us to endure with You. Our Savior, our Lord, to You be all glory and honor - now and forever. Amen.

Janina Graves  
Coordinator of International Ministries  
OSU Wesley Foundation

## SATURDAY • FEBRUARY 25, 2012

Read Matthew 21: 1-9

Lent is a time where we pay close attention to the unfolding presence of God within our lives. This faith journey that we call lent is about the forty days (not counting Sundays), beginning with Ash Wednesday and ending the night before Easter. However, during this time of symbolic transformation we sometimes get wrapped up in our own lives and forget the children and youth's journey to the cross. This pathway is also a rich experience for children and youth to learn the symbols of our story.

Symbols are an important part of our Lenten preparation for Easter. Symbols surround our lives. Just ask a child what the Golden Arches stand for in their world. During Lent each Sunday in church during the children's message, we will be sharing with the children a new symbol for the week. These symbols will be made visible in our sanctuary throughout Lent on our Lenten Tree. This theme will also be carried through in this devotion book. The Saturday devotion will share a symbol from the events of the last week of Jesus' life. Our hope is that this can be a time for which parents can share with children and youth symbols of Lent, so that this time is important for all on this great journey.

So as we start this journey I thought it appropriate to start with our symbol of the donkey, a lowly animal that was given to Jesus to start his ride into Jerusalem before his death. Just as Jesus started his journey with the donkey, may we start down our Lenten pathway with the same animal he did.

*Prayer:* God of love, we really want to discover what it means to live in your way. God of hope, we pray for strength to discern the path and then the courage to follow it. Thank you for all the symbols that reflect your story and love to us. Amen.



Rev. Rebekah Belase

**SUNDAY • FEBRUARY 26, 2012**

Read Psalm 25:1-10

**Steadfast Love**

During the season of Lent, we are continually reminded about how much of our lives fall short of what God has intended for us. It is clear that in this Psalm, the writer most definitely feels that way. In the first few verses (1-7), there is adoration (“I lift up my soul”; “In you I trust”) and supplication (“Make me to know your paths”; “Do not remember the sins of my youth”).

In verses 8-10, the psalmist expresses complete trust in God and the certainty that God will do what God has said God will do for those who keep the covenant.

But the part of the psalm that has most bearing on Lent are verses 6 and 7. The psalmist obviously has some guilty feelings about past indiscretions. The writer desires a deep relationship in which God forgives and together they can move past the situation. All the writer wants is to be remembered according to God’s “steadfast love.”

What more could we want than a God who forgives our past wrongs and loves us in spite of that? That is the kind of God we serve. Today, know that your youthful indiscretions can be forgiven if you will only ask God to do that.

*Prayer:* Go back and reread the 10 verses of this Psalm as your prayer today. After that, say aloud some of the transgressions of your own life and ask God to forgive you of them. And then remember them no more since you are forgiven!

Rev. Derrek Belase

**MONDAY • FEBRUARY 27, 2012**

Read Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

**A Time for Everything**

I have always been the type of person that likes to have things organized, in order and to know what is going to happen. When there is a job to do, I like to know when it is going to get started, how long will it take, and when will it be done, and that just does not always happen. I also have a hard time throwing things away. I do admit that I am getting better, but over my life, I have saved everything in sight. My daughters would look at my stacks of “junk” and just shake their heads.

We have all had times in our lives when things did not happen or work out as we planned. We may have been trying to buy a house and someone else beat us to it, only to find one that we liked even better later on or tried to get a job and did not get hired but later found a better paying job that was more suited to us.

As I read one of my favorite scriptures – Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 – I realize there is a time for everything on earth. There is a time for us to be born and a time for us to die and everything between. As hard as I try to organize everything in my life, I find out I cannot do it and when I throw those items away that I did not need to save in the first place, I feel like a load is lifted.

When I read this scripture, I understand it is not for me to plan the future, or to save everything that comes along. God will provide for me in his time. I do the best to live my life one day at a time and trust in God to allow the events and even the problems to happen in his time and he will see me through each and every day if I trust and believe in his word and strive to live my life for him.

*Prayer:* Lord, please help me remember to “let go and let you” take care of my present and my future. During this season, let me put away that which I no longer need. Amen.

Nancy Myers

**TUESDAY • FEBRUARY 28, 2012**

Read 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 5:12-28

### **The Mule and the Well**

A parable is told of a farmer who owned an old mule. The mule fell into the farmer's well. The farmer heard the mule "braying" – or whatever mules do when they fall into wells. After carefully assessing the situation, the farmer sympathized with the mule, but decided that neither the mule nor the well was worth the trouble of saving. Instead, he called his neighbors together and told them what had happened . . . and enlisted them to help haul dirt to bury the old mule in the well and put him out of his misery.

Initially, the old mule was hysterical! But as the farmer and his neighbors continued shoveling and the dirt hit his back . . . a thought struck him. It suddenly dawned on him that every time a shovel of dirt landed on his back . . . HE SHOULD SHAKE IT OFF AND STEP UP! This he did, blow after blow.

"Shake it off and step up . . . shake it off and step up . . . shake it off and step up!" No matter how painful the blows, or how distressing the situation seemed the old mule fought against panic and just kept right on SHAKING IT OFF AND STEPPING UP! It wasn't long before the old mule, battered and exhausted, stepped triumphantly out of the well.

#### *LESSON:*

"Life is 10% of what happens to you, and 90% of how you respond to it." Should you find yourself the victim of other people's bad ideas, bitterness, ignorance, smallness or insecurities; take time to THINK! Remember, things could be worse. You could be them!!!

*Prayer:* Lord, help me to realize that there will be days when I, like the mule, find myself in very difficult situations (some even life threatening) to not panic but stop and think of how to make a bad situation better and that it's ok to be scared sometimes. Help me to, simply, remember that "FEAR is a very close cousin to EXHILARATION" and that "COURAGE is the mastery of FEAR"! Help me to have the COURAGE of my convictions and continue working hard on being the –BETTER PERSON. Amen.

Bernice Mitchell

**WEDNESDAY • FEBRUARY 29, 2012**

Read John 1:3-5

### **Kicking at the Darkness**

Dietrich Bonhoeffer points out in chapter three of *The Cost of Discipleship* that when Jesus challenged the rich young man to leave everything he had and follow him, by accepting the life of voluntary poverty, the choice was not all that complex. That is to say, the rich young man had "the simple alternatives of obedience or disobedience." Nothing complex! Follow, don't follow!

During this Lenten season, I have been reflecting often and hard on the tension between these two options. Following or not following! We often attempt, as Bonhoeffer points out, to problematize the clear options. We play word games and ask for the meaning of particular words that are self-evident. We attempt to convince ourselves that Jesus doesn't really expect us to be literalistic, but merely attempt to find the kernel of truth in his request. We want to unpack meaning without having to unpack our lives. We attempt with all our might to pull the blinds over the light that shines in our eyes. Darkness is addictive!

One of the realities of Adam's condition is that we are addicted to systems of death. All that is came into being through him and in Adam we find that the opposite is true. War, death, family violence, addictive behaviors and anger seem to be the avenues of the human condition. The fragileness of our bodies, the tenderness of our hearts, the brokenness of our minds hints to us that darkness is more comfortable than light.

In fact we are even willing to suggest that Jesus wasn't really meaning voluntary poverty; Jesus just wanted to know that we are willing, if requested, to let go of a little. However, being requested is even debated. Problematize . . . Follow, don't follow!

At the center of the Christian story is an understanding that in the midst of this darkness echoes a love that was once announced a crime. Follow, don't follow! The religious leaders, the political leaders, the masses were addicted to darkness. Even Peter, who spent weeks on end with Jesus, shows his addiction to darkness. Follow, don't follow!

Bruce Cockburn, the Canadian Jazz/Blues/Folk musician reflects on this belittling tension when he writes,

*Sometimes you're made to feel as if your love's a crime  
Nothing worth having comes without some kind of fight  
Got to kick at the darkness 'til it bleeds daylight*

Rev. Michael Bartley  
Director, OSU Wesley Foundation

**THURSDAY • MARCH 1, 2012**

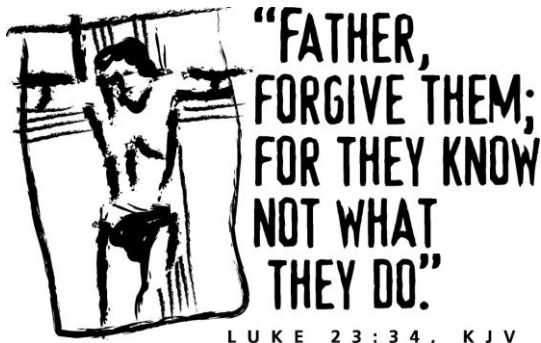
Read Luke 23:26-43

**“Indifference”**

*a poem by Studdart Kennedy*

When Jesus came to Birmingham  
they simply passed him by.  
They never hurt a hair of him  
they simply let him die.  
For men had grown more tender  
and they would not give him pain.  
They only just passed down the street  
and left him in the rain.

