



Lenten  
Devotional  
2020

**Sunday, April 12      Easter Sunday**

He is Risen! Alleluia! Rejoice this day, and give thanks to God by worshipping with the community of faith. Know that because Christ has been raised, we also have been raised into a new life.

Now that Easter has arrived and your Lenten journey completed for another year, consider these questions:

**How have you moved forward in your journey as a disciple?**

**Where do you still want to grow in worship, study, service, giving and sharing your faith?**

**How will you take the next step?**

*Thank you for completing this Lenten study with your church family. We hope this time has been a blessing to you, and through you, to others.*

**Week Beginning April 5  
Holy Week**

**Sunday, April 5 Palm Sunday**

**Scripture: Matthew 21:1-11**

Sabbath! Participate in worship today. If you are not able to attend Westover Hills UMC, tune in to a church service on TV or online, or create a worship experience for you or your family around the dinner table or during a journey into the community.

**Holy Week**

This week, there will be no commentary on the readings. You are invited simply to read or meditate upon these scriptures as we prepare our hearts for the celebration of the resurrection on Easter Sunday. Plan to attend the Maundy Thursday service at WHUMC at 7 p.m.

**Monday, April 6**

Scripture: Isaiah 42:1-9

**Tuesday, April 7**

Scripture: Romans 8:16-17

**Wednesday, April 8**

Scripture: Hebrews 12:1 -2

**Thursday, April 9 Maundy Thursday**

Scripture: John 13:1-7, 31b-35

**Friday, April 10 Good Friday**

Scripture: John 18:1-19:42

**Saturday, April 11**

Scripture: Hebrews 10:16-25

**February 26 Ash Wednesday**

Ash Wednesday is the first day of Lent, a time when we remember that we are creatures who are made from dust and face the sobering reality that one day we will return to dust. (Ecclesiastes 3:20) Though that is true, it is also true that we are holy dust, given life by the very breath and Spirit of God, fashioned in the image of the divine. The key word for Ash Wednesday is “repent.” Many of us probably came up in a time where repentance meant a turning away from sin. Repent comes from the Greek word, metanoia, literally meaning “change your minds.” Repentance is about changing in the direction of God. During Lent we are invited to remain open to the changes God desires to make in us and through us. For these first few days leading up to the first Sunday of Lent, you are invited reflect upon and to write down the answers to these questions:

**What will I do in order to be more open to God in these weeks leading up to Easter?**

**What barriers to openness exist in me? What is at risk if I open myself completely to God?**

**What do I hope will be different in me when Easter arrives?**

## **Week of March 1**

**Theme: Worship**

### **Sunday, March 1 First Sunday in Lent**

**Scripture: Psalm 95**

Attend worship today and set a goal to attend worship each Sunday in Lent. If you can't be present physically at Westover Hills UMC, worship online or privately. Look up favorite hymns and sing or recite the words. Offer the Lord's Prayer, along with prayers of thanksgiving and petitions to God for your needs or needs of those you love. Make your meals sacred by giving thanks before mealtime, not only for the food but for all that went into it being prepared for your use. Use this sabbath day to be present to God, noticing with gratitude the many gifts we have all been given.

### **Monday, March 2**

**Scripture: I Thessalonians 5:16-18**

This week we will begin developing the spiritual muscle of gratitude through prayer. Our Creator has given us everything to enjoy. Isn't it right that we should express gratitude! Today, begin to work five daily prayers into your schedule. The prayer can simply be "Thank you, God." Offer it at times that will be easy to remember. A suggestion would be to offer these short prayers of gratitude upon waking in the morning, at breakfast, lunch and dinner, and at bedtime. If it is difficult to remember, then set an alarm for these times or put a note on your kitchen table or desk or in your lunchbag to remind you to offer thanks. Try to do this each day this week. If we do this each day during Lent, it will become a holy habit!

### **Friday, April 3**

**Scripture: 1 John 4:16-21**

"What leads the unchurched to take notice of a church is when that church and its members genuinely care about them and when they are actively engaged in seeking to have a positive impact on the community. They notice when a church serves others selflessly, when it gives generously, when it loves radically." (Hamilton, Adam. *The Walk*. Abingdon Press. Kindle Edition). Make a list of the things our church is known for. That list may include pumpkins and a tot lot, but we hope it also includes things like "we take care of each other in hard times," and "we listen to one another." What can you do to make sure that our church is living out the best values so that others will be drawn to this community of faith.

### **Saturday, April 4**

**Scripture: John 13:34-35**

Consider what it means to love a sister or brother in Christ. It doesn't mean that we always agree, or that we vote in the same way. It doesn't mean that prefer the same music in worship or that we believe exactly the same when it comes to practical theological issues. It DOES mean that we try to see things from each other's perspective, even if we don't agree. It DOES mean that we care for each other across differing views. Love is an action verb. Today, reach out to someone who is very different from you with a word of greeting, care or compassion.

