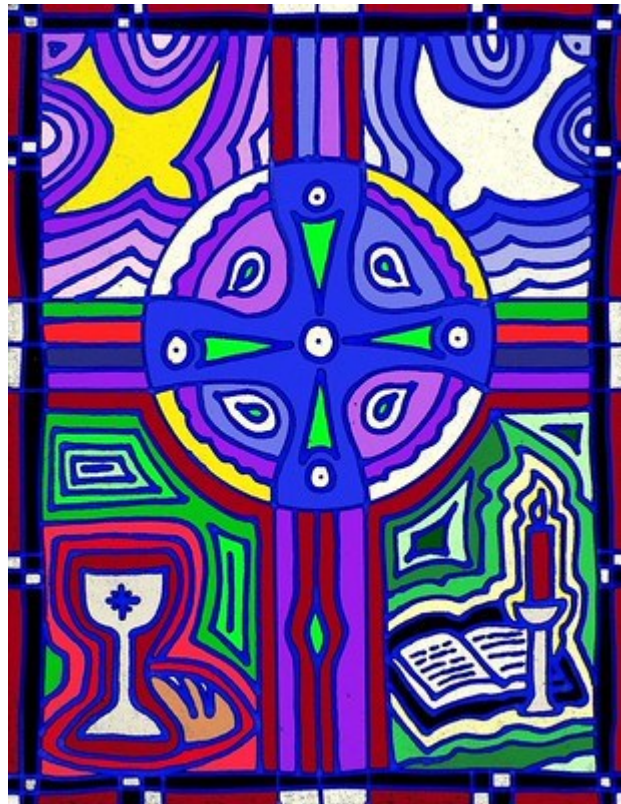


From Ashes to Easter



Faith in Uncertain Times

Lutheran Church of the Reformation

Lent 2026

Cover Art by John Stushie

From Ashes to Easter

The Meditations of Our Hearts

By Members & Friends of this Community

LUTHERAN CHURCH OF THE REFORMATION

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Worship Times at Lutheran Church of the Reformation

For details and links for the Worship services,
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Ash Wednesday

February 18th

Ashes to Go - 7:30 - 9:00 a.m.

Ash Wednesday Service - 7:00 p.m.

Holy Week Services

Holy Wednesday April 1st– 6:30 p.m.

Good Friday, April 3rd - 7:00 p.m.

Easter Morning

April 5th - 8:30 a.m. & 11:00 a.m.

Easter Morning Brunch at 9:30am

*We give thanks for all of the saints who have
journeyed before us and all those who have crafted this
annual devotion for 40 volumes.*

From Ashes to Easter turns 40 this year! Among my earliest memories after joining Reformation in 1990 was being approached by Helen Vigness, who “asked” me if I would contribute to the Lenten devotional that year. Helen was a long-time and faithful member of our congregation who organized *From Ashes to Easter* every year for decades. I say that Helen “asked” me to contribute, but she had already signed me up before she approached me. She was just being polite to share that fact with me. For those of you who remember Helen, you’ll remember her fondly as a person who got things done and didn’t hesitate to “ask” you to help.

Over the last 40 years, *From Ashes to Easter* has become a beloved fixture in our church. It’s an apt metaphor for our congregation: a communal effort with deep roots in the past, but also firmly rooted in the current moment, as this year’s theme shows: “Faith in Uncertain Times.” I’m grateful for each opportunity to contribute a reflection to the devotional. Taking time to sit in silence with scripture is a practice I tell myself every year that I must do more regularly.

From Ashes to Easter is a generous communal gift of spiritual reflection. Thank you to everyone who contributed this year and who has contributed over the last 40 years.

Putting this devotional together is no easy task, and we are so grateful to Ivy Finkenstadt for her tireless efforts to organize this beautiful booklet.

I am also grateful to Helen Vigness, who first “asked” me to contribute all those years ago. It warms my heart to think that 40 years from now, From Ashes to Easter will still be around, and someone will think back fondly to 2026 when Ivy first asked them to be a contributor (I offer no commentary on Ivy’s “style of engagement” compared to Helen’s. Let’s just say they are both women who know how to get things done!).

Generous Lord, we offer thanks for this communal expression of our faith and for all those individuals who have contributed to its creation over the past 40 years.

Craig Middlebrook
Council and Congregation President
Church of the Reformation (Lutheran)

Forty years of Forty Days seems pretty fitting for a milestone anniversary of Lent. I have been blessed to be a writer for From Ashes to Easter from most of my time at Reformation, since the early 2000s. I took over as the lead editor around 2021 (it's hard to say exactly). I received my charge from Megan Quirk Herrera and Pastor Ben Hogue, who inherited the responsibility themselves. The original, and longest serving, editor of From Ashes to Easter was Helen Vigness, who did all of this without the benefit of Google Drive and easy email access. Above all, the writers make From Ashes to Easter what it is.

Writing through Lent is difficult, no matter which liturgical year we are in. The texts are some of the most challenging of the liturgical year. In Lent we are focused on repentance and learning. The thoughts and prayers that the members and friends of Reformation have shared these past forty years are some of the most intimate and beautiful pieces of writing I've read. It is especially meaningful to hear from congregation members and get to know them through their own words. I am truly privileged to get to do this every year. Thank you for trusting me with your thoughts, feelings, and experiences.

Finally, I want to thank this year's From Ashes to Easter team; Emily Andre, Alex Dunkel, Pastor Jayme Kokkonen, and Director of Facilities and Operations Julie Miller. And the trusty copier.

In Peace,

Ivy Finkenstadt

One Way to Use this Booklet:

Opening: Trace a small cross on your forehead to remind yourself of the ashes that you received,

*Today, let my heart be good soil,
open to the seed of your word.*

Scripture: Find the Scripture passage for the appropriate day. You will find this located at the top right of each page. Some authors have also included a specific ‘focus verse’ as well before their devotion.

Reflection & Pray: After reading the assigned Scripture passage, read the words from the author of the daily reflection. Pray with the author at the end.

Closing: Take a moment to reflect, breathe, and then go in peace.

Our Access to God is Direct and Personal

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Matthew 6:21

At some point in our lives, each of us has asked: “How should I pray?” or “How should I express my faith?” Being Lutheran, public piety is not something that comes easily to us. And to read Matthew here, nor should it. Matthew lays out for us, in as prescriptive a passage as any in the New Testament, a “code of faithful conduct.”

Reading this through my Lutheran glasses, what strikes me about this “code” is how much it reinforces the tenet that our access to God is direct and personal. Each of us is touched directly by God’s grace, and through that grace we have an intimate relationship to God. It makes sense then, that when we sit down to pray or carry out faithful acts (giving alms, forgiving, fasting) we should do so in a manner that reflects the intimacy and personal nature of this relationship. Matthew reminds us, forcefully, that whenever we pray and perform acts of faith, God is aware of what we are doing and, significantly, why we are doing it.

The last paragraph of this text completes this idea. Matthew asks each of us to look deeply into ourselves and to answer the question of what is it in our lives that we value above all else? What is it that we “treasure?” Answering this question honestly can only be done introspectively. And if we answer that question from within our deepest self (from our heart), we and God will know why we choose to live our lives in the way we do.

We are grateful, God, for the gift of your grace and for the gift of prayer. Guide us to better know our hearts’ desires and how best to serve you faithfully.

The Call for a Radical Recentering

To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be his holy people.
Romans 1:7

The title of this devotional comes directly from Reformation's new Missional Narrative: "Situated on Capitol Hill at the symbolic and literal center of power in the world ... [w]e exist to make the center of power different because we are ... a reforming people who reflect the image of the living Christ." Paul's epistle to the burgeoning church situated at the seat of the Roman empire was written circa 55-57 AD, just a year or so after the emperor Claudius was assassinated. Under his reign, the Roman Empire had continued its territorial expansion, including the forcible conquest of Britain. Claudius was succeeded by Nero, remembered by history for fiddling while Rome burned in 64 AD. It is rumored that Nero had ordered the arson to clear space for his new "Golden House," which was built upon the city's ashes. However, Nero blamed the conflagration on the Roman Christians, 979 of whom were arrested and killed.

Does all of this first-century imperial land grabbing, raising of gilded edifices, self-serving deceit, and tyrannical disdain for humanity sound eerily prescient for us in today's literal center of power in the world? If so, we can receive Paul's letter to the church in Rome as if written directly to us. In the throes of today's empire, let us take to heart Paul's reminder that we are "loved by God and called to be his holy people." Per our Missional Narrative, we are called to a radical recentering, to "reflect the image of the living Christ and his vision for the world."

Father, in these Uncertain Times, save us from the time of trial. Give us faith to actively resist the temptations of fear, bitterness, vengeance, and apathy. Jesus, may we heed the call to reflect your image in this world which you so loved and redeemed with your body and blood. Amen.

February 20

Friday

Romans 1:8-17

Faith to Faith

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

Romans 1:16

Mrs. Lovett calls herself “a woman alone, with limited wind, and the worst pies in London ... times is hard”. Me too - I find our times are exceptionally hard. Prospects look harsher; issues produce heated arguments but scant progress; people who disagree also habitually deride and dismiss each other; executive and legislative action triggers widespread repercussions.

I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.

D.C. could be Rome’s successor. Reformation members share many stories - of discovering that faraway places know our congregation, our ministries, our history, our pastors and our lay leaders; of hearing that visitors seek us out based on reputation.

Perhaps we underestimate our influence. We have our tools to help the long arc of the moral universe bend toward justice. Worship materials, social media posts, Weekly Word messages, parish hall bulletin boards all publish narratives and photos of what’s happening - how to participate - whom to contact – milestones achieved - more opportunities to grow – new ways to serve.