Still Jesus cried, ‘Forgive them, for they  
know not what they do.’  
And still it rained the wintry rain  
that drenched him through and through.  
The crowds went home and left the streets  
without a soul to see.  
And Jesus crouched against a wall  
and cried for Calvary.



**FRIDAY • MARCH 2, 2012**

Read Psalm 23 and Romans 5:1-5

**Why Me?**

Those of you who have followed collegiate football for as long as the 1990s are probably familiar with the name Danny Wuerffel, who was the 1996 Heisman Trophy winner.

We have followed his career because his aunt and grandmother are very close friends of ours. These are just a few of his accomplishments: in high school, as a senior quarterback, he led his football team to an undefeated season, and that year he was *USA Today's* high school player of the year in Florida. He was also class valedictorian. At the University of Florida, he was one of the most decorated players in Florida's football history and led the Gators to the 1996 national championship. He is the only Heisman Trophy recipient to also receive the Draddy Trophy, which is presented annually to the nation's top football scholar-athlete.

The New Orleans Saints selected Wuerffel in the fourth round of the 1997 NFL draft. With his resume, after his football career he could probably have picked a major corporation and been employed at a phenomenal salary. But what he chose for his life's occupation was to work at Desire Street Ministries, a non-profit faith-based organization focusing on spiritual and community development in one of the poorest areas of New Orleans.

Lest you think his life has been a bed of roses, let me tell you “the rest of the story.” Danny never really achieved great success as a professional football player, and he retired from that in 2002. When Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans, his home and everything in it, as well as the Desire Street Ministries facilities, were totally destroyed.

Then in June of 2011, Danny was diagnosed with Guillain-Barre syndrome, a disorder which causes the immune system to attack a person's nervous system and which sometimes causes total paralysis.

At this time he struggles to do even a few simple things each day, yet his faith remains strong. He says that God resides not only in the joys but in all things if we are willing to look long and hard enough and that if we have a false expectation that we deserve for life to be easy, that can turn a tough moment into an unbearable one.

I recently read this quote from tennis star Arthur Ashe: “If I don’t ask ‘Why me?’ after my victories, I cannot ask ‘Why me?’ after my setbacks and disasters.”

All of us have times in our life when we tend to say “Why me?” or “Why this person?” Danny writes that life has a lot of seasons, and “while it’s Winter now for this Wuerffel, God will bring me Spring when He is ready.” So instead of saying “Why me?” perhaps we need to say “Why not me?” God will be with us through all times.

*Prayer:* Dear God, help us remember that we are never alone, that you are always with us, and your steadfast love endures forever. Amen.

Anna Horn

A note from Pastor Derrek – on Sunday, the sermon for the second Sunday in Lent will focus on Romans 5:1-5 and the idea that we have to “embrace our brokenness” in life before we can move forward. You might want to reread this devotion before worship on Sunday. On Monday evening during “Living Faith,” our guest speaker, Devery Youngblood, will also talk about this subject.

If you would like more information on Danny and his ministry, check out the following website: <http://www.desirestreet.org/>.

**SATURDAY • MARCH 3, 2012**

Read Luke 22:7-23

### **The Chalice**

*Symbol:* Communion Cup

*Devotion:* Jesus celebrated a final meal with his disciples. This happened on the day they called “passover.”



While they were sitting around the table, Jesus took some bread, gave thanks and broke it. He gave each of them a piece and told them the bread represented his body.

Then Jesus took a cup of wine and told his disciples to drink it. He told them this was his blood, which was poured out for them. The disciples drank from the cup, but they still did not understand what it meant.

He then told them he was going away and while he was gone, they would eat this meal again and remember that he had been with him and that he was still with them, through his Spirit and through these common things like bread and wine.

Today, when we give our hearts to Jesus and love him, we may celebrate the Lord’s Supper. It is a celebration because we are remembering that Christ died for us and freed us from our sins.

#### *Questions:*

- What did Jesus give His disciples at their last meal together?
- What does He want us to remember?
- Who can celebrate the Lord’s Supper?

*Prayer:* Jesus, we thank You for giving Yourself so that we might have life. Every time we come to Your table and take Your bread and wine, we will remember that You died for us because you loved us so much. We look forward to Your coming again when we may sit with You and fellowship with You forever. Amen.

adapted from The Lenten Tree by Dean Smith

## SUNDAY • MARCH 4, 2012

Read Psalm 22:23-31

### For the Sake of the Next

This particular Psalm is part of a much bigger one that is often read at Good Friday services. The first 21 verses provide a vivid picture into an event that will happen many years after the writing of the Psalm – the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Some have suggested that this is a prophetic Psalm regarding Jesus and his life.

Verse 22 provides the turning point in the Psalm, leading some to believe that it might even be part of a separate Psalm all together. But if you read it continuously, you will see a God that hears and answers our prayers. We read verses 23-31 about God answering the prayers of the people. It is a glorious hymn of thanksgiving.

If you read it closely, though, you will notice something quite interesting. The Psalmist is really writing for others. Look again at verses 30 and 31 where the writer speaks of future generations and a people yet unborn. In this writing, there is a glimpse of what is yet to come.

The Psalmist is thinking of the people of God who will be in need of being delivered from adversity for many centuries to come. As we march toward Easter, we must remain mindful of the sacrifice of Jesus and that it was made for people yet unborn.

A few years ago at an ordination service, Bishop Bruce Blake talked about asking an airplane test pilot why he would risk his life making sure airplanes are safe. The man responded, “I do it for the sake of the next.” I think the Psalmist is writing “for the sake of the next” reminding us that we are God’s people and we are to continue worshipping God and preparing for “people yet unborn.”

*Prayer:* O God of all time and people, help me continually remember that what I do now is not just for me, but for those who will come after me. Thank you for allowing Jesus to come and save us **all**. Amen.

Rev. Derrek Belase

## MONDAY • MARCH 5, 2012

Read Job 42:1-6 and Luke 2:25-34

### Waiting and Waiting with God

We are looking forward to a family vacation at the beach in May. I was born in Galveston and have many happy memories of jumping the waves, feeding the sea gulls, and building sand castles in the sand. I can hardly wait to explore the wonders of the beach with Madison—and the rest of the family, too, of course! When I was telling Madison of all the fun and excitement that was waiting for us, she very pitifully stated, “But that is a long time away, Buni.” So there is the question: how will we wait for our beach experience? Not mention it again until it is time to wake up and be there? Or prepare for it along the way by studying, anticipating, preparing so that when the time comes, we have fully embraced the whole experience and journey?

I think Lent is like that. And to be honest, I have tried both ways of waiting for the Easter morning experience. I have had my years of rushing through Lent, neglecting the long, sometime-painful journey and just waking up to the Easter lilies and empty tomb. I sometimes thought it made the journey easier and it did not crowd into my already busy life. But when Easter morning arrived, I somehow felt cheated. It was as if my mind and body cannot grasp the enormity of the Easter experience when I just show up for Easter. Waiting is so hard and I sometimes get impatient. But throughout the Bible we are taught the ways of patience and productive waiting. We wait for the bulbs that we bury to bloom, seeds that turn into blossoms; we wait for Spring to warm us, and we wait for children to be born. We even wait to go to the beach.

I am choosing to prepare for Easter in God’s time. I want to walk each day’s journey, knowing that Jesus is traveling with me, holding my hand as we experience the tragedies and the triumphs. And on Easter morning the joy will be the holy experience that God has planned for each one of us. I want to thoroughly immerse myself in the

gift and the servant hood that is embodied in the Easter experience. When I read and study each day, I feel more alive and aware for the miracles along the way. Simeon waited to behold the Lord and his joy leaps from the pages of Scripture into our hearts.

Madison and I have started our beach preparation. We have talked about waves and crabs and listened to stories. And each day the beach seems closer. We will be ready to embrace the whole experience. But first there is Lent...

*Prayer:* Dear Lord, help me to learn your ways as I prepare for my personal Lenten journey. Give me the discipline and the patience to embrace the journey and not just the destination. Help me to trust you and the wisdom of your time and your process. Let me appreciate the gift of Lent, without bypassing it as I rush on to the lilies. Faithfully, Amen.

Margaret B. Wallace

## TUESDAY • MARCH 6, 2012

Read Proverbs 31:8-9 and Psalm 32:8

### Starfish Leadership

One day a man was walking along the beach when he noticed a figure in the distance. As he got closer he realized the figure was that of a boy picking something up and gently throwing it into the ocean.

Approaching the boy, he asked, "What are you doing?"

The youth replied, "Throwing starfish in the ocean. The sun is up and the tide is going out. If I don't throw them in, they will die."

"Son," the man said. "Don't you realize that there are miles and miles of sand and beach and hundreds of starfish? You can't possibly make a difference."