**Wednesday, April 1**

**Scripture: Matthew 28:19-20**

The Great Commission, as these verses are called, is often considered the marching orders for Christians. The verbs, “go,” “make” (disciples), “baptize,” “teach” are offered in the imperative. These are not suggestions, but a mandate. It may feel awkward to think about “making” disciples. But this word does not mean that we force faith on someone else. More often, faith is “caught.” If we live and speak in a way that gives glory to God, and if we are not afraid to tell the story of God’s faithfulness in our own lives, we will be contagious Christians. This week, allow your awareness of God’s gracious activity in your life to spill over into your words and the way you interact with others in such a way that you spread the good news of God’s love.

**Thursday, April 2**

**Scripture: Matthew 9:36-38**

In this age of “spiritual, but not religious” people, these verses ring true more than at any other time in recent history. It feels as if the workers are few. But the other side of this story is that there is a plentiful harvest. There are people waiting for an invitation to be part of something that gives meaning and purpose to their lives. There are those who are starved for community. Today, think of two people you could invite to worship with you on Easter Sunday (or other Sunday if you won’t be in town that day). Find time to reach out with a personal invitation. Make sure to include something about why faith and church have been important to you.

**Tuesday, March 3**

**Scripture: James 1:17**

Call to mind the experience of receiving an unexpected and wonderful gift? Maybe it was a birthday or Christmas gift, but quite possibly it was a gift “just because.” Did it bring you joy, even before you knew what was in the package? God’s gifts are so many and so consistently given that we can forget how special they are – a beautiful sunrise or sunset, the first green sprouts to push out of the ground in the spring, the smile of a stranger, the wagging tail or purr of a furry friend, the gift of a special relationship. Could it be that God delights in showering God’s children with gifts? Imagine then how it must delight God to be told “thank you.” Make a list of the ordinary gifts of daily life, and offer thanks to God for them in one of your prayer times today.

**Wednesday, March 4**

**Scripture: Psalm 139:1-5**

“There is something within us that longs to worship, just as the birds long to sing.” (Adam Hamilton, *The Path*) Have you ever longed for something so much that you would give almost anything to have it? I believe that is how much God longs for a relationship with us. No one will love you more than the God who made you. As you go about your day, imagine God walking with you into each place and situation. Think about God cheering for you or consoling you. Believe that God is giving you the strength to accomplish something difficult. God is with you. Thank you, God!

**Thursday, March 5**

**Scripture: James 5:13**

Have you ever been so full of joy that you felt your heart might burst? Or so happy that you couldn't help but sing (or at least hum)? Singing often is a form of prayer. Singing along to a contemporary Christian song, or humming a familiar hymn as we are going about our daily tasks can be a way for us to offer a prayer to God. When our hearts are heavy and we can't find the words, often we will find that a hymn or Christian song (and sometimes even a "secular" song) can give voice to our own pain. When we are joyful, some of the standard hymns of the faith similarly give us musical words to express what we are experiencing. Today, look up a favorite hymn or tune in to a Christian station. Alexa or any of the online music sources can help you locate some good ones. Find one song that you can make your own this day. And sing!

**Friday, March 6**

**Scripture: Psalm 8**

Worship can take many forms. Our theme during Lent is walking with God, because our relationship with God is not static. It is a journey. It is possible to worship even as we are walking. In biblical times, pilgrims would make their way to the temple in order to share in great festivals to God's faithfulness. Modern day pilgrims journey the Camino do Santiago as an experience of growing closer to God. But even a simply walk in the woods or around the neighborhood can help us to be mindful of the people and gifts around us. Today, take a walk, short or long, around the neighborhood, through a park or even through your office. Practice being present to whatever you experience. Take the time to express gratitude to God for all that you encounter on your walk, for all is a gift from God.

**Week of March 29**

**Theme: Sharing Our Faith**

**Sunday, March 29 Fifth Sunday in Lent**

Sabbath! Participate in worship today. If you are not able to attend Westover Hills UMC, tune in to a church service on TV or online, or create a worship experience for you or your family around the dinner table or during a journey into the community.

**Monday, March 30**

**Scripture: Matthew 4:18-20**

When Jesus called the first disciples, he called them away from fishing for fish, to a life of fishing for people. He didn't call the wisest or most eloquent people, but commoners. Jesus similarly calls us away from things that matter less to things that matter more. As you prepare to fish for people, it may be helpful to consider how and why you became a Christian. Today, write down the answers to these questions "Why am I a Christian? What do I believe as a Christian? What difference does faith make in my life?"