For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

The angels are not sent into our world of pain to do what we were meant to do in Jesus’ name; that falls to you and me and all who are made free. Help us, O Lord, we pray, to do your will today. – Enviado soy de Dios (The Lord Now Sends Me Forth), ELW #538

Prayer of Repentance: Create in Me a Clean Heart

A broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. Psalm 51:17b

Several parts of this psalm are well known to us. It was written by David after he had lain with Bathsheba. In it, he speaks with fresh experience of how we are so often disappointing to God. God was optimistic in thinking that his creation, once given free will, would still lead a pure life. David, however, offers no excuses and only pleads for mercy. David acknowledges that his own condition as a sinner is ever present and cannot be denied. He seeks a clean heart so he can know the joy of salvation. He knows that such can only come from a broken and contrite heart. David is stimulated to write these words by a single sin, yet he faces the full implications of the condition of sinfulness.

Such an admission is difficult for us as individuals. Yet it is vital to understand the distancing that sin creates for us from God. It is important, however, to remember that it is our actions that create this distancing. God is all around us, and in Christ, offers us grace. In these particular times that we face, however, it is easy to think that God has abandoned us because of our sins. Such is not the case.

It is grace that David is seeking in his writing. We have that grace in Christ. In such times as these, we must remember that it is through grace and faith that we are to learn how to be the hands of God in this world. We should not be trapped in the world of sin but move forward to take on the challenges that our journey with God demands.

Dear Creator, wrap us with Grace in Christ, remove our sorrowful sins, that we may overcome the traps laid by evil, that we may become your hands to restore righteousness and justice in your kingdom.

TESTING: ONE, TWO, THREE?

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.
Matthew 4:1

Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tested by the devil--fasting for forty days. The tempter said, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread."

Then the devil placed him on the pinnacle of the temple in the holy city saying, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down."

Lastly, the devil took him to a mountaintop, showing him all the kingdoms of the world saying, "All these I will give you, if you will worship me."

Jesus always said "NO", ending with "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.' "

Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.

The Spirit purposely took Jesus into that wilderness. Just like the Spirit purposely puts us into certain situations.

"To tempt" comes from the Greek word "peirazein". In English, "tempt" is negative. It means to entice a person to sin. But originally peirazein meant to "test" far more than to tempt. Just as metal has to be tested far beyond any stress it will ever need to bear before it can be put to any useful purpose, so each of us must be tested before God can use us. Maybe what we call temptation is not meant to make us sin; maybe it is meant to enable us to conquer sin--not to weaken us, but to make us stronger. Added bonus: Just like what Jesus experienced, our angels are everywhere to care for us, too.

My prayer for all of us is "Dear God, when we are led into temptation, help us know that you will deliver us from evil, as we keep our eyes only on you--and emerge stronger for it!"

February 23

Monday

Hebrews 2:10-18

Finding a New Way

Both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So, Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters.
(Hebrews. 2:11)

“Because he himself was suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tested.” (Heb. 2:18)

Empathy. There’s been a lot of talk about that word. Some say it’s a sin: comforting the sinner encourages their sin; and encouraging sin is itself sin. I suppose that there is a kernel of truth in that notion. But I think such a sentiment shifts the focus away from Christ’s example. Empathy is not the approval of sin; it is the refusal to abandon the sinner.

God is not ashamed of our weaknesses. We are ashamed; we have been ashamed since the beginning. “Who told you that you were naked?” etc. He knows that we will stumble and fall. He came to show us how to get up.

We observe Lent, not to prove we can overcome our sinful ways; our faith rests not in ourselves, but in Him. We observe Lent to remind us that when we fall into sin, God’s grace picks us up.

*Let us pray,
Lord, you know our weaknesses. You know how easily we fail. Help us to remember that when we fall, you are there to help us up. Amen.*

February 24

Tuesday

Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:1-10

Jesus, the Great High Priest

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. Hebrews 4:15-16

Lent is an opportunity to reflect on Jesus's singular role in reconciling us to God. Only Jesus could endure all the pain of true human suffering and death, spend 40 days in the wilderness, face all forms of temptation, and ultimately be killed brutally. Today's passage reminds that Jesus experienced those things so that he could stand in my place and earn for me what I'm unable to earn on my own. If he hadn't done this, how could I really have "approached God"? How could I approach with my sin and failures, both those inherently human and those deeply personal, and seek anything? I imagine that conversation would've been deeply uncomfortable: "God, I've sinned in all of these ways, and in others I neither remember nor appreciate, but I'm here to ask for something!" And, lurking in my mind, a type of despair that there's no way God will answer my prayer and that I deserve to be rejected. Yikes!

Today's verses, though, explain I can approach God "with confidence." Yes, I've sinned and yes I deserve sin's consequences. But Jesus stood in my place and took those consequences, suffering on my behalf and offering me a clear path to God. Even when life otherwise feels uncertain, I can be certain that path is open. God understands and empathizes, and lets me lay down my burdens by bringing them to Him. I can do this confidently because of what Jesus has done for me, and take comfort in this promise.

God, Thank you for Jesus' sacrifice and for accepting that sacrifice in my place. Thank you for the comfort this provides, even in uncertain times. Thank you for the clear path to you that Jesus gave me. As I continue on my Lenten journey, remind me daily of that comfort, so that I can approach you with confidence. In your name I pray, Amen.

Forgiveness

*Blessed is the one
whose transgressions are forgiven,
whose sins are covered. Psalm 32:1*

We've all been there. You've done or said something hurtful, or that was downright wrong. Or you didn't step in to help someone when you should have. Then you struggle with how to make things right, or whether that is even possible. Sometimes, it is as simple as apologizing to someone. And I don't mean the non-apology, "I'm sorry that what I said hurt you," as if it was merely the words that hurt, and not you saying them. I mean a real apology, "I'm sorry I said something hurtful to you. I'm sorry that I hurt your feelings. I'm sorry I didn't stand up for you in that situation."

After taking responsibility, clearing the air, and making peace, it's as if the person's forgiveness has lifted a weight off your chest. That is the gift this Psalm and Jesus offer. As Lutherans, we read in Romans that God's grace is a free gift to us, but even Paul reminds us that God's kindness is intended to lead us to repentance. After all, how can we be forgiven our sins if we do not recognize them as such? This self-reflection opens us to receive God's forgiveness and learn to do better.

In these uncertain times, we can feel frustrated and powerless, often having little or no control over the wrongs occurring around us. But we can control our own actions and our relationship with God. Psalm 32 shows us — by holding ourselves accountable and seeking God's grace — we will receive God's blessings, and be free to pursue God's will.

Lord, grant us the wisdom to recognize and repent of our sins, that we can receive your grace and pursue your will. Amen.

February 26

Thursday

2 Timothy 1:3-7

Make the Connection

I remind you to fan into the flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. 2 Timothy 1:6

Greetings Friends in Christ,

Heed the snow and ice. Don your jackets, bundle up your feet and your hands, it is cold out there. My friend and neighbor called me out to follow her as she took a hammer to the ice-covered sidewalk, almost a foot deep. With each swing, she cracked chunk after chunk of the compressed ice. I tossed the pieces to the side with my gloved hands, and then found a dirt shovel used in different seasons for turning the sun-kissed soil of the garden.

Paul's deep love for his student and the church shines through in today's reading. Despite distance and time, he reminds Timothy of his call to preach the gospel as the early church stormed and formed. Paul's letter is a call to action, to press forward to serve God with a clear conscience.

My friend shouted out, "Let's do something," and I joined her to clear several yards of sidewalk so that no one would fall on this short path. In verse 6, Paul encouraged Timothy to 'fan into the flame the gift of God,' that he would find the power, love, and discipline to keep preaching the Gospel, to find a way to break through adversity. Our Christian community today serves as a testament of the spirit of God's hand supporting Paul, Timothy, and fellow Christian faith leaders in discernment.

Raging storms, political headwinds, social injustice, birthing a community of faith – it can all feel so futile in the moment. We can pick up a shovel, a sign, a phone, or wrap a traveler in a warm blanket. Paul penned a letter. God compels us to make that connection

Dear Lord, Help me to bear, see and breathe deeply into to my human existence. Move me to make meaningful connections through your loving Holy Spirit.

Who is a God Like You?

“But our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.” Philippians 3:20

The book of Micah carries one of the most beautiful expressions of peace, saying, “They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks.” But the vision of Micah, a small-town prophet of the 8th century BCE, has two sides to it: first, God will punish his people because of their sins and iniquities; then God will show mercy to his people.

Micah warns the people of Israel that the Lord is coming from his dwelling place, that God is planning disaster. The vision of Micah foretells “Jerusalem will become a heap of rubble,” and its peoples exiled. Israel will be subject to God’s punishment for its wickedness – bribery, deceit, fraud, idolatry, injustice.

Micah portrays God as a righteous judge, but also a merciful judge. The prophecy ends not with the ruin of Israel but with praise and prayer for God’s love and compassion.

*You do not stay angry forever / but delight to show mercy.
You will again have compassion on us;
you will tread our sins underfoot / and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of
the sea.*

Micah’s words call us to praise the everlasting nature of our God, who pardons sin and forgives transgressions. God shows mercy to his sinful people, and we are called “to do justice and to love mercy” in response.

Dear God, in these uncertain times, help me to remember you are compassionate and merciful. Who is a God like you? There is none! You do not stay angry. You forgive our sins and call us to walk humbly with you. Help me to remain faithful to you in times of trouble. Let me sing praises to you this day. Amen.