After listening politely, the youth bent down, picked up another starfish and threw it into the surf.

Then smiling at the man, he said, "I MADE A DIFFERENCE FOR THAT ONE."

When it comes to building leadership or identifying leaders in a group we all need to consider the skills that a leader should possess, kindness, encouragement, communication, helping those who are unable to help themselves. We can all identify with the boy in the story as well as to identify with the leadership style of Jesus. The boy reached out to help those unable to help themselves as Jesus teaches us to serve others.

Jesus tried all the time to encourage those who believed in him. He reminds us that he has created us beautifully. As the boy gave life to the starfish so Jesus has given us salvation, love, caring, and healing.

The boy in the story transformed the world for the starfish on the beach. Jesus came with the purpose of transforming the world through his words. If you had unlimited power, unlimited time, unlimited resources, how would you transform the world?

*Prayer:* We pray, O God, that this lesson in leadership would be ever present in our thoughts and minds as we go about our day to day lives. Amen.

HPUMC Youth Group

## WEDNESDAY ● MARCH 7, 2012

Read Psalm 121

### “The LORD is with Us”

On the day before Valentine Days this year, I was scheduled to be in Dallas, TX for a 1:00 p.m. pre-meeting in preparation for a 2:00 p.m. meeting. The plan was for me to drive to Oklahoma City and meet two other persons who will be driving to Dallas. At 6:25 a.m. traveling on Highway 51 going west, I hit a slick spot and started sliding to the median.

My last experience of sliding on ice was on 412 just west of Lake Keystone Bridge in which I ended up sliding across the median of the east lane into the ditch. This time I corrected to move my truck towards the shoulder where I could perhaps stop. Again, there were no vehicles on either side of the highway but I managed to slide, ending with my truck facing the east with the left side tires in the ditch.

At no time was I disturbed about missing my trip to Dallas because I called AAA and then called my friends in Oklahoma City. Meanwhile, with my iPad, I could communicate with persons around the world through Facebook about my experiences.

There were a number of persons who stopped to check on me including a Good Samaritan named Jeff Green. Jeff had a wench and chain and had just pulled a semi truck out of a ditch.

My friends drove from Oklahoma City and arrived at the same time AAA came to pull my truck out of the ditch. We parked my truck and drove to Dallas together.

We made it to Dallas, missing the 1:00 p.m. meeting but in plenty of time for the 2:00 p.m. meeting. We had a very good meeting and drove back in heavy fog.

Psalm 121:8 says “*The LORD will keep your going out and going in from this time forth and forevermore.*”

John Wesley explains the Psalm this way — “*Everywhere the Psalmist goes, God will provide protection.*” I have experienced this many times and I am sure that I am not the only one.

*Prayer:* We give thanks O God, for sending Jesus Christ to live and die as one of us. It is the Faith of Jesus Christ and his commandments that inspire us all to keep the faith. We give thanks for this. Amen.

Earl Mitchell

## THURSDAY ● MARCH 8, 2012

Read Ephesians 4:11-17

### Breaking Down Discipleship

As I thought about what Christian discipleship means to me, I took the word apart and found some new ones to give it meaning and depth. I want to share them with you in this Lenten season.

- **D** – Discipleship of self to put the needs and well-being of others ahead of my own selfish desires.
- **I** – Interest in other persons – genuine, as Christ cared for others.
- **S** – Strength to bear my burdens – it comes from Christ.
- **C** – Concern about others and the time to listen to them.
- **I** – Inspiration to do my best because God gives the strength.
- **P** – Praise for those who are trying to do God’s will.
- **L** – Love for those who are “unlovable”.
- **E** – Expectations of good deeds and good thoughts – people live up to your expectations.
- **S** – Silence when I cannot think of something good to say.
- **H** – Humility—for God giveth and he is the source of all our worldly goods.
- **I** – Imagination—God gives us the wings of imagination to solve our problems.
- **P** – Prayer – for only through talking with my Creator can I do his will.

*Prayer:* As we go throughout these forty days of Lent, keep us ever mindful of the ways you have called us to be your disciples, O Lord. Amen.

Virginia T. Rowland (from 1981 devotion book)

## FRIDAY • MARCH 9, 2012

Read Matthew 5:14-16

### Disciple Defined

Discipleship is the life of an individual Christian. By definition, Webster describes a disciple as “a person who receives instruction from another.” The act of discipleship is an individual carrying out the teachings of Jesus in his or her life. In Second Timothy, chapter 2, verse 15, we are commanded, “Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman need not be afraid, rightly dividing the word of Truth.” The Living Bible states it this way: “Work hard so God can say to you, ‘Well done.’ Be a good workman, one who does not need to be ashamed when God examines your work.” Maybe this more clearly aligns our thinking as to what God wants us to do in Christian discipleship.

Over thirteen years ago, I was traveling on the turnpike between Tulsa and Miami at night. I was listening to the radio to some station in Ohio. “Peace in the Valley” was being sung. Near the end of the song, I came over a rise in the turnpike and saw a town in the distance. The lights in the town outlined its perimeter, so peaceful and quiet.

If we have the true discipleship for Christ, our lives can be peaceful and quiet and fulfilling. This I believe should be the way we live our lives.

*Prayer:* Thank you for those times of peace and quiet in which we can feel your presence so palpable in our lives. Amen.

Les Miller (from 1981 devotion book)

## SATURDAY • MARCH 10, 2012

Read Matthew 18:1-4 and John 13:1-17

### A Servant Leader

*Symbol:* basin and towels

*Devotion:* Do you know what these are used for? They can be used to wash feet and hands. During the time when Jesus was alive people had to walk everywhere. They not only walked everywhere but wore sandals most of the time. So their feet were dirty from walking around everywhere.



One time Jesus wanted to show his disciples how not to be selfish. While he was eating his last supper with them, he thought of a way. The disciples' feet were dirty from walking and needed to be washed. Jesus stood up and did an amazing thing. He wrapped a towel around his waist, poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet. They were so surprised and felt so bad that Jesus would be acting like a servant to them. But Jesus told them they needed to let him do this. He washed the feet of all his disciples, and when he finished he sat down to talk to them.

Jesus told them that if they really loved him, they would love others too. They would serve others by putting them first. Jesus wants us to do the same thing, and if we do, we will have joy from it.

*Questions:*

- How did Jesus show his disciples he loved them?
- How can we show love for others?
- How can we help others during this time of Lent?

*Prayer:* Dear Jesus, thank you for loving us and showing us how to serve others. Help us think of ways we can serve others to make them happy. Amen.

adapted from The Lenten Tree by Dean Smith

**SUNDAY • MARCH 11, 2012**

Read Psalm 19

**Gold and Honey**

If you read the entire Psalm for today, you will notice some familiar words (verse 14). Pastors, before beginning a sermon or other presentation, will often use these words as a prayer of preparation.

But the entire work is one of celebration for creation. It reminds us that the earth is not simply put here for human habitation, but is a place of beauty and magnificence apart from what it does for humans.

The writer reminds us that God's laws are perfect and commandments are clear. Isn't it interesting that the Old Testament lectionary text for today comes from the Exodus story of the 10 Commandments. It does us good to remember that God provides guidance for our lives so that we can live together and get along appropriately.

When we keep the commands, decrees, ordinances, laws, and precepts, there is great reward. The flip-side of that warning, then, is that when we don't keep these things, there is punishment.

These commandments are so precious that their worth is compared to gold and their importance to us is sweeter than honey. Today, think of the commandments and decrees of God as a gift of grace rather than a prohibition and you will indeed think of them as "sweeter than honey."

As a final act of worship and meditation today, read this Psalm in several translations and see how they differ.

*Prayer:* Just as the heavens are telling of your glory, O God, my prayer today is that the words and actions of my life would also spill forth in ways that others would know your glory. You are indeed our rock and redeemer and for that I give you thanks. With praise and thanksgiving I pray, Amen.

Rev. Derrek Belase

**MONDAY • MARCH 12, 2012**

Read Luke 6:27-36

**Blessed Are the Peacemakers**

We live in a divisive world. This problem has been with humanity for centuries. There are religious, cultural, and political disagreements in our world, nation, community, and families. Jesus teaches us that love is the only way and trumps destructive violence and division. Love draws us to each other and to God.

Each of us can work for reconciliation, unity, and peace. Perhaps you are alienated from a neighbor, friend, or family member. Is there something you could do to heal a broken relationship? Perhaps a phone call, card, or an apology would bring reconciliation. Or maybe you could help heal a disagreement between family members. If there is a broken relationship that is troubling you, pray about it and take positive action during this Lenten season. You will feel blessed to become a peacemaker.

*Prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi*

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light, and where there is sadness joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console, to be understood as to understand, to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Amen.

Carol Stone

## TUESDAY • MARCH 13, 2012

Read Psalm 43:5, Psalm 94:17-19, Isaiah 43:2, Lamentations 3:22-24 and Romans 15:13

### Movin' On

My good friend was visiting from out of town and she wanted to show me a Youtube video on her phone. Usually she shows me silly videos that I roll my eyes at, but this time she was streaming a video entitled "If Dr. Seuss Met Eckhart Tolle" by Scott Kalechstein Grace.

The speaker caught my attention as I watched him recite a rhyme about the ego. What I thought was going to be a waste of my time actually starting zinging me as I listened to "...projecting it on to the others you'll blame, for that is the ego at its beastiest best, it nurses its grievances close to its chest, Republicans, liberals, you're parents, your X, the world is just teaming with folks to correct., if only these fools would conform to your ways, you could get on with life without further delays, the ego is always finding new gripes to complain about, turns mole hills to mountains of yikes to feel pain about...." I was stunned! This was the answer to my latest round of prayers to help me get over the bitterness that I still carried around.

I found that the words resonated over and over in my head and I cried. I have watched the video several more times and cried each time as I hear the words that God has been trying to share with me for a long time. I know there has been a shift already as I feel a sense of peace starting in my soul... I am thinking of things in a new way.

This way of communicating with God is not new to me. In a stubborn confrontation, I made a "deal" with God stating if I heard the message three times, in whatever form it took, I would know that it was directly from God. Well, God has certainly held up his end of the bargain as we have communicated this way for over 18 years. That day at the cafe, I heard God loud and clear.

*Prayer:* Lord, you have always been there for me no matter where my adventures take me. Your patience is incredible as you deal with my stubbornness. How do you do it? I am reminded again to ease up on the control I so want to have in my life. You **always** approach me with acceptance and grace and I am eternally grateful! Thank you! Thank you!

Desiree Ingram

## WEDNESDAY • MARCH 14, 2012

Read Mark 12:28-31

### Being Perfect?

After the sermon, she said, "I don't believe that is right! I don't believe that is possible. I mean, I don't think I could ever do that."

I had just preached that morning about the movement of salvation John Wesley (founder of the Methodist movement) called "entire sanctification" or sometimes referred to as "Christian perfection." In fact, Wesley wrote that he believed the chief reason God had created the Methodist movement was to teach this doctrine.

If you are not familiar with the term sanctification it is the state of salvation when we love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength and our neighbor as ourselves — when all our motives are fueled by love.

Justification would be recognizing that God loves us and forgives us of all our sin.

Sanctification would be allowing that divine love to so shape our hearts and minds that we embody it in all we say and do.

Do you believe that God can do that in you? To say it another way: Do you believe God can form you into the image and likeness of Christ? After my sermon she was saying, "No, I don't believe it." (And of course, she cannot do it on her own but God can do it in her.)

Wesley says Scripture would not commend it or command it, if it were not possible – if God were not able and willing. Lent might be a good time to seek God in this matter and pray that God might work in you so as to cast out all sinful thoughts and actions and fill you with divine love. It is sanctification! It is abundant life! It is life in Christ!

*Prayer:* Lord, so work in me, that I may live in you and be filled with your love. Amen and Amen.

Rev. David Wiggs  
District Superintendent  
Stillwater District, OKUMC

## THURSDAY • MARCH 15, 2012

### Read Isaiah 51

#### Faith of My “Fathers”

The scripture from Isaiah 51:1-2 states “Consider the quarry from which you were mined, the rock from which you were cut! Yes think about your ancestors Abraham and Sarah from whom you came.” Look to the past to find hope for the future. This passage was used in a sermon at one of our McAllister reunions by my cousin, Robert McAllister, a former Navy chaplain. As is probably true for you, I have many ancestors who paved the way toward my faith.

My great, great, great, great, great, great maternal grandparents, Felix Fislser and Barbara (Koller) were protestants from Switzerland. They emigrated to S. Germany in the 1720's and then to America in 1732 due to religious oppression.

Sophia Klein came to America with her parents, Jacob Klein and Katerina (Paten) when she was a young girl. They left Germany because of religious oppression. On the way to America, the captain of the ship poisoned her parents, confiscated their silver, and sold her for passage. Her fare was paid by Felix Fislser and they raised her as their own. She later married one of the Fislser's sons, Jacob I.

Their son, Jacob II, married Hannah Jane (Sparks) and were members of the Swedish Lutheran Church in Swedesboro, NJ. They moved to Clayton, NJ joining the Methodist Episcopal Church and opening their home for preaching and praying as meeting houses were scarce. The Fislser's made a home for the Methodist itinerant preachers and helped to feed and clothe them. They deeded several acres of their land for the 1808 Useful School House. It was a school, a meeting place for the community, and the first Methodist Church in Clayton. They also donated land for the Aura Methodist Episcopal Church. Jacob II was one of the managers elected the first year of the Gloucester County Bible Society in 1816 which was an auxiliary of the American Bible Society in NYC. His German bible he carried during the Revolutionary War and given to him by his grandfather Felix is in the Concordia, KS museum.

Jacob and Hannah's daughter, Mary, married Reverend Thomas Cheesman. He and one of his brothers were Methodist ministers. In 1828, a group of reformers who later called themselves Methodist Protestants broke away from the Methodist Episcopal Church. He was a minister in the Methodist Protestant Church at Barnsboro, NJ in 1829. During that same year in Glassboro, the Ebenezer Methodist Protestant Church meetings were first held in the old schoolhouse until the Reformers were denied further admission. In 1834, the church transferred their religious services to the steps of the nearby Protestant Episcopal Church and this is where he preached until he died the next year.

My great grandparents, Abel James McAllister and Sarah Jane (Brown), gave a corner of their farm land in Cloud Co., KS to the Zion Congregationalists so Sarah could walk to church. Abel helped build and organize the church. Five years later in 1890, the building was sold to the First Methodist Episcopal Church. My great grandfather taught Sunday School and was a soloist at the church the morning of his death at the age of 82.

Their son John Elias was a teacher near Concordia, KS and moved to Harper Co., OK Territory with my grandmother Ella May (Davis) about 1902. He sometimes preached in the schoolhouse where he taught as there were probably few other college educated men in that area at that time. He had a 4-year degree from Emporia.

As far as I know, all my paternal grandparents were Catholic. My paternal great grandfather Francois Odin Olivier came with his parents Francois Alexandre Olivier and Barbe (Mercier) from Pomoy, France to America in 1848 when he was four. They settled in Holmes Co., OH several years later among other French settlers. He married Marie (Blanchard) and eventually moved to Danville, KS in 1885 with a group of other Catholics where they built their church. Francois and Marie donated one of the stained glass windows in that church. They both had beautiful voices and sang in the Parish Choir.

I have these forefathers that I know about who kept their faith, sometimes through adversity, and I am thankful for their guidance. From a song written by John Rusco, one of our former pastors, in 1986, “Praise the history of your family; know the story of your kin. Give to all their well earned glory in their lives where they did win. Praise the family, praise the family, praise the family of your life.”

*Prayer:* Thank you for our forefathers and foremothers in faith. Let us be for others the faithful people who are written about in the years to come. Help us live in such a way that others come to faith in you through our faithful example. Amen.

Loretta Bertholf

## FRIDAY • MARCH 16, 2012

Read Matthew 16:24-28, Galatians 2:19-21, Philippians 2:1-11, Mark 16:14-20

### WWJD?

Jesus came as a man to walk on this earth to redeem us and to show us how to live. We are called to be His Disciples—to take up His cross and follow Him (Matthew 16:24). The Bible tells us that Christ lives in us (Galatians 2:20), therefore we have the mind of Christ (Philippians 2:4). We are called to our professions and we are to be the very best that we can possibly be, remembering to ask ourselves what would Jesus do in this certain situation.

I have taught kindergarten for fourteen years and I feel, to be a dedicated person in your profession, one must follow the example of the teachings of Jesus. As a teacher of five and six year olds, I know that they are going to learn by an example faster than any other method. It may be prohibited to teach a Christian faith in the classroom but it is easy to show Christian love. The children in return are a Christian witness to me—with their love, truth, and sure beauty.

Jesus says, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all people” (Mark 16:15).

*Prayer:* Our Heavenly Father, help us in our profession to be a working disciple for you. Amen.

June Dorris (from 1981 devotion book)

## SATURDAY • MARCH 17, 2012

Read Jonah 1-2 and Matthew 12:40

### When In Distress

*Symbol:* Big Fish

*Devotion:* Do you remember a story about a man and big fish like this in the Bible? There one was a man named Jonah who had said “No!” to something God wanted him to do. He got into a big boat and tried to get as far away from God as he could. But a big storm came upon the waters, and Jonah was thrown into the sea.



It looked like Jonah was going to die, but God had a different plan for him. God sent a huge fish to swallow Jonah without hurting him, and Jonah stayed inside the fish for three days and nights! I bet it was scary inside that fish, but do you know what Jonah did? He prayed to the Lord, and at the Lord’s command, the fish spit Jonah onto dry land. Jonah was alive, and after that day he told many people about what happened. Because Jonah was willing to share his story, many people turned to the Lord.