February 28

Saturday

Luke 7:1-10

The Faith of the Centurion

Therefore I did not presume to come to you. But say the word, and let my servant be healed. Luke 7:7

The centurion's servant is ill, and the centurion, because he values his servant, sends Jewish elders to Jesus to plead for his intervention and healing of the servant. Jesus appears to have been moved by the earnestness of the elders' plea and sets off toward the centurion. Before he arrives, Jesus is met by yet another group of people sent by the centurion. This time, it is the centurion's friends, sent to carry the centurion's own words to Jesus, unlike the Jewish elders who had formulated an argument of their own (that the servant had built the synagogue) possibly designed to appeal to Jesus on their shared religious grounds. The centurion, speaking through his friends, voices a familiar sentiment: it would be too presumptive of me to ask for what I want, but I desperately want it.

Why is it so difficult to ask for what we want, for what our hearts in righteousness long for?

The centurion really wanted his servant to be healed, so much so that he sent not one but two groups of his allies to the rumored Jesus with no guarantee that Jesus was capable of healing his servant or even confidence that Jesus would come. And when Jesus had already started to come and was already planning to heal the servant, the centurion seems to have lost some of his gumption to ask for help. He says, through his friends, to Jesus, "Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof." In the story, the centurion is so close to getting what he wants and, right then, he has a crisis of confidence. Why? I think it's because it would be easier to not get what he wants than to admit how vulnerable it makes him to ask. He'd rather see his servant die than face his own weakness.

But, in that moment of nearly giving up, the centurion, through his friends, realizes and professes faith in a way that makes even Jesus "marvel." Like the centurion, it may only be in the weakness of desperately wanting something that we experience faith, if faintly, that what we want is actually possible. Jesus actually can heal the centurion's servant. In the story, the centurion naming that possibility (through his friends and in a way that reflects his experience) is what makes the difference; in that moment, the servant is healed.

God, meet me in my wanting, hear me in my asking, and help me in my hoping.

March 1

Sunday

John 3:1-17

The Journey of Nicodemus

Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?" John 3:9

How many times have you heard or read John 3:16? I don't think I could count at this point. It's everywhere! I remember the first time I went to In-N-Out, and I looked down to see it printed on the bottom of my soda cup. So often, this one verse of salvation is pulled out of its context and used to define Christianity. While I don't question the centrality or importance of this verse, I find myself drawn even more to the story that this message is spoken into and specifically the journey of Nicodemus.

I think Nicodemus is a pretty relatable guy. He comes to Jesus in the night, and he's skeptical but curious. Through his wrestling with Jesus' teachings, we witness his logistical mind start to be broken open. I imagine him leaving this interaction with more questions than when he started. And yet, I also imagine him feeling more sure that Jesus is the Son of God. How often have you felt this in your own faith journey? Times where unanswered questions or mysteries or uncertainties opened up spaces for the Spirit to slip through and faith to deepen. For me, these moments have been the hinge points in my own journey, no matter how hard my logistical mind has tried to fight them.

It seems like this night was a hinge point for Nicodemus. Throughout John, we see how Nicodemus' public witness evolves. In John 7, his bravery grows as he questions the legality of arresting Jesus. After Jesus' death, in a time of deep despair where even the most faithful found themselves faltering, Nicodemus is there. He brings expensive spices and helps prepare Jesus' body for burial. His journey begins under the secrecy of night, but it doesn't end there. He lets his faith be transformed through moments of questioning and curiosity. May we too, be so transformed.

Mystical God, accompany us in our times of questioning or doubt. When our minds or hearts are being broken open, help us in finding the Spirit as she slips through even the tiniest of cracks. May these moments transform us. Amen.

March 2

Monday

Psalms 128 and 28

Prayer, Humor, and Happiness

Happy is everyone who fears the Lord, who walks in his ways. (Psalm 128:1)
To you, O Lord, I call. Psalm 28:1a

Psalm 128 starts with the tenet that happiness begins with fearing the Lord. It then goes on into somewhat confusing territory, with a wife 'like a fruitful vine' and children 'like olive shoots' for 'the man... who fears the Lord.'

What do these images mean in the 21st century? What, about family, still matters? For me, relationships bring joy. My eight-year-old grandson, for example, loves to tell jokes. "Hey Babs," he will say, "Why did the chicken cross the road?" When I say, "I don't know, why?" he will give the answer. And then he will watch me to make sure that I get it, and then he roars with laughter. I treasure these little moments.

Scripture itself sometimes has its little jokes. Psalm 28, for example, begins with a pun in verse one, and continues with word-play in verse three.* The psalmist, although clearly crying out for help, does so with a small bit of fun, suggesting that he and the Lord were already close, already able to enjoy a moment together.

Like a child with a grandparent, perhaps, the psalmist was going to a Lord whom he knew he could count on. The psalmist was confident that God would get the joke and that God would understand the problem. There is familiarity between them – it is not their first shared moment together. And there is, it seems, pleasure and intimacy in their relationship.

Just as a grandparent is glad to see a grandchild growing up, God, too, is interested in our growth. Is it my imagination, or is the psalmist slightly more mature in his thoughts in verse five? By verse six, a master lesson in prayer is clearly unfolding. As Psalm 128 might put it, the psalmist is happy.

Prayer: Our Lord, your son was nurtured by a human family. Help us to grow in our relationships with family members and with you, that we might walk in your ways. Amen.

* See more in Robert Alter's (2007) *The Book of Psalms*

New Heavens and a New Earth

For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy.

Isaiah prophecies about the new heaven and earth that God will create when Christ comes again. It is a whole newly created world, as the “former shall not be remembered nor come to mind.”

I must admit that on my first read, this new Heaven sounds a lot like the retirement compound where my college girlfriends and I joke we’ll live out our golden years together. The plan is to build little cottages on a plot of land where we’ll recreate our seemingly carefree dorm lives of sleeping, eating, studying, and loving within extreme proximity to each other: “And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards and eat the fruit of them.” (Obviously, consuming the fruits of the vineyards will be a key activity of College 2.0 and we most likely had enjoyed quite a bit of them when we concocted this plan).

But the world that Isaiah describes is even more wondrous. God reaches out to us before we ask for him, children do not die prematurely, the predator and prey eat together in peace, there is no fruitless labor, and land and food are not stolen from those who cultivated them. This is truly a heaven for His people.

Just like our retirement fantasy won’t happen until we have worked hard in our careers, nurtured our friendships, and diligently saved for decades, accessing the Heaven Isaiah describes can only come to those who serve faithfully. We should live in the present as though we are already in that place – by seeking repentance, extending mercy, and practicing loving acts.

Dear Lord, as we toil daily to be your faithful servants, remind us of the futures we can create and guide us towards creating that reality in our present time.

March 4

Wednesday

John 7:53– 8:11

Casting Stones - A Cautionary Tale

In John 7:53–8:11, Jesus is confronted with a woman accused of adultery. The impasse seems to be orchestrated to force Jesus to choose whether to uphold the Law of Moses by stoning the woman or show mercy and turn from the Law. Jesus calmly invites whoever is "without sin" to cast the first stone, shifting the focus from the woman's public shame to the accusers' private consciences. One by one, the accusers disperse. In this passage, Jesus offers a dual gift: total grace to the woman with the words, "neither do I condemn you" and empowerment, "go and sin no more". The dust of the Temple floor becomes a place where hate is dismantled. In this narrative, we see the anatomy of leaders consumed by the need for dominance and judgment. To the accusers, the woman is not a human being with a story, but a tool used to trap an enemy. This is the hallmark of leadership driven by exclusion: the "other" is dehumanized, stripped of their individuality and reduced to a category of sin to justify their destruction. Such leaders thrive on selective justice. They shout for the Law while standing in the shadows of their own hypocrisy, condemning others of the same vices they harbor within themselves. They use moral standards not to heal, but as weapons to maintain hierarchy. Yet, Jesus meets their rage with a calm restraint. By kneeling down, he defuses the atmosphere of angry superiority and refuses to participate in their judgment. When Jesus finally speaks, he holds up a mirror that shatters any moral superiority. His challenge, to let the sinless cast the first stone, strips the leaders of their false righteousness. We learn that true authority is not found in the power to crush those who are different, but in the strength to offer mercy and restoration. In the end, grace remains standing while the mob fades away.

A prayer for wise leadership:

Lord, deliver us from the hatred that masks itself as justice. Soften the hearts of those who lead with stones in their hands, and remind us all of our shared fragility in the dust. Grant us the courage to de-escalate rage with your quiet wisdom and the grace to see your image in every 'other' we encounter. Amen.

March 5

Thursday

Exodus 16:1-8

Grumbling Against the Lord

... In the evening you will know that it was the Lord who brought you out of Egypt, and in the morning you will see the glory of the Lord. Exodus 16:6

In college, I majored in history. I studied mostly American history, with a focus on slavery and the early American abolitionists. During those years, I learned about some of the worst atrocities humans are capable of committing against one another. And I also learned about the long tradition Americans have of resisting that evil, both in word and deed.

We are living in an era where it seems like many of our neighbors have forgotten this tradition of resistance. It's hard to see God's plan amid all this suffering. Right now, it's easy to grumble against God.

But God is moving among us. He is offering strength and guidance during an icy winter. He is offering consolation even as we grumble against him.

As we navigate this year, grumbling along the way, we should remember that God brought us out of Egypt. And that when we entered another trial in the desert, God stayed with us and reminded us that – through our faith – we can emerge on the other side.

Lord, let us remember that you're still with us even in the next trial. Help us to lift our voices against hate and guide our feet out of the desert so that we may do your will. Amen.

Manna and Quail

I have heard the grumbling of the Israelites. Tell them, 'At twilight you will eat meat, and in the morning you will be filled with bread. Exodus 16:12

When your stomach grumbles, it demands your attention. Our bodies (and particularly our stomachs) don't usually wait for a polite pause in conversation before making their needs known. And once we get to the point where our throats are parched and our stomachs grumbling, it is hard to focus on much else. I'm sure many of us have had road trips and other plans upended because someone got a bit too hungry or needed to unexpectedly use the bathroom. In the days and hours before this winter's snowstorms, anxious shoppers cleared grocery shelves around the region. It is no wonder that the Israelites began to grumble soon after leaving an Egypt where food was plentiful for a seemingly barren desert.