Every time we look at this fish, let’s remember that although it looked like Jonah was dead, he really wasn’t.

*Questions:*

- What did the fish do?
- How long was Jonah inside the fish?
- Who did Jonah try to run away from?

*Prayer:* Dear Lord, whenever I am scared, help me to remember the story of Jonah. Thank you for saving him, and saving me, so that I can tell others about how much You love us.

adapted from The Lenten Tree by Dean Smith

## SUNDAY • MARCH 18, 2012

Read Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22

### Living Well and Giving Thanks

We all desire to “live well.” We think about getting a good education, so that we can get a good job, so that we can save for retirement, so that we can retire and have enough money to live comfortably until well, you know the rest! Living well is something we work our whole lives to do.

But the concept of “living well” was a little different for the Israelites. Living well for them meant living a righteous lifestyle. Psalms 107 through 114 are designed to give some advice about what it means to live righteously.

If you read Psalm 107 entirely, you will see that it is comprised of four short stories all with a general theme – God’s delivery from whatever problem existed at the time. Each story ends with a word of thanksgiving.

Verses 17-22 are a part of story three in this short saga. The Israelite people thought that disease was a result of sin. The people we read about were close to death and therefore cried out to God to be saved. When their cries bring relief, the psalmist reminds them that they are to give thanks to God for deliverance.

When we really think about all that God has given us and all the things God has delivered us from, we should pause and give thanks. We have cried out so many times to God and we know that God is listening. We receive what we ask for and then go on with our daily activities. This Psalm provides us with a timely reminder that we are to give thanks to God in all circumstances. Living well might mean living a life of thankfulness.

*Prayer:* Thank you God for all the times I have called on you for deliverance and then forgot to say thanks. I am indeed thankful for all you’ve given me. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Rev. Derrek Belase

## MONDAY • MARCH 19, 2012

Read Hebrews 11

Focus Verse (verse 1): “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

Our family had been on a two week work related vacation in Florida when Paul, my husband, received a call to report back early, meaning that I would be driving to our home in New York, alone. Our two sons were five and three, back before seat belts.

It seemed, to me, to be the challenge of a life time, as well as the only solution we could think of at the time.

“You can do it honey,” my husband hopefully urged me. I had just completed a driving course a week before our trip, but I had no driving practice while in Florida. However, with the encouragement of my husband and friends we left Florida for home as Paul headed for the airport.

I realize now that all God asks for is a mustard-seed-sized faith, and that is pleasing to God. We were miraculously delivered safely to our home within the prescribed time.

Although I wasn’t aware at the time that angels are the ministering spirits sent to the heirs of salvation, I doubt we traveled alone.

As our faith grows, so do the challenges, and I remember the encouragement, “You can do it honey” . . . , and with God’s Grace, I do.

*Prayer:* Thank you, God, for always keeping us safe and for supplying our every need. Lest we think we are responsible, keep us ever mindful that all gifts come from you. Amen.

Greta Friesen

## TUESDAY • MARCH 20, 2012

Read John 13:34-35

### Prison Experiences

This command in John's gospel represents the most powerful force on earth, because *agape* love (unconditional love) can overcome all the evils in the world such as hatred and anger.

We experienced that truth in a most powerful way at the Kairos # 1 Closing at the Oklahoma State Penitentiary at McAlistier in November, 1994. The "closing" is when the men tell what the weekend meant to them. At that "closing" these hardened criminals explained that during this weekend of sharing they were able to replace that hatred and anger with God's unconditional love and forgiveness. They were able to support one another when previously they would only have fought, stabbed or killed one another.

On our way home after experiencing this Kairos Prison Ministry weekend, we looked at each other and said, "We have found our ministry!" Since that time we have continued in the Kairos Prison Ministry in men and women's prisons across the State of Oklahoma and we continue to experience the transforming power of God's unconditional love and forgiveness in the lives of hardened criminals.

In the process our lives have been transformed into more loving and forgiving lives as well. We would invite you to join us at a Kairos "Closing" to experience this transforming power of God's unconditional love and forgiveness in the lives of those who had no hope.

*Prayer:* Father God, we pray that your unconditional love and forgiveness will become a way of life, not only in prison, but also at HPUMC in all our lives. In the name of your Son Jesus, the Christ, who lived and taught us how your unconditional love and forgiveness transforms lives.

Jim and Jean Key

Kairos is an ecumenical prison ministry supported, in part, by the United Methodist Church. If you would like more information on the ministry, check out their international website: <http://kairosprisonministry.org/> or the website for Oklahoma's group: <http://www.kairosoklahoma.org/>.

## WEDNESDAY • MARCH 21, 2012

Read Romans 4:23-35 and John 11:25-26

### The Day Phillip Joined the Class

Phillip was 9 years old, in a Sunday school class of 8 year olds. Eight year olds can be cruel. The third graders did not welcome Phillip to their group. Not just because he was older but because he was "different." Phillip had Downs Syndrome.

One Sunday the Sunday school teacher gathered some of those plastic eggs that pull apart in the middle. The Sunday school teacher gave one to each of these plastic eggs to each child. On that day they were to go outdoors and discover for himself some symbol of "new life" and place it in their egg. They would then open their eggs and each explain how his or her find was symbol of "new life."

So ... the youngsters gathered 'round on the appointed day and put their eggs on a table, and the teacher began to open them.

One child had found a flower. All the children "oohed" and "aahed" at the lovely symbol of new life. In another was a butterfly. "Beautiful" the girls said.

Another egg revealed a rock. Immediately one boy spoke up. "That's mine. I knew everyone would get flowers and leaves so I got a rock to be different." Everyone laughed.

The teacher opened the last and there was nothing in it. "That's not fair," someone said. "That's stupid," said another. The teacher felt a tug on his arm. It was Phillip. "It's mine. I did it. It's empty. I have new life because the tomb is empty." The class fell silent.

From that day on Phillip became a part of the group. They welcomed him. However, Phillip's family had known that he would not live a long life. That summer, overcome with infection, Phillip died.

On the day of his funeral, nine 8 year old boys and girls confronted the reality of death and marched up to the altar... not with flowers. Nine children with their Sunday school teacher placed on the casket of their friend their gift of love—an empty egg.

*Prayer:* In these days of Lent, the egg reminds us of the empty tomb. My prayer is that I can keep this image first and foremost in my mind, even when resurrection seems so far away. Amen.

Karen Mitchell

## THURSDAY • MARCH 22, 2012

Read Ezekiel 47:1-12

### Stagnant Ponds

In my old home town, when I was very young, there was a stagnant pond behind my friend's housing development. Everyone carefully avoided the foul smelling pond except for the city workers who would occasionally attempt to do battle with the squadrons of mosquitoes who claimed it as their base.

When I was in grade school, the city fathers decided something had to be done about the pond. They dug a channel through the hill that formed a natural dam and tied it into a wash several hundred yards on the other side of the hill. Today the pond is a beautiful area. Sometimes, during a hot summer, the pond will dry up. But the water in the creek formed from the runoff of that pond has created a beautiful wooded park out of what was open prairie.

Often, close knit churches become like the stagnant pond, not contributing much to the community around them. The people joined the stream that had come from that church. They swam up to the head waters, and close the dam gates behind them. This is self-defeating because it is the sight of what the water can do for others that keeps its meaning fresh for us.

To me, discipleship is a process of renewal of salvation, for the church and for the world.

*Prayer:* During this season, help me reach out to others so my faith community does not become stagnant. Amen.

David Luther (from 1981 devotion book)

## FRIDAY • MARCH 23, 2012

Read 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 1:3-7

### The Path of Discipleship

“Teach Me Thy Way, O Lord.” These words were carved over the stone doorway of the building where I first attended Sunday School. Thousands of children and young people have gone through that doorway; many of them have gone on to enter full-time Christian vocations, partly because of the dedicated Christian men and women who taught them in that building. My first memory of Sunday School was of a warm, loving lady named “Miss Betsy” who smiled a lot!

Most of us started our journey as Christian disciples as children with the blessings (and maybe insistence!) of our parents. For it is a journey, in a way, that never ends. Jesus thought teaching was so important that he spent most of his ministry doing just that.

Discipleship implies willingness to learn. That means being open mentally and spiritually to God's teachings, however they are delivered. That may be through study of the Bible, through the ministries of music and preaching, through participation in a Sunday School class, through reading inspirational books, through prayer, or through other people.

Faithful Christians can teach us by showing us how to become better followers of Christ; they can teach us best by allowing the Holy Spirit to work through them. Discipleship means that we need to be teachable, that we need to be ready and willing to learn. “Teach Us Thy Way, O Lord.”

*Prayer:* During your prayer time, consider the way you are teaching others through word and deed. What lessons are being learned? Pray to God for the strength to be a great teacher and example.

Nancy Giles (from 1981 devotion book)

## SATURDAY • MARCH 24, 2012

Read Matthew 21:8-11

### Hosanna! The King Arrives

*Symbol:* Palm Branch

*Devotion:* Do you know why Palm Sunday is called Palm Sunday? Read the scripture in Matthew to find out more about this very special day.



Do you remember what Passover is about? It was Passover week, and the Jews from all over the Roman world were in Jerusalem to celebrate the holiday. The streets were crowded and on this day, the air was filled with excitement as Jesus rode into town on a donkey. Many people took off their coats and put them down on the ground for Jesus to ride over. Others cut down branches from trees and made a path for Jesus. The people shouted “Hosanna,” and they began to praise God joyfully for all the miracles he had done. You see why most people were happy, can’t you? The people praised God that Jesus had come. They did not know that Jesus would soon be killed.

Two Sunday from now, we will celebrate Palm Sunday. We will celebrate Jesus our victorious king. We have a lot to praise Jesus for, don’t we?

#### *Questions:*

- Were the people happy?
- What did they put down on the street and why?
- What are some things we should praise God for?

*Prayer:* We praise you, God, just like the people did on Palm Sunday and just like we will do in a few weeks. Thank you for sending us Jesus. Thank you for \_\_\_\_\_. Amen.

adapted from The Lenten Tree by Dean Smith

## SUNDAY • MARCH 25, 2012

Read Psalm 51:1-12

### The Creation of Something New

In years past, you might remember reading a part of this Psalm on Ash Wednesday, the day that the Lenten season starts. It is appropriate for that day in that it calls us to remember our transgressions against God. It encourages us to ask God for forgiveness of our sins and to wash us “thoroughly.”

We are reminded again that we have been sinful since birth (“born guilty, a sinner when my mother conceived me”) but through God’s steadfast love, the Psalmist is sure that forgiveness is not far away.

There are times in my life where I feel like I could have written the same type of Psalm. There are things that I’ve done that I wish God would just forget...and the good news is that God does just that! Our sins are forgiven and we do not have to fear being cast aside from God’s presence. Even when we’ve done wrong, God is still there for us.

This is never more obvious to me than on a Sunday when we partake of the Lord’s Supper. I am reminded that I must confess my sins to God and when I do, I can take the elements with confidence that God has forgotten my misdeeds. It is important to take communion as often as we can. John Wesley is reported to have supported “constant communion.”

As you prepare to come to the table on the first Sunday of each month, do you expect that you will feel more redeemed, forgiven, and grace-filled when you leave? Hopefully so, for that is what God desires for each of us.

*Prayer:* Create a clean heart in me, O God, and renew my spirit. Let me no longer do the thing that I know to be wrong, but continually look for ways to live according to your will for my life. Because of your great love for me, blot out my transgressions. Amen.

Rev. Derrek Belase

## MONDAY • MARCH 26, 2012

Read Psalm 5

*In the morning, O Lord, you hear my voice; in the morning, I lay my requests before you ...*  
— Psalm 5:3 (NIV)

### Start Your Day With Prayer

Prayer is appropriate at any time of the day and as often as you wish to pray. For me, however, my favorite time to pray is at the start of my day. I like to begin by reading the daily devotional in the Guideposts devotional book. It is a guide for my morning worship.

There are many kinds of prayers. We should all start our prayers by giving thanks for the many blessings our God has given us. Other kinds of prayers are for healing, forgiveness, patience, help and guidance through difficult situations, and the list is endless. Prayer is your personal time for communication with God. He always listens.

I have always liked poetry and the following poem is one of my favorites.

#### “Time to Pray”

I got up early one morning  
and rushed right into the day;  
I had so much to accomplish  
That I didn't take time to pray.

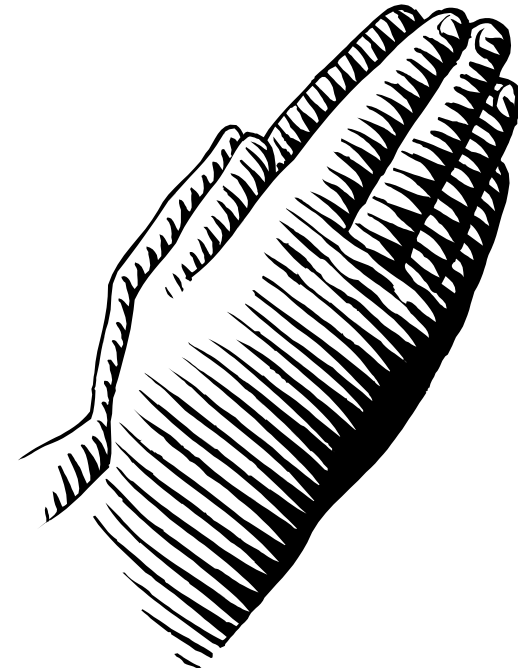
I wanted to see joy and beauty.  
But the day toiled on, gray and bleak,  
I wondered why God didn't show me,  
He said, “But you didn't seek.”

I tried to come into God's presence;  
I used all the keys at the lock.  
God gently and lovingly chided,  
“My child, you didn't knock.”

I woke up early this morning  
and paused before entering the day.  
I had so much to accomplish  
that I had to take time to pray.

*Prayer:* Lord, help me to always find prayer time each day to talk to you.  
Amen.

Johna Williams



## TUESDAY • MARCH 27, 2012

Read 1<sup>st</sup> Kings 19:1-18

“...and after the fire a still small voice.” – 1 Kings 19:12

### Grandma Needs a Hearing Aid

My discipleship, over many years,  
has always happened to be  
Just doing some things for those nearby,  
who seemed to have need of me  
Nor has it been the type of thing, you’d  
“want to write home about”  
Only a series of small simple tasks,  
the kind families can’t do without.

For me, discipleship starts with a willingness of the spirit, and continues by a frequent revision and up-dating of my personal priority list.

One of my “left-overs” from a car wreck several years ago is a recurrent inner ear problem, causing temporary blurred vision and a loss of equilibrium. The surest and safest cure for this is to simply stay very still until it passes. But not being by nature a stay-still-person, these attacks used to always be accompanied by acute frustration—until I remembered Elijah.

It seems that he and I, in our headlong pursuit of discipleship, may both have been afflicted with an “inner ear” problem. (And maybe mine didn’t really start with the car wreck?)

I am now persuaded that all shapes and sizes of effective discipleship should start by listening to the “still small voice.” In other words, in an attitude of prayer. For as Catherine Marshall once wrote, “You can do no more than pray until you have prayed ; but you can do more than pray after you have prayed.”

*Prayer:* Help me, God, to open my ears so that I can receive your messages. Amen.

Doris W. Monroe

## WEDNESDAY • MARCH 28, 2012

Read Mark 10:13-16

Mark 10:13b-14

*The disciples shooed the children away, telling them not to bother Jesus. But when Jesus saw what was happening he was very displeased with his disciples and said to them, “Let the children come to me, for the Kingdom of God belongs to such as they. Don’t send them away!”*

— The Living Bible

### The Unlikely Teacher

We learned the very valuable lesson shared in the above Scripture from one of our CASA kids. We were Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs) for a family of six children. One of the boys in the family shared that he had been reading a fiction book, *Tuck Everlasting*, in school. The story was about people living forever. He said, “I don’t want to live forever because I want to meet the One who made me!” What insight from a 12 year old!

When asked to say the blessing before our meal at McDonald’s, he prayed for the good of each of his brothers and sisters and the families with whom each lived as well thanking God gratefully for his food. His statement of simple faith that he didn’t want of live forever and to meet the one who made him, reminded us that our faith must become as a child’s as we seek to enter into eternal life with our Father God and Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

*Prayer:* Lord, Open our eyes as children to see you through their simple faith and trust

Jim and Jean Key

Court Appointed Special Advocates are volunteers who are trained to represent the best interests of abused and neglected children as they move through the justice system. For more information on their work, check out their website: <http://www.casaforchildren.org>. Their Oklahoma site is <http://www.oklahomacasa.org/> and information for Payne County can be found at <http://www.casaforkids.com/>.

## THURSDAY • MARCH 29, 2012

Read Matthew 25:31-46

### Shower Roses from Heaven

During my years at The Evaluation Center at Western Michigan University, I worked as an evaluator of many interesting projects, including the U.S. Marine Corps personnel evaluation system, charter school movements in several states, Kellogg Foundation initiatives, and NASA and National Science Foundation scientific and education programs, but no projects were so inspiring as those funded in Hawaii and the Philippines by the Consuelo Zobel Alger Foundation.

In 1914, Consuelo Zobel de Ayala was born into the aristocratic and wealthiest family in the Philippines. She and her husband, U.S. General James Alger, retired in Hawaii in 1970, and her husband died in 1986. She met Patti Lyons, President and CEO of Child and Family Services, in Hawaii in early 1987 when Patti was just beginning to help develop a residential shelter in the Philippines because of the thousands and thousands of street children in the Philippines.