When the Israelites grumbled, the Lord listened. When they needed food, He sent it. Still, some of them did not listen to Moses and they kept the food despite being instructed not to. After experiencing starvation, it was hard to be confident that the next meal would come, even after seeing – and tasting – God's gift. This shows just how hard it can be to maintain our faith and to recognize blessings. Nonetheless, God asks us to push past our fear to trust in Him.

This passage reminds us that while hunger and lack of food can test our faith, fullness and the presence of food can as well. The certainty that many of us at Reformation have in our next meal is relatively uncommon particularly when compared to many of our neighbors around the globe and across the span of human history.

Lord, let us remember your name when we hunger and when we are fed. Let us take no bite for granted and guide our work to nourish the world. Amen.

Enduring Bitter Winter with Gratitude for Certain Spring

O come, let us sing to the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation! Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise! Do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah, as on the day at Massah in the wilderness, when your ancestors tested me and put me to the proof, though they had seen my work. Psalm 95:1–2, 8–9.

These passages feel so appropriate for winter—especially this winter, where no matter how many times in our lives we’ve seen winter turn to spring, ice thaw, and life come back, we still fret and despair and wonder how we’ll endure. Winter is a desert: empty, lifeless, and perilous. And yet the psalmist in these passages reminds us that the only way to survive a desert is not to harden our hearts with bitterness and fear but to praise God with joy and thanksgiving because God has delivered us and is not going to abandon us.

I was interested in the references to Meribah and Massah, locations that were part of the Exodus story where the Israelites, suffering from a severe water shortage, told Moses that God was going to let them die of thirst. This was, of course, the same God who had only just delivered them out of generations of bondage in Egypt. The psalmist, speaking now from God’s perspective, enjoins us not to be like the Israelites at Meribah and Massah but to be mindful of the miracles we have seen, the joy and freedom that we have witnessed through God’s deliverance.

This Lenten season, as we bear a bitter winter and wait for the warmth and rebirth of spring—maybe in more ways than one—these passages remind us to lead with gratitude, remembering who is the rock of our salvation and making a joyful noise in songs of praise to the source of our deliverance. God, who has been here before us, and for us, and is with us now and forever, did not deliver us out of Egypt to let us die of thirst in the desert. May we bear that in our hearts and keep it top of mind as we traverse life’s inevitable and innumerable deserts.

Dear Lord, as I shiver through this winter’s chill, may the warmth of my gratitude, joy, and praise be a reminder of the certainty of spring and the promise of your deliverance.

March 8

Sunday

John 4:5-42

I am He

“ . . . we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world.” John
4:42

I am He.

Astounding words

resounding through history and prophecy

and from Messiah in the flesh

from Love at the well

pouring Living Water on a nameless nobody

to wash her soul and slake her heart's thirst.

Ours too.

This mystic meeting of Spirit and humanity

tears the ancient veil between--

revealing we are one in the One

with one deathless consciousness

in one kingdom without boundaries

sealed in Him now and always.

Astounding.

*Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as You are one, keep us one with You in divine
love and joy forever.*

March 9

Monday

Genesis 24:1–27

Gazing in Silence to Learn

Go to my country and to my kindred and get a wife for my son Isaac. . . . The man gazed at her in silence to learn whether or not the Lord had made his journey successful. Genesis 24: 21

Engaging with today's passage may require that we avert our eyes from Bronze-age social hierarchies, and empty ourselves of reading the story as fulfillment of outcomes we know.

If we try to enter the mind of the servant and wrestle with the uncertainties he encountered, might we hear God speaking to us, so many years later?

Can we imagine the task of this unnamed messenger? Obedient, dutiful, and loyal, he also exhibits preparedness, willingness, attentiveness, and agency. At every turn, he makes time to consider, to pray, and to offer thanks. Does this combination of traits and practices offer him an advantage? Do they belong to the sort of humility and vulnerability that Lent reminds us to consider?

At the most crucial moment, the servant waits, and he listens. He asks questions, and with sincere humility, remains open to answers. He experiences the presence of God, alive and activating – much as Elijah will, finding God in “a still small voice.”

In our uncertain times, could the servant's approach serve us? We cannot know if his way will work for us, nor what outcomes await us now. We can, at least, know that “listening” has a living history, as does the steadfast, loving God we can honor and listen for.

As set to music by Alex Berko, the Mi Shebeirach prayer:

*May the source of strength
Who blessed the ones before us
Help us find the courage
to make our lives a blessing.
And let us say Amen.*

Jacob Arrives in Paddan Aram

¹ Then Jacob continued on his journey and came to the land of the eastern peoples. ² There he saw a well in the open country, with three flocks of sheep lying near it because the flocks were watered from that well. The stone over the mouth of the well was large. ³ When all the flocks were gathered there, the shepherds would roll the stone away from the well's mouth and water the sheep. Then they would return the stone to its place over the mouth of the well. ⁴ Jacob asked the shepherds, "My brothers, where are you from?" "We're from Harran," they replied. ⁵ He said to them, "Do you know Laban, Nahor's grandson?" "Yes, we know him," they answered. ⁶ Then Jacob asked them, "Is he well?" "Yes, he is," they said, "and here comes his daughter Rachel with the sheep." ⁷ "Look," he said, "the sun is still high; it is not time for the flocks to be gathered. Water the sheep and take them back to pasture." ⁸ "We can't," they replied, "until all the flocks are gathered and the stone has been rolled away from the mouth of the well. Then we will water the sheep." ⁹ While he was still talking with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep, for she was a shepherd. ¹⁰ When Jacob saw Rachel daughter of his uncle Laban, and Laban's sheep, he went over and rolled the stone away from the mouth of the well and watered his uncle's sheep. ¹¹ Then Jacob kissed Rachel and began to weep aloud. ¹² He had told Rachel that he was a relative of her father and a son of Rebekah. So she ran and told her father. ¹³ As soon as Laban heard the news about Jacob, his sister's son, he hurried to meet him. He embraced him and kissed him and brought him to his home, and there Jacob told him all these things. ¹⁴ Then Laban said to him, "You are my own flesh and blood."

What word/phrase/image is still ringing in your mind after reading this passage?

March 11

Wednesday

Jeremiah 2:4-13

Fighting Despair with Grace when Surrounded by Evil

*What fault did your forefathers find in me,
that they are wandered far from me,
pursuing empty phantoms and themselves becoming empty?*
Jeremiah 2:5

In this text, Jeremiah describes how when we despair of the sins of our ancestors, the evil done to our neighbors and us, and the sins we ourselves commit, God's charge to us is simple. We should repent, and God will fill us with Grace when we follow his Word.

Verses 5 and 13 are worthy of our consideration in these uncertain times, often full of evil and despair:

“What fault did your forefathers find in me,
that they are wandered far from me,
pursuing empty phantoms and themselves becoming empty,”

“Two sins have my people committed:
they have forsaken me,
a spring of living water,
and they have hewn out for themselves cisterns,
cracked cisterns that can hold no water.”

These verses show us that earthly riches and power will not make us full, only the Grace of God can do that.

When I despair amidst the evil around me, I recite part of Psalm 23 as a prayer to fill me with the spring of living water that is God's Grace:

“Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for You are with me; Your rod and staff comfort me.”

March 12

Thursday

Ephesians 4:25-32

Lord, I'm Trying

“Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.” Ephesians 4:31-32

Oof! In this time, in this world (in this country) this feels like a BIG ASK! It seems that we have no shortage of reasons to be bitter and angry these days. Injustice is all around us, and when those in power are shamelessly propping up systems of inequity and cruelty, I'm not spending a lot of time thinking about speaking compassionately back to them. I'm worried about the impact of these policies on the “last and the least” in our world.

Honestly, this text is a challenge. I feel that texts like these are sometimes used to encourage those who have been hurt by others in power to “just forgive” and “get over it”. I don't think that's what God is calling us to do. I think there's wisdom here, but it's difficult to put into practice. I'm hoping that this can be a “both and” situation. I'm hoping that there is a path forward that pursues justice for those that have been cast aside, that also includes kindness and compassion **for all**.

God, in your wisdom, help us pursue justice and forgiveness. Amen.

March 13

Friday

Ephesians 5:1-9

Instructions for Christian Living

As I write this, a group of Buddhist monks has just passed by my office in Alexandria on a “Walk for Peace” culminating at the National Cathedral. They traveled more than 2,000 miles from Texas on foot.

Most of the people lining the streets were probably not Buddhist, including myself and my coworkers. Yet we held out flowers with eagerness to show our appreciation of their sacrifice and their powerful message of peace, lovingkindness, and compassion. In uncertain times, their faith — lived by putting one foot in front of the other for months, despite freezing weather, serious injuries and the daily discomforts of walking so far — offers hope to everyone.

The monks’ pilgrimage makes me examine how I am living out my own faith during this year’s Lenten journey. How am I attempting to imitate God? How do I choose to live in love each day? Is my response to hardship to keep going, or to retreat into the comfort of my own privilege? Can my choices inspire even one person to embrace God’s love for themselves? Because that would be worth the walk.

Loving Father, fill me with your Spirit and help me to live out your love, one day at a time. Remind me not only to do this for myself, but for the sake of others who also need hope in these uncertain times. Amen.

March 14

Saturday

Psalms 23

The Lord Is My Shepherd

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. Psalm 23:1

My earliest memory of the 23rd Psalm is that of my mother requiring me to memorize it. I found the wording of the King James version stilted and difficult. I resented having to learn this passage "by heart".