The day after meeting with Patti, Consuelo sent her first check to Patti, in the amount of \$15,000. She asked Patti how much per year it would cost for this mission, and when Patti said \$50-55,000 a year, Consuelo's reply was, "Oh, I think I can manage that." The first project was the Consuelo Zobel Alger Home for Children. Her mission was to serve the most needy, the poorest of the poor. When asked how long help should be given, she replied, "Until the need is filled." Her first concern was to prevent and ameliorate sexual abuse and exploitation of children and women. Childless herself, she wanted abused and neglected children to have a permanent and loving home. Other concerns were homelessness, lack of income generating skills, lack of self-help skills, and lack of access to medical, dental, and social services. Over the years, many programs have been initiated and supported by the Foundation in Hawaii and the Philippines. The common thread among these projects is support, assistance, and education for the poorest of the poor and those with little or no hope.

According to Consuelo, "What matters in life are not great deeds but great love. Saint Therese of the Child Jesus did what I want to do in life . . . to let fall from Heaven a shower of roses. My mission will begin after my

death. I will spend my heaven doing good on earth. I would like to renew hope for those who have lost it and to give hope to those who never had it."

Her foundation was established in 1988, and she died two years later at the age of 76. She bequeathed her entire estate (worth more than one hundred million dollars) to charity, with the stipulation that 75 percent of the earnings from endowments were to be spent in the Philippines. Her foundation now has over 50 projects in the Philippines and spends \$5 million to \$6 million a year on projects in Hawaii and the Philippines. Through her foundation, Consuelo Zobel Alger continues, as she wished, to "shower roses from Heaven."

*Prayer:* When an opportunity to help come my way, help me to have eyes to see and hands to help in whatever way I can. Amen.

Jerry Horn

For more information on the Consuelo Zobel Alger Foundation, check out their website: <http://www.consuelo.org/>.

FRIDAY • MARCH 30, 2012

Read Psalm 84

### May the Lord Be With You

*“Marvelous, infinite, matchless grace, freely bestowed on all who believe. You that are longing to see His face, will you this moment His grace receive? Grace, grace, God’s grace...”*

The United Methodist Hymnal, No. 365

These words from the 1911 hymn fit my life so perfectly and in so many ways. For instance, the choral benediction we often sing in church, “May The Lord Be With You” is an example of God’s grace. I wrote it in April 1998. Our middle son Jake had been given a devastating diagnosis of bone cancer on February 13, 1998. Leaving Bart and our youngest son Matt at home, Jake and I had to move to Houston where he was in the care of doctors at M.D. Anderson.

Family and friends in Highland Park supported us with prayers, cards, calls, money, and gifts for 5 months. We had an overwhelming sense of protection...and God’s grace. You loved us and helped us have hope; we knew we were not alone, we were connected to you. Your love and faith carried us through those long, scary months.

In the middle of an April night I awoke in our tiny Houston apartment with the words and melody in my mind; I wrote them down. When we returned to Stillwater and my piano in June, I created the accompaniment to the melody. The piece of music came from God ... I know it. He used me as His voice to show us His grace and love and now we get to sing it to each other in church. We are blessed!

*Prayer:* Today, we give thanks for the grace, mercy and protection we receive each and every day of our lives. In Christ’s name, Amen.

Gayla Foster

April 1998

May the Lord Be With You  
for Highland Park United Methodist Church

words and music by  
Gayla Foster

Andante

May the Lord — Be With You —

Bless you and keep you for- ev- er. Tho we go on our

se- par-ate ways, our hearts are con-nect-ed thru God.

He will guide and lead us, All the days of our lives.

May the Lord, Be with you Bless you and keep you for-

ev- er Bless you and keep you for- ev- er.

## SATURDAY • MARCH 31, 2012

Read Isaiah 53:6 and John 19:18-34

### The Cross

*Symbol:* a cross

*Devotion:* Next Friday is Good Friday. It is very sad because this was the day Jesus died. Jesus was always doing good but there were people who hated him. The soldiers placed a heavy beam on his shoulder and made him drag the cross through the streets. Jesus was very weak, so they forced a man named Simon to carry the cross the rest of the way to a hill outside the city. The whole time people were laughing and saying ugly things to him. His friends followed crying because they did not understand why he had to die.



Jesus' mother was there with some of his followers, watching her son die. Jesus asked his friend John to take care of her. At noon, the sky turned black for three hours and everything was very dark. Then Jesus cried, "It is finished." He bowed his head and died. Jesus had finished what God wanted him to do. This was a very sad day, but why do you think we call it Good Friday? It was good because Jesus died so you and I could have all our sins forgiven, and we could go to heaven and be with him forever!

*Questions:*

- What happened on Good Friday?
- Who was there?
- Why did Jesus die?

*Prayer:* Jesus, we can never thank you enough for what you did for us on the cross. We love you very much. Help us to show our love to you by living for you. Amen.

adapted from The Lenten Tree by Dean Smith

## SUNDAY • APRIL 1, 2012 • Palm Sunday

Read Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29

### Light

Psalm 118 is a perfect Psalm for Palm Sunday (which we are celebrating today). While its original use was for the Passover Celebration, it has snuck in to our pre-Easter celebration on Palm Sunday. You can see why...just read verse 27 in particular.

We begin our reading for giving thanks to God for the steadfast love of God that endures forever. As we move to the latter verses, we read about entering the gates of righteousness and thanking God for becoming our salvation. Because of all that God has done for us, we are in a state of continual thanksgiving.

However, if we go back to the pivotal verse 27, we see that reminder that God has given us "light." For the Christian, that light is God's gift to us in Jesus Christ. Is there a better gift for which to be thankful? Is there a better gift that has ever brought forth such light?

Palm Sunday begins as a celebration as Jesus moved into Jerusalem and was hailed as the Lord's anointed one. However, celebration quickly turns into something else and by the end of the week, the "Lord's anointed one" is hung on a cross.

As you read and worship today, remember the light that has come into the world to dispel the darkness. Remember that the light was extinguished for three days...or so we thought! There was a glorious resurrection and the light from that day has never stopped shining. This week will be emotional, but no emotion will match that of next Sunday, when we awake to the melody "He Arose, He Arose, Hallelujah Christ Arose."

*Prayer:* Thank you for the light that we have found through Jesus Christ. Never let us forget the great gift of salvation that he was for us. Let us enter your gates, O God, with thanksgiving and your courts with praise every day of our lives. Amen.

Rev. Derrek Belase

## MONDAY • APRIL 2, 2012

Read Matthew 25:31-46

### Meeting Christ in the Andes

In 1988 I found myself on a Medical VIM trip to Churquipampa, Bolivia. Churquipampa had no electricity, no potable water, nothing. A young couple brought their 2 year girl to see our doctors. The child was extremely underweight and held itself in an awkward position as it lay listless in her father's arms. Our doctors had no idea what the problem was; but Dr. German Crespo, a Bolivian doctor was with us and he knew immediately: Polio.

The parents pleaded: "We know you have medicines for Polio. Please give us medicines."

We had to explain that the medicine that we had was a vaccine. It would do no good. There was nothing we could do.

A child with Polio in the U.S. or in the cities could still have a significant quality of life, but in Churquipampa it was destined to a life of suffering and pain. So the community decided it was better to let the child die now instead of suffering and dying.

As I held the child, just moments before its death, I thought, 'if we'd only come earlier. If I had just brought the team a year earlier. If only I had known or cared ...' Then I saw something ... I realized something.

It was Jesus! I was holding Jesus just moments before His death. I held Jesus in my arms just before his death on a cross of poverty and deprivation.

This was the beginning of my journey ... my calling ... my decision to follow God where ever He leads. And seldom does a day go by, that I don't think about the first time I met Christ in the Andes, and held Him in my arms.

*"When a poor person dies of hunger, it has not happened because God did not take care of him or her. It has happened because neither you nor I wanted to give that person what he or she needed. We have refused to be instruments of love in the hands of God, to give the poor a piece of bread, to offer them a dress with which to ward off the cold. It has happened because we did not recognize Christ when, once again, He appeared under the guise of pain, identified with a man numb from the cold, dying of hunger, when he came in a lonely human being, in a lost child in search of a home."*

*Mother Teresa of Calcutta*



Rev. David Stephenson  
Mission Interpreter  
Oklahoma/Bolivia Partnership

## TUESDAY • APRIL 3, 2012

Read Matthew 26:36-48

Focus verse (v. 39): "Going a little further, he fell with his face to the ground and prayer, 'My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you Will.'"

### The Humanity of the Incarnation

One spring in the late 1960's, the UMW sponsored a Bible study, led by our minister, the Reverend Bob Pierson. We were studying the Easter story, which we had all heard many times throughout our growing up years. But...something caught my attention in a whole new way this time. It was the verse identified above. What?! "Take this cup from me." What an epiphany I had that day! Jesus did not want to die! Could this be right thinking?

To be honest, this brought Jesus to me in a whole new light. I saw the human side of this God/Man in a way I had never considered before. Possibly a human being like myself, with fears, doubts and concerns who had truly lived among the people, experiencing pain, suffering, poverty and even death of those he loved. A new concept for me. Although the stories were there and had been read many times, I had not recognized His feelings as a man.

Of course over the years the haunting question remained, why did he say this? Did he feel his mission was not finished, that he had more to teach and share? Or possibly like most of us, he just wasn't ready to die.

As reported in the Gospels, he returned to his prayers three times with similar words. This was not a spur of the moment or split second decision obviously it had weighed heavily upon his heart and mind before this moment.

After much agony, he accepts his fate, as prophesied in the Old Testament, as well as his own teachings. According to Luke, he was strengthened by an angel after reaching this decision. (Luke 22:43)

What occurs from this point on is well known by us, but how often do we miss the very important point that Christ himself made the final choice, or agreed to his crucifixion with faith that his sacrifice would bring forgiveness and grace to the world.

*Prayer:* Gracious God, thank you for the gift of grace. Thank you too for allowing, even encouraging us, to question and thus learn and grow in our faith.

Jane Sloggett

## WEDNESDAY • APRIL 4, 2012

Read Mark 4:1-9

### A Sower Went to Sow

Beside the sea, Jesus called his first disciples. Upon it, he calmed the wind and the waves. In this scripture, the seaside again becomes his classroom and crowds flock to hear him. The power of his stories draws multitudes to him; in his parables they discover something about God and themselves. Two thousand years later, we come to the seashore to hear Jesus' stories and rediscover within them something of ourselves and God.

We were once taught that this story was about the sower, but it is not. Later, we thought this parable was about the seeds, but it is not. More recently, we've come to call this the parable of the soils. I believe Jesus' words go even deeper than the soil. This is a parable about human hearts, and Jesus admonishes us to "listen."

- The wayside soil represents the hardened heart, the one that is unreceptive and ill-disposed.
- The stony soil represents the shallow heart, where impulses are strong but reflection is weak.
- The thorny soil represents those hearts that are preoccupied; they have no depth for other matters.

Today we must be this parable's good soil. With hearts opened through Jesus' words, we come to this moment to "listen" and "hear." The good soil is prepared soil; good hearts eagerly hear and respond! Listen! A sower went to sow . . .

*Open my ears, that I may hear voices of truth thou sendest clear; and while the wave notes fall on my ear, everything false will disappear. Silently now I wait for thee, ready, my God, thy will to see. Open my ears, illumine me, Spirit divine!*

The United Methodist Hymnal, No. 454

*Prayer:* Let us be the good soil, each and every day of our lives, as we allow your word to richly dwell in us. Amen.

Bishop Robert E. Hayes, Jr.  
Episcopal Leader, Oklahoma Area  
United Methodist Church

## THURSDAY • APRIL 5, 2012 • Maundy Thursday

Read John 13:1-17

### Servant Leadership

A few years ago, I attended a workshop led by the then Bishop of the Oklahoma area, Bruce Blake, entitled "Servant Leadership." It was a very informative seminar based on the work of Robert Greenleaf, a Quaker who served as president of AT&T.

In the seminar, Bishop Blake said that servant leadership is not a style of leadership, but an attitude that affects style. It is a consistent, constant attitude built on a foundation of commitment and is defined by a commitment to service others rather than self.

Today, is Holy Thursday, the day where we remember the institution of the Last Supper and in John's gospel, we read about Jesus washing the feet of his disciples. The act of washing another's feet was typically done by a servant and would have never been done by the host of a meal.

But in his usual style, Jesus does the unthinkable and by doing so, teaches us a lesson. Jesus showed what it meant to be a servant leader and in verses 14 and 15, he reminds the disciples that they are to follow his example. He didn't give them a treatise on serving others... he gave them a living witness.

That living witness is carried on (or at least should be carried on) through **our** Christian witness. Whose feet have you washed lately? Whose feet will you wash today? Think on these things as you live into Easter and live into Christ's likeness.

*Prayer:* Eternal Christ, as you washed the feet of your disciples to show them the meaning of loving service to others, wash clean our hearts, that we may freely embrace your ministry of service to others. Help us keep your commandments to love one another, that through our love, the world may know that we are your disciples. Amen.

B.J. Beu

Rev. Derrek Belase

**Reminder** – Holy Thursday Worship Service – tonight – 7 p.m.

**FRIDAY • APRIL 6, 2012 • Good Friday**

Read John 18:1-19:42 (The Passion of Christ)

*Were you there when they crucified my Lord?  
Were you there when they nailed him to the tree?  
Were you there when they pierced him in the side?  
Were you there when the sun refused to shine?  
Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?*

words to "Were You There," [UMH 288](#)

What do you think as you sing those words? Do you imagine yourself there? Do you imagine yourself below the cross casting lots for Christ's clothing or running off and hiding for fear others will know you were with him? Do you wonder what will happen after this day is over? Can you imagine what the first Sabbath will be like without him?

We were there...even though we didn't want to be. We were there and still remain at the foot of the cross today. We are there, remembering the crucifixion and what it means for our lives.

*Prayer:* O Christ, your cross speaks both to us and to the world. In your dying for us, you accepted the pain and hurt of the whole creation. The arms of your cross stretched out across the broken world in reconciliation. You have made peace with us. Help us make peace with you by sharing in your reconciling work. Amen.



Ali Newell (Colossians 1:15-20)

Rev. Derrek Belase

**SATURDAY • APRIL 7, 2012 • Easter Vigil**

Read John 1:1-5 and Matthew 27:57-66

Rejoice, heavenly powers! Sing, choirs of angels!  
Exult, all creation around God's throne!  
Jesus Christ, our King is risen!  
Sound the trumpet of salvation!

Rejoice, O earth, in shining splendor,  
Radiant in the brightness of your King!  
Christ has conquered! Glory fills you!  
Darkness vanishes for ever!

On this holy night all evil is dispelled,  
Guilt is washed away, and peace restored.  
So we are reconciled with God.  
Alleluia!

*From the ancient Exsultet for Easter Vigil*

*Prayer:* Merciful and ever-living God, Creator of heaven and earth: as the crucified body of your Son was laid in the tomb and rested on this holy day, grant that we may await with him the dawning of the third day as he promised, and rise with him in newness of life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



from [The New Handbook of the Christian Year](#), pg. 191

Rev. Derrek Belase

## EASTER SUNDAY • APRIL 8, 2012

Read Luke 24:1-12

### **There was nothing there**

In May 2010, I had an opportunity to take my first trip to the Holy Land. All my life I had longed to visit this fascinating country where Jesus walked and taught. For forty years I've preached hundreds of sermons and given at least a thousand Bible studies and lectures on this small strip of land that is the birthplace of our Christian faith, and now my going was indeed a dream come true.

Neither time nor space will allow me to tell you everything I saw, but I can tell you the boat ride on the Sea of Galilee was spectacular. The Mount from which Jesus spoke the Beatitudes was awe inspiring. And the walk Jesus took carrying the cross to Calvary will forever be etched in my mind.

However, the most memorable moment of my entire trip was when I went to the Garden Tomb where it is presumed Jesus was buried. It was a quiet place filled with beautiful trees and shrubbery.

Several trails lead to the tomb itself, and when the trail I was on brought me to the tomb, I stood speechless. After standing in line for a few minutes, it was my turn to enter the tomb alone. Because the grave was so narrow and short, I had to bend over just to get in. But once I got inside, I beheld the place where the body of Jesus could have possibly been placed. There was nothing there but an empty space! Whoever had occupied that tomb was no longer there! Then the words from the Gospel of Luke rang loud and clear in my memory: "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen."

I rushed out of the tomb with tears flowing down my cheeks. All the sermons I had preached and all the verses of scripture I had read concerning the resurrection were now confirmed! It took me over an hour to compose myself and process all my emotions.

Bishop Robert E. Hayes, Jr.  
Episcopal Leader, Oklahoma Area  
United Methodist Church



Inside the "Garden Tomb" in Jerusalem



Golgatha – "The Place of the Skull" in Jerusalem



**Wednesday, February 22 – 6:30 p.m.**

Ash Wednesday Worship Service

**Sunday, April 1 – 10:30 a.m.**

Palm Sunday Worship Service with palm procession and Holy Communion

**Monday, April 2 through Friday, April 6 – 12:10 p.m.**

Ecumenical Community Holy Week Service at St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church

**Thursday, April 5 – 7 p.m.**

Holy Thursday Worship Service with Holy Communion and altar stripping

**Saturday, April 7 – 10 a.m.**

Children's Activities and Easter Egg Hunt (fellowship hall)

**Sunday, April 8 – 10:30 a.m.**

Easter Sunday Worship Service