And now some 80 years later when I am awake at night I find that repeating these words of the 23rd Psalm often helps me return to sleep.

The writer of Psalm 23 was confident in the goodness of God in spite of very real difficulties that he was experiencing. He saw God as the shepherd who faithfully leads the flock which are His people. The psalmist fears no evil -- even though the evil is real -- even in the darkest valley of the shadow of death -- because of God's care. He sees God as a host at a meal providing blessing, goodness, and mercy even though enemies remain. Psalm 23 is one of many biblical texts that portray life with God as a banquet of abundance -- where cups overflow -- and twelve baskets of leftovers remain.

Dear God, I thank you that you shepherd me and care for me through the highs and lows in my life. You are always there for me and bless me abundantly. Thank you. Amen.

March 15

Sunday

John 9:1-41

Seeing What's In Front of You

He replied, "Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!" John 9:25

Everyone is looking for answers. This passage begins with the disciples analyzing why the man was born blind. The Pharisees scrutinize how it was possible for Jesus to heal this man, and how Jesus could justify failing to observe the Sabbath. Although this scripture is a miracle, you might not know it from the reactions of the neighbors, the Pharisees, and even the man's parents.

I think, especially these days, many of us come to church looking for answers in absolutes—why is the world the way it is, and what can we do about it? We might not blame those who suffer for their suffering, but we want to know why times are so challenging. We want answers, and to feel secure in our own paths.

And yet, in the scripture, only the (formerly) blind man knows where to focus. All he needs to know is that Jesus is the Son of Man to spread the good news.

We cannot wait for certain, sure guardrails before beginning up our path. But we can rejoice in every eye that is opened along the way.

Lord, be with us as we travel down treacherous roads. Help us remember that you are the light, even when we cannot see you. Amen.

Overcoming Blindness - Seeing the Light

But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel."
Acts 9: 15

With a flash of light from heaven, Jesus blinded Saul, a persecutor of believers who was "breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord." Then, the Lord asked a disciple, Ananias, to lay hands on Saul to restore his sight. Though Ananias was aware of Saul's despicable reputation, he did as he was instructed. After Saul's three days as a blind man in prayer and fasting, Ananias laid hands on him, and Saul regained his sight as "something like scales fell from his eyes." Saul was baptized and he then began a new path of "speaking boldly in the name of Jesus." (This last part is from Acts 9:26-29).

My first reading of this passage honestly made me wish that the political leaders wreaking havoc on our country and communities would be immediately struck blind and transformed. But then I realized that our instruction is likely not to wish God's wrath upon others—he will decide how to deal with them.

I also thought about how we can reflect the actions of Ananias in our own actions, albeit challenging. Perhaps we are to trust that even the most the evil-doers among us, with our help somehow, can be saved.

And I then thought about the words of Pastor Kevin when interpreting the action of God separating the wheat from the chaff—teaching us that we all have some wheat and some chaff within us. So, I realized that during Lent, we can take the opportunity to look deep into ourselves for any of our own Saul-like characteristics—and to combat them with prayer.

Dear Lord Jesus, please help us to identify and remove any scales within us that blind us from seeing the light of God.

Continually Praying

For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. Colossians 1:9

Commentary indicates Paul wrote from prison to the church in Colossae to refute a heresy, but Paul begins his letter praising the believers. He first acknowledges that when he prays for them, he always thanks God for their faith in Jesus and love for all people, which comes from their hope in God's redemptive plan. In the assigned passage, Paul assures the church that he will continually pray for them so that they receive the wisdom and knowledge of the Holy Spirit, and continue living into their faith in Jesus with endurance and patience, while giving joyful thanks to God.

It's not clear exactly what actions of the church Paul referred to when he said he thanked God for them and would continually pray for them to persist. The parallel I see today is the resistance in Minneapolis and elsewhere. We may not be in an actual prison like Paul was, but we are weighed down by distress and depression over the constant assault on the most vulnerable. Reports of our fellow citizens resisting occupation and acting to create a world that protects and includes all people is definitely cause to thank God. It is also gratifying that many protestors declare their faith. Like Paul, these believers are refuting heresy by joyfully proclaiming the supremacy of Jesus's commandment to love our neighbors as ourselves. Like Paul, we are called to continually pray for this witness.

Thank you for those proclaiming your love throughout our country and in our congregation. Like Paul, we ask that you strengthen them with all power according to your glorious might, so that they have great endurance, patience and joy.

In this text, we encounter a prophecy: a return to light after a time of profound darkness. A return to peace after a period of violence. Instead of walls and gates, salvation and praise. A divine turnaround of fortunes.

As I read this text, I can't help but think of how it relates to current events. We have borne witness to atrocities that should have been relegated to history books. Some of our neighbors fear leaving their homes because of their immigration status or even, simply, the color of their skin. American citizens being punished for exercising their constitutional rights.

Yet, glimmers of light continue to pierce through the darkness. The person using their privilege to grocery shop for a neighbor. The singing protest. The marches showing solidarity and resolve, and centering joy. The Buddhist monks walking for peace. Thousands of ordinary citizens, organizing to protect and provide for their communities. This is where the light comes in. This is how we create and nurture peace and love, and bring about change.

Each one of us is a member of the body of Christ, each with a role to play. Let us each discern what is ours to do – where our time, talent, or treasure can help. And then as we do it, let's watch with joy as the light overtakes the darkness.

Lord, do not let me despair. Help me to understand that I am a beacon of light, and help me join my light with the light of others, as your everlasting light shines through us to overcome the darkness. Amen.

March 19

Thursday

The World I Live In

I have refused to live
locked in the orderly house of
 reasons and proofs.
The world I live in and believe in
is wider than that. And anyway,
 what's wrong with Maybe?
You wouldn't believe what once or
twice I have seen. I'll just
 tell you this:
only if there are angels in your head will you
 ever, possibly, see one.

-Mary Oliver

March 20

Friday

Revelation 11:15-19

The Kingdom Come

The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ. Revelation 11:15

My mind keeps juxtaposing the scene in these passages with the ride into Jerusalem. I imagine these passages were more in line with what the pharisees were expecting when they saw Jesus on the donkey. A bold proclamation of triumph by the creator of the universe, his stallion trampling on those who seek the destruction of the earth. Instead, it's a simple traveler atop a common pack mule making his way through a crowd declaring him sovereign lord. Thunderstorms, lightning, palm trees, braying.

I'm no scholar of Revelation. I don't really know what the author meant here. But I think I can say that the King of Heaven has come, and He shall reign forever and ever.

Let us pray.

O God, in the sounds of trumpets, in the footsteps of the ass; your kingdom come, your will be done. Amen.

March 21

Saturday

Exodus 12:21-27

I wait for the Lord, my whole being waits (or my soul waits) – Psalm 130:5,
multiple translations

Does my whole being really wait? I am very impatient (if inherited, then definitely from my dad, as patience was more the virtue of my mom). Perhaps my soul is impatient too, and I can only hope for the patience of the psalmist.

Waiting is challenging when we have great expectations. Our patience can be tried when we are angry or frustrated. We want a problem to go away, and we want it to go away – now! We march, we advocate, we show up, we pray, we express our grief from our very depths. Some have put their very lives on the line.

The psalmist's declaration of waiting might frustrate me, and yet there is so much hope in this psalm. There is the message of forgiveness, of God's grace, grace we neither earn nor outright deserve (Martin Luther would approve). And while the psalm starts personally with I statements, it grows to expand collectively, to Israel, to all of us.

So we need to remain active. We should cry out from our depths to God (in good times or bad, God always wants to hear from us). And if (or in my case, when) our patience runs out, remember to look for signs of hope and signs of grace, just like the psalmist.

Dear God, thank you for always listening to us through all our range of emotions, including whether we are patient or impatient. We wait for you, we cry out. When our patience ebbs, remind us of grace and hope. Amen.

March 22

Sunday

John 11:1-45

Jesus Wept.

Keith Porter
Luis Gustavo Núñez Cáceres
Geraldo Lunas Campos
Víctor Manuel Díaz
Parady La
Renee Nicole Good
Luis Beltrán Yáñez–Cruz
Heber Sánchez Domínguez
Alex Pretti

We pray for the lives ended by federal agents in 2026 as of February 8, 2026. In saying these names, we reflect on the bitterness of death and lament their lives cut short. We commend them to God with the promise to let none of them be lost to silence. We pray for their families, and we pray for justice.

March 23

Monday

1 Kings 17:17-24

Upper Room Cry

The Lord heard Elijah's cry, and the boy's life returned to him, and he lived. Elijah picked up the child and carried him down from the room into the house. He gave him to his mother and said, "Look, your son is alive!" 1 Kings 17:22-23

Do I trust that you hear my cry?
Do I believe you are who you say you are?

Do I know you are
My healer?
Provider?
Protector?

Let me seek your face before I accept death.
Let me boldly protest in your presence.

Let me search for your grace—
Not for my own selfish striving,
Not for my own, but for your kingdom come.

May I see heaven on this vast earth.
May I seek justice and love mercy.

Lord my God, today not tomorrow.

Carrying my fears and my chains to the upper room.
Laying tragedy and trembling at your feet.

Stretched out and weary, but with all hope.
Weeping for evidence of your promise.
Trusting that even while the skies hesitate,
Lord my God, you don't.

Lord my God,
remember Renee.

Lord my God,
remember Alex.

Lord my God,
let no more lives be taken in this hour.

Lord my God,
be Protector where terror has entered.
Be Healer where breath has stopped.
Lord my God, cover this land with mercy.

March 24

Tuesday

2 Kings 4:18-37

When the man of God saw her at a distance, he said to his attendant Gehazi, 'Look, there's the Shunammite woman. Run out to meet her and ask, 'Are you all right? Is your husband all right? Is your son all right?'' 2 Kings 4:25-26

The account of the Shunammite woman in 2 Kings 4:18-37 offers a jarring look at the anatomy of a "tested" faith. Having received a son through Elisha's prophecy, she suddenly watches that gift expire in her arms. Her immediate journey to Mount Carmel and Elisha is not fueled by a naive theology that ignores her pain, but by a tenacious and persistent faith that believes in God's goodness as well as his power.

I started to hum the hymn "It Is Well with My Soul" and was struck when I found that Horatio Spafford penned the hymn originally as a poem to commemorate the four daughters he lost to a shipwreck. Much like the Shunammite woman—who, when asked by the prophet's servant if all was well, replied, "It is well"—Spafford's peace was not born from the absence of tragedy, but from the presence of a Sovereign Savior.

This "wellness" is not an emotional state we manufacture; it is a forensic reality. The Shunammite woman laid her dead son on the prophet's bed—an act of placing her grief directly on the promise of God. Similarly, we find faith in hard times by recognizing that our "wellness" is anchored in Christ's finished work, regardless of our current circumstances. He does not remain distant from our shipwrecks or our empty nurseries; He enters the room of death and occupies it.

Lent invites us to sit in this tension. We acknowledge the "sorrows like sea billows" that roll over us, yet we cling to the Word that declares death is not the final chapter. Faith, in its hardest form, is the ability to look at an empty chair or a cold horizon and trust that because Christ has conquered the grave, our souls are anchored in a peace that transcends biological or situational finality.

Lord of all Comfort, when life threatens to overwhelm our faith, grant us the courage to speak peace over our storms. Help us to trust not in our own strength to endure, but in Your promise to never leave us. Whether in plenty or in need may we find our rest in the finished works of Jesus, knowing that through Him, it is truly well. Amen.

Relentless Love

Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz, “Ask the Lord your God for a sign, whether in the deepest depths or in the highest heights.”...Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel. Isaiah 7:10; 14

When I was growing up, my Sunday school had a circular calendar that displayed the seasons of the liturgical year with different colors of felted fabric like a pie chart. We had a wooden clothespin that we moved each week, showing our progress through Advent to Christmas, through Lent to Easter, with long periods of “Ordinary Time” in between. This passage reminded me of that felted calendar because my first thought after reading it was, “This is an Advent passage – our clothespin is in Lent!”

While verse 14 is a popular Advent reading because it includes the prophecy of the birth of Jesus, the surrounding verses add the context of why and how the promise was given. In Isaiah 7:10-14, we find a frightened King of Judah, Ahaz, in the midst of political turmoil and impending war. In his fear, Ahaz refuses to ask for a sign from God. But God relentlessly pursues Ahaz and gives him a sign anyway – whether he wanted it or not.

I imagine that in this season, many of us are tender to the reality of doubt and fear. You don’t have to look far to see examples of turmoil in our own lives, communities, country, and world. There are probably times when our fear or discouragement lead us to stray from God the way Ahaz did. But this passage reminds us that God relentlessly pursues us too. And amidst all the conflict, we always have a sign that God is with us in Jesus Christ – no matter what season our clothespin is in.

Lord, we thank you for pursuing us. Help us to see You in our lives each and every day, and cultivate your relentless love within us so that we may show it to others. Amen.

March 26

Thursday

Philippians 1:1-11

Take My Life, That I May Be

Refrain:

Take my life, that I may be
consecrated, Lord, to thee;
take my moments and my days;
let them flow in ceaseless praise.

1 Take my hands and let them move
at the impulse of thy love;
take my feet and let them be
swift and beautiful for thee. [Refrain]

2 Take my silver and my gold,
not a mite would I withhold;
take my intellect and use
ev'ry pow'r as thou shalt choose. [Refrain]

3 Take my voice and let me sing
always, only, for my King;
take my lips and let them be
filled with messages from thee. [Refrain]

4 Take my will and make it thine;
it shall be no longer mine;
take my heart, it is thine own;
it shall be thy royal throne. [Refrain]

Hymn 538, ELW

On Not Fearing the ICE

Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then . . . I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. Philippians 1:27-28

As far as we know, Paul wrote this letter from prison, under a pending capital charge of proclaiming someone other than Caesar as the “Son of God.” Thus, “Whatever happens” refers to whatever the court decides about Paul’s life or death. In either case, Paul will have served the gospel in death as in life. Paul encourages us to carry on in a manner “worthy of the gospel of Christ,” no matter what happens to him.

When Martin E. Marty died last February at age 97, the Washington Post said he had been a Lutheran pastor for ten years. But in addition to a vigorous life of scholarship, he reached a broad audience in the public arena. “I read the periodicals biblically,” he said, “and the Bible, periodically.” When the uncertainties of heresy-hunting tore apart the church body of his birth, Martin Marty pastored many of us by helping to clarify a calling to stand firm in the faith of the gospel beyond that chaos. And just three weeks after his death, when Eva breathed her last, Marty’s faith reached out to me again through the little book he had written after the death of his own wife: **A Cry of Absence: Reflections for the Winter of the Heart**. So even in death, he shared the gospel in wintry times as in sunny ones.

If we’re seeking for a way to fathom what it means to live a life “worthy of the gospel of Christ” in a time as uncertain as ours, we could hardly do better than to heed the words of the Rev. James Martin, a Jesuit interviewed for The New York Times Magazine (2/8/2026), saying that “standing with immigrants isn’t political, it’s biblical.” In the story of Renee Good and her killing, Rev. Martin finds an example of the moral clarity that we risk losing when the ‘powers that be’ try to justify her killing by pretending to make “us” safe from “them.” Saith Martin: “For Jesus, there’s no us and them. Everyone is a beloved child of God; everyone deserves to be treated with dignity—and not shot in the head.”

As I struggled to free my car from the ice on my way to choir practice last week, two neighbors came by—a father and son bearing two shovels and kindly offering to clear the ice from my car. As the three of us went to work, the father said to me, “Unless we help each other, the whole world is lost.” If the Spirit moves enough of us to act in that way, in the long run we will have nothing to fear from the ice – or, for that matter, from ICE.

Blessed Spirit, help us stand firm for each other in the midst of uncertainty, that we can recognize and share the confidence to extend your love to all.

March 28

Saturday

Lamentations 3:55-66

Do Not Fear

I called on your name, O Lord, from the depths of the pit; you heard my plea, "Do not close your ear to my cry for help, but give me relief!" You came near when I called on you; you said, "Do not fear!" Lamentations 3:55-57

As I was assigned this text, I was feeling the deep heartbreak and lamentation for the world around me. Snowed in by a severe storm, whose severity was likely the result of climate change. People murdered in the streets by sanctioned government officers. Children and adults infected with diseases we had all but eradicated through vaccinations. This scripture gives words to the deep cries and fears of my heart.

My fears these days are existential. I fear a system that has ceased to care for the least among us. I fear that I can easily become one of those who is cast aside when I'm simply trying to do the right thing. A fear, that I confess, sometimes keeps me from acting. A fear that God doesn't hear my plea and has closed God's ear. Where is the relief from this anguish? Where is the peace in all of this chaos?

When I zoomed out and started this chapter from the beginning, I saw that the author began this poem with a rant against God turning away from the author. However, about a third of the way through, the author remembers that God is one of great faithfulness, renewing mercies each morning. We are reminded that "The Lord is good to those who wait for [God], to the soul that seeks (Lamentations 3:25).

Dear God, may we be reminded of your great faithfulness. May we know your mercies fresh each morning and be renewed in our hope in you. May we know the peace and goodness that comes as our souls seek you. Amen.

March 29

Palm Sunday

Matthew 21:1-11

This is Jesus

The crowds answered, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee."
Matthew 21:11

News travels fast in our era. Within moments of a word spoken or an action taken, videos and witness accounts are available online, usually in the palm of our hands. If you get your news on your phone, you are probably seeing a lot of the wider world through the lens that has been curated for you by a megalithic corporate algorithm. When we get a chance to look up from our screens, break through our unique world views, we can find Jesus in our lives.

The crowds of people outside the gates of Jerusalem observed Jesus fulfilling prophecy by riding into glory on a donkey and colt. They were fulfilling scripture as well with their shouts of Hosanna and waving palm branches. The word spread fast that this was Jesus, prophet or Nazareth in Galilee. Palm Sunday is both a triumph and a foreshadowing of death. Unexpectedly to those of his time, and even to us who know the story's progression, Jesus did not come to be the King of an earthly kingdom, but to live through and prevail over death.

What can we do, other than live through our times and proclaim when we look up and see, "This is Jesus!" To those who protect the vulnerable, stand up for accountability, and demand justice, we say, "This is Jesus!" When we take to the streets, we are Jesus. When we love our neighbors, this— this, is Jesus.

Lord, let us lift our Hosannas to the one who comes in the name of the Lord and let us find Jesus in the world through our work to bring in your kingdom. Amen.

March 30

Monday

Isaiah 42: 1-9

Working Towards Justice

A bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice. Isaiah 42:3

What does it mean to “faithfully bring forth justice”? Through our faith, we work towards justice in ways small and large, though we may doubt our efforts. In my 25 years as a social work educator, I encouraged students to “work towards social justice” even if we did not always have clear ideas about what “justice” might look like for the people they served.

As we grapple with how to respond to the injustices we observe, this passage reminds us that the servant is simply required to “do justice.” The quiet things we do as individuals and our collective efforts can bring about change. If our neighbors fear leaving their homes due to unjust enforcement operations - those of us who are shielded by our appearance, our skin color, and our age - can step up, be braver, and do more.

In January, events in Minnesota prompted me to reach out to Martha, my college roommate, who grew up in Minneapolis and now lives outside St. Paul. Like so many others in her community, Martha has responded. As she said, “I’ve gotten hooked into a mutual aid group supporting 61 families in a local community. We are whirlwinds of God’s love!”

Showing up, taking care of others, and being open to whatever we learn from our experiences will help bring forth justice. We can build upon things we already do and know, using our expertise and talents in new ways, and work with others to create a more just world.

Lord, allow us to be whirlwinds of God’s love as we joyfully and faithfully bring forth justice in an uncertain world.

March 31

Tuesday

John 12:20-36

Trapped

When I think of my Lenten journey
I am filled with frustration
Trapped in my body which does not feel good
Not only the snowcrete environment
But also my undiagnosed malady
I feel Spirit and appreciate the loving community of our
congregation
Gratitude rings out as solutions are found
Promises are made that this medication will work
Just must wait a couple more days
And all will be well
All will be well

*Creator God,
Bless us in these uncertain times and let us feel your goodness and your presence.
Amen.*

April 1

Wednesday

John 13:21-32

Judas Was Spending Too Much Time Online

The time has come for the Son of Man to enter among his Glory, and God will be glorified because of him. John 13:31

Betrayal is everywhere. The America we once knew is betraying its principles, its promises, and its people. The reasonable human reaction to such betrayal is sadness, grief, and fear. Yet, the story of Judas cannot be understood without recognizing that if we focus only on betrayal, we miss the more potent lesson of John's chapter: love. Being loved, and being loving, is the most powerful motivation in the world, which John, as the "disciple Jesus loved," understood deeply, more so than any other follower of Jesus.

So -- what's the deal with Judas, anyway? How could he go from being the most trusted disciple (the keeper of money) to an instrument of corruption and a vehicle for Satan so easily?

Somewhere along the line, Judas turned into a strongly opinioned, disillusioned zealot who thought he knew better than God. Whatever the ancient version of YouTube, Facebook, X, and TikTok was, Judas was surely there clicking, posting, and morphing into a shell of a man who once was.

Today, as women methodically organize our communities of resistance -- as we have throughout history in times of war and conflict -- it is the men among us who are emotionally vulnerable to corrupt influences. Isolation and hubris are the ingredients. The manufacturing of grievances to justify violence is intentional. The promotion of a kind of masculinity online that values greed over generosity, control over community, falsehoods over truth, is not happening naturally.

This passage reminds us that in the body of Christ, we need to help model and create the conditions for courageous masculinity to shine through the darkness of distortions. The so-called "strongman" of today is nothing more than a weak link in the everlasting chain of love that is bound by God's promise to us throughout time. All you need is love, the Beatles agreed.

Dear Lord, help us absorb the lessons of John and not just Judas. Those who realize how much they are loved are able to love much. Help us pivot our collective fears into loving action and encourage the right messengers to model a more manly way forward. The time has come. love.

April 2

Maundy Thursday

John 13:1-17; 31b-35

Love One Another

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. John 13:34

The words go down deep as Reformation's choir—including six of us altos on this February Sunday—sing in harmony from Eleanor Daley's "Set me as a seal upon your heart." "If you keep my commandments, you shall abide in my love. Love one another as I have loved you."

Now, as I read today's text, I wonder about Jesus's instructions to his disciples to wash each other's feet. Is it a literal instruction—take a basin and towel—or is it about serving everyone, beginning with the lowliest kind of servanthood? How is this a commandment for our time?

It's a cold winter's day as I write—it has been below freezing in DC, with ice and "snowcrete" everywhere—no dusty sandaled feet here, just icy boots! And ICE and other federal agents in Minnesota have recently taken the lives of two 37-year-olds, Renee Good and Alex Pretti, who were monitoring and responding to the fear and chaos the agencies were creating.

How are we to respond?

I hear the beautiful words given harmonious voice in the streets of Minneapolis. "We belong to them, they belong to us.... Hold on, my dear ones, here comes the dawn...Yes, our love for each other will carry us through."

Pastor Elizabeth MacAuley of Hennepin Avenue United Methodist Church in Minnesota describes what is happening. "I'd like to think that more and more people are waking up. 'They' [the sowers of chaos] want us to go about our lives while our neighbors are stolen from their families....The everyday acts of deep love and courage that I see my neighbors taking—that's the world that we want and we're practicing it every day here."

I feel heartened by our work as we continue to furnish beautiful homes for our newest refugee neighbors seeking hope and new life in our Maryland and Virginia neighborhoods.

In the last verses of today's reading, Jesus says "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."

And we sing, "Then shall your joy be complete." Amen.

April 3

Good Friday

John 18:1—19:42

The Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus

So Judas brought a detachment of soldiers together with police from the chief priests and the Pharisees, and they came there with lanterns and torches and weapons. Then Jesus, knowing all that was to happen to him, came forward and asked them, “Whom are you looking for?” John 18:3-4

The betrayal, arrest, and crucifixion of Jesus is, of course, a very dramatic and emotionally-charged narrative. Each time I encounter this climax of the Jesus story (of which there are many) there seems to always be another detail waiting to poignantly take me by surprise.

Since Holy Week of last year, my understanding and engagement with the practice of nonviolence resistance has deepened, as I have been called on both a personal and communal level to this work in the world and on Capitol Hill. I imagine that following his journey across the Kidron Valley, Jesus and his companions were both physically and spiritually spent. The garden sounds like a soft and peaceful place to land until the serenity was shattered by the military’s presence. I marvel at Jesus’ composure and commitment to nonviolence even in the face of a jarring, militarized intrusion. John’s gospel notes that Jesus stepped forward to meet the threat before him. He is clear when he instructs Peter to put away his sword. Later, John tells us that once he is brought before the high priest, Jesus is questioned about his disciples and his teaching. “I have spoken openly to the world... I have said nothing in secret,” Jesus replies.

It can too often feel like we are living in a world that is hell-bent on locating and following a domineering, vengeful, and exclusionary Jesus that evidently was revealed to the world somewhere in secret. On this Good Friday, I am reminded of Jesus who vehemently opposed violence, openly walked the path of a detainee— rather than detainer, and perhaps most of all, equipped himself to meet these moments through sustained practices of personal and communal prayer.

Christ who moves before us and beside us, meet us in the stillness and give us an authentic, moral grounding as we step forward to meet the world. Amen.

April 4

Holy Saturday

John 19:38-42

When It Was Evening

They took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths with the spices...

John 19:40

These verses are often read quickly; we are eager to get to the resurrection story. But there is a powerful level in this text. I would ask you to reread it as if you were really there, as if you were Joseph or Nicodemus. Think, first, of asking for the body of Jesus from the oppressing Roman authorities. Such a request could have been met with death. Feel their fear.

Next, try to feel what they felt as they carried away the lifeless body of the man they thought was their Messiah. You are holding him in your arms. His body has little clothing; your flesh touches his cold flesh. This is the man who had touched your hearts, and now you held him in the intimacy of death. Let your mind decide if there was a cart or if you carried him all the way to the tomb. His lifeless body.

Once there, you have to wrap his body with the linen cloth and herbs. Could this be done without your tears? Are the teachings, dreams, and love for this Jesus to be wrapped as is his body being wrapped? How can it be? This is a question many of us are also asking these days. For us, too, our beliefs, our dreams seem wrapped for death in a tomb by unthinkable authoritarianism. But read on! With Easter morning comes redemption and the love of justice. Receive these; throw away the wrappings. Ready yourself to be the loving hands of God.

Holy Spirit, guide us with the love and grace of Jesus to leave tombs behind and to build the justice and compassion of the Kingdom of God.

April 5

Easter Sunday

Matthew 28:1-10

Easter

The Lord rises while it is still dark outside.

This year, I am struck by movement, emotion, and how people react when they don't know quite at what they are looking. After doing some early-morning tomb-visitation, Mary Magdelene discovers that the stone has been moved away, runs to the disciples and tells them that "they" have taken the Lord, and that his whereabouts are seriously in question.

With that, two other disciples, Peter, and "the one Jesus loved" run to the tomb. The unnamed disciple outruns Peter, looks in, sees the cloth and linen, but does not go in. Peter follows closely behind, and runs right into the tomb. They know that Jesus is gone—but I don't think they really know what's happening. So, they go home. I wonder what emotions would have accompanied them as they, no doubt, made their way back, albeit much more slowly. Sometimes when we don't know at what we're looking, it's just enough for us to go home, regroup, and find a way forward.

Mary, however, stays by that tomb. Despite the emotions and the tensions, she leans into the unknown. We get a hint as to why she stays. She's determined to find out what happened, and what exactly it is that she is seeing (or not seeing). She is ultimately rewarded with a glimpse of the One who was once dead and is alive forever.

This is a time of tension for a lot of people. We don't always know what we are seeing, but we do feel the void that something is missing. We are ever looking for the Savior to appear among us. Some of us go "home" to our communities to make sense of what's happened. To regroup. Some of us lean into the tension in ways most uncomfortable. But the Easter blessing is the reminder that ultimately, Jesus finds everyone where they are, comes among them, and announces "Peace."

There is so much judgment: of others, and even of ourselves, or at least, the efforts around how we manage ourselves around the various tombs which confront our existence. But Jesus is not judging us. Whether we limp home to lick our wounds, or stay to get a closer look, whether near or far, whether we are at home, or on the edge of the tomb, Christ comes to us every time. Jesus travels towards us in moments most uncertain, reminding us at the worst times, that God works outside of our own awareness, and moves beyond the places of our disappointments and fears.

The Lord rises in the dark, before we are even aware that it has happened, but it has happened indeed. This is good news for we who await, and are yet unaware.

Alleluia.

ABOUT OUR AUTHORS

February 18 CRAIG MIDDLEBROOK has been a member of Reformation since 1990. He currently serves as President of the Church Council and is chairing the capital campaign. His children, Ella (22) and Henry (26), were baptized and confirmed at Reformation. He lives in Falls Church, Virginia, with his wife, Stacey Helberg, their dog, Tommy-Toes, and their two cats, Winky and Meezer.

February 19 PETER POON recently retired from the Federal Government after 30 years of public service. He and his husband Marcos Dacruz split their time between sunny Miami Beach, Florida, and Washington, DC, where they continue to worship and fellowship with their beloved community at Reformation.

February 20 JUDITH MANGUBAT is a long-term Reformation member and learned under every person with a full color portrait in the Blue Room.

February 21 PHILIP W. MOELLER, the son of a Lutheran Pastor, has a BA from St. Olaf College and a MA and PhD in International Relations and Development. He has specialized in institutional dynamics as a key to sustainable development, addressing governance, public participation, ethics, inclusion, and social/environmental impact for the State Department, USAID, UNDP, the ADB, and the World Bank.

February 22 MONICA FITZGERALD taught high school for 4 years in MN, and later served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Guatemala and a leader at City Year in Boston. She spent most of her career at GSA, retiring in 2024. She is musical, athletic, and extroverted. Her greatest joys are her wife Susanne and being mom to Danny (18) and Benji (16).

February 23 EVAN SCHRAGE has been a member of Reformation since 2019. He lives in Northeast DC, and you can usually spot him in a coat and tie, zipping along on his scooter.

February 24 MATT COOK is an attorney at the Securities and Exchange Commission. He has attended Reformation since 2005 and serves as an usher and on the Stream Team. He and his partner, Patrick, live in Adams Morgan.

February 25 DIANE KOHN is a Capitol Hill resident and has been a member of Reformation for 25 years, and has served on the Council and sung in the choir. She retired last year from a 20-year career with the Department of State, having served as a foreign service officer in Nigeria, Lithuania, Romania, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Ukraine. Her next move will be to a charming small town on Lake Michigan, where she hopes to find ways to continue promoting democratic governance and combatting corruption.

February 26 PAMELA LENZ is a long-time member of the Church of the Reformation. Recently retired from Federal Service, Pam lives in Arlington and serves on the Usher team and Altar Guild.

February 27 VALERIE ANNA PLATZ is a long-time member of Reformation. She enjoys being a part of the choir and the Property Committee. She has a long-standing interest in the congregation's records and history. Valerie is semi-retired and lives in Arlington, Virginia.

February 28 MARY VERSA CLEMENS-SEWALL has been attending Reformation for the past year and a half. She enjoys singing in the congregation and helping out at Sunday School.

March 1 KATIE EVANS has been attending Reformation since 2024. She's ordained as a deacon in the ELCA and is currently serving with Lutheran Campus Ministry. She lives in Capitol Hill with her partner, Jayme, and their dog, Merton.

March 2 BARBARA LAYMON is a Capitol Hill neighbor, author, family systems counselor, and avid Nationals fan. Her latest book, **All the Families of the Earth: Therapists in Bible Times**, was published by Wipf and Stock.

March 3 DINA FINKEL has been a member of Reformation since 2018, was confirmed in Grace Lutheran Church in Eau Claire, WI, and was baptized at the Norwegian Seamen's Church in New Orleans. She and her trusty dog, Fitzwilliam Darcy, live and seek adventures in Hill East.

March 4 KIRSTEN PETREE joined Lutheran Church of the Reformation in 2005 with husband Corey and daughter Ella. She is part of the 'stream team' and enjoys walking (and wine) with the Empty Nesters club. Kirsten works for NASA Science as the Administration Branch Chief.

March 5 MARCIA BROWN is a member of the church council and the choir. She works as a journalist. She lives in Washington, D.C., with her husband Shiva Sethi.

March 6 SHIVA MICHAEL SETHI is an attorney at a union-side labor firm. He is an avid college basketball fan. He lives with his wife, Marcia Brown, in Washington, D.C.

March 7 EVAN R. CHRISTOPHER joined Reformation in 2021. He enjoys volunteering at Reformation as a reader, handyman, baker, Sunday school teacher, and choir member. Originally from Oregon, he lives in northwest D.C. with his wife, Kate, and their dog, Tito.

March 8 JULIETTE AMBERSON JONES and her husband Marvin have been active in Reformation's ministries for decades. Their four children were baptized and confirmed at Reformation. They have three grandchildren.

March 9 JOHN HAGOOD sings in Reformation's choir. He and Laura enjoy the blessings of living near the church, in the Shaw neighborhood of Washington DC.

March 10 CANDACE LILYQUIST is a retired educator and organizational development specialist . She worked for multiple education associations across the United States over the past 26 years. Previously, she was a teacher in Minnesota and Texas. She is a committed activist in service of maintaining and improving a public system of learning for all. Candace is a life-long Lutheran and graduated from Concordia in Moorhead, Minnesota.

March 11 ANDREW ROBB, Sarah Stauderman, and Frederic are long-time members of the Lutheran Church of the Reformation. He has served on Council and as Council President and currently is active in the Reformers Group, providing mutual aid to our neighbors in need. He and Sarah live on Capitol Hill.

March 12 KIRI NICHOLSON has been attending Reformation since 2019. She lives happily in Arlington with her boyfriend and their two cats.

March 13 CAITLIN JACOBS Caitlin Jacobs has been a member of Reformation since 2005. She lives in Wheaton with her husband Paul, toddler Clíodhna, and cat Molly.

March 14 NANCY SWINGLE has been a member of Reformation since 2003. She enjoys continually making new friends at Reformation. She is happy to be serving on the church council.

March 15 CARLY UEHLING has attended Reformation for a year and a half. She helps with Sunday School and battles mosquitoes in the church garden. On weekdays, Carly works as a civil rights attorney. She lives near Lincoln Park with her dog, Winston.

March 16 SUSAN KAUFMANN NASH is a lifelong Lutheran and a new member of Reformation. She looks forward to getting to know our community and getting involved in our mission.

March 17 ELIZABETH WIRICK recently relocated to the Del Ray neighborhood of Alexandria with her nearly 16-year- old dog, Charley. After a series of losses and transitions in the last two years, some voluntary and some less so, Elizabeth is grateful that Charley gives her a reason to get dressed each and every day.

March 18 EMILY SOLLIE has been a member of Reformation for more than 20 years. She lives in Capitol Hill with her husband Jonathan and son Jack-Henry.

March 19 MARY OLIVER is a poet.

March 20 EVAN SCHRAGE is the immediate past president of the Reformation Council. He serves as an usher.

March 21 ANDY WEAVER grew up in central Ohio, attended college in Maine, and ended up in DC.

March 22 SARAH STAUDERMAN is the lead for the Altar Guild. Among other professional activities, Sarah teaches preservation of documents and books at the Library School at Catholic University. She joined Reformation in 1997 and married her husband, Andrew Robb, here in 2000. Their son Frederic will graduate from UCLA in June.

March 23 SABA AMARE: After several years as a visiting guest at Reformation, Saba Amare is grateful to now call this church home. She enjoys gardening projects, long-distance running, and harmonizing with the congregation during hymns.

March 24 KERRY HYDRICK has been a member of Reformation since 2023 and is also on the Stream Team.

March 25 LYDIA ABMA is a Sunday school teacher and Young Adult Bible Study member at Reformation. She works on Capitol Hill doing health policy. She also lives in Capitol Hill and enjoys running, crocheting, and trying to find DC's best almond croissant (recommendations welcome).

March 26 Hymn 538, ELW

March 27 TED STEEGE is a retired pastor and public policy advocate who lives in College Park, MD, with a ton of books, pictures of his late beloved Eva and eight grandchildren, and a handful of old racquetball trophies. He's not done becoming.

March 28 GLORIA KENYON is a decade-plus member of Reformation. She lives in Silver Spring with her husband, Greg, and son, Ben. They have two dogs, Max and Link. In her imaginary free time, Gloria enjoys baking and reading romance novels.

March 29 IVY FINKENSTADT is the editor of From Ashes to Easter and a Sunday school teacher at Reformation. She works as an attorney for a legal services organization that provides free services to Maryland residents. She lives with her family in Cheverly, Maryland.

March 30 JOY ERNST is a retired professor of social work. She lives with her husband Dan in Mount Vernon Triangle. They joined the Church of the Reformation in 2018 and enjoy their weekly walks to worship. Joy is the daughter and mother of Lutheran pastors.

March 31 LIZ TUCKERMANTY has been a member of Reformation since 1980. She is related to Dale Manty by marriage. And celebrates holidays with her daughters and grandchildren when they come to church!

April 1 KRISTINA WILFORE is a global authority on countering political violence and online abuse, advising governments and civil society on protecting democratic participation.

April 2 KATHRYN TOBIAS, a member of Reformation since 1977, loves, among other things, singing in the choir, organizing efforts of Good Neighbors of Capitol Hill to furnish apartments for refugees, spending time with friends and neighbors, writing, learning about women's contributions in many fields, traveling, and doing InterPlay (ask if you're curious).

April 3 PASTOR JAYME KOKKONEN (she/her) is the newly-called Associate Pastor for Community Engagement and Formation at Reformation. For Lent this year, Pastor Jayme is taking on the practice of daily meditation (along with reading the FATE devos!). Please let her know what your Lenten practices are!

April 4 PHILLIP W. MOELLER has served on the Board of the ELCA's Global Mission Division. In 2017, he was awarded a bronze medal in recognition of 50 years of International Service by Johns Hopkins University. He has served as Director of International Programs on the Board of ReconcilingWorks. He chairs the Worship, Music, and Arts Committee at Reformation and the Metro DC Synod RIC Team. In his spare time, he writes on mysticism and composes music.

April 5 PASTOR KEVIN VANDIVER is the Senior Pastor at LCOR.

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