**Tuesday, March 31**

**Scripture: 2 Corinthians 5:20**

As we discovered earlier in Lent, everyone can be aware of God through the natural world that God has fashioned. But God also reveals Godself through those made in God's image – you and me! If God is indeed making an appeal to others of God's children through us, then how might that inform how we live? Offer a prayer today asking God to work through you to show God's love to others in a way that opens them up to a relationship with God.

**Thursday, March 26**

**Scripture: 2 Corinthians 9:6-8**

It was Winston Churchill who famously said, “We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give.” Giving can be done individually, but God also intends for us to exercise generosity as a community of faith. The church has many ways to give. During Lent, we are collecting quarters to be used to send children to Westview on the James camp. Collect the quarters in your house and set them aside to bring to church on Sunday to be added to the collection. We might not be able to contribute enough personally to create a scholarship, but together we certainly can!

**Friday, March 27**

**Scripture: Deuteronomy 15:7-8**

Today, think about your generosity. Make it your goal to offer five special acts of generosity during the month of April. You could give an especially generous tip, make a donation to a charity or to a special fund at the church, or an anonymous gift to someone in need. Make a list of potential extra special gifts. Post them on your mirror or refrigerator to remind you to continue in your generosity in the month to come.

**Saturday, March 28**

**Scripture: Malachi 3:8-10**

As mentioned earlier in the week, giving has a corporate (community) component. We are all asked to give to God through the church, that the ministries of the church might serve both its members and the community. Take a checkbook or bank account selfie. How much do you give each month to your church compared to what you earn? Consider increasing your giving by 1% per year until you reach a tithe (10%). You don’t have to wait until the annual stewardship campaign to give generously back to God from all that you have been given.

**Saturday, March 7**

**Scripture: John 4:24**

Reflect upon your week. How are you doing with your five daily prayers of gratitude? What was successful? What may have kept you from praying in the way that you wanted? What support might you want to put in place to help you to commit to building the muscle of worship and prayer?

**Week of March 8**

**Theme: Study**

**Sunday, March 8**

**Second Sunday in Lent**

Sabbath! Participate in worship today. If you are not able to attend Westover Hills UMC, tune in to a church service on TV or online, or create a worship experience for you or your family around the dinner table or during a journey into the community.

**Monday, March 9**

**Scripture: Psalm 19**

Some theologians categorize God’s revelation to humankind in two ways: general and special revelation. General revelation is available to everyone, coming to us through the natural world, art and our human story. We can discern God’s creative and active love through these means. Today, make time to observe nature by taking a walk or by looking through a window at the activity of the birds. Or set your gaze upon a work of art. How do you sense the presence and activity of God?

**Tuesday, March 10**

**Scripture: Matthew 4:18-24**

Special revelation is God's direct action to speak to us, through the Holy Spirit, the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, and paying attention to the Word of God in scripture. The study of scripture can be done privately or with others. Both are necessary and helpful! A time of personal devotional reading of scripture can center and ground us. Wrestling with scripture in a group creates an opportunity to hear other perspectives and interpretations, which can enhance our learning. The consistent study of scripture gives us a lens through which to see the world, other people and ourselves in light of God's creative power and never-ending grace. This week we will read through a section of the gospel of Matthew a few verses at a time. Read today's verses several times. Make a mark around and list all of the action words. What do you notice about the passage in light of the action?

**Wednesday, March 11**

**Scripture: Matthew 5:13-16**

Read today's passage three times. Begin with the following prayer: "Spirit of God, open my heart and my mind to receive what you offer me today." After you read the passage out loud the first time, make a note of a word or phrase that stands out to you. Read the verses out loud for a second time, again noting a word or phrase that stands out to you. It may be the same as the word/phrase that you chose after the first reading, or it may not. Make a note about why this particular word or phrase stands out to you today. Read the passage out loud a third time. Now take a minute to reflect upon what God is asking of you through this passage. Write that down, and make this part of your morning prayer.

by exercising gratitude. Today, take stock of the things you have for which you are grateful. It can be as simple as a coffee pot or favorite mug that brings that welcomed cup of coffee in the morning, or a pair of slippers that keep your feet warm. See how many things you can list in five minutes. Then pause to give thanks over your list.

**Tuesday, March 24**

**Scripture: Luke 6:38; Acts 20:35**

When was the last time you gave something to another person, perhaps a birthday or Christmas gift, an unexpected token given to a friend, a meal offered to a neighbor? How did you feel when you offered that gift? A sure antidote for our tendency to focus on our own problems is to do something kind for someone else. Today, make a plan to give an unexpected gift (the value is not important) to someone this week. Then enjoy carrying out your plan.

**Wednesday, March 25**

**Scripture: Ecclesiastes 2:4b-10**

Pay attention today to the number of advertisements that flash before your eyes – on the internet, on TV, on billboards, magazines, wherever. Consider one or two of the ads – how do they feed our desire to want more? What lies do the ads tell? Part of combatting our "wants" is to be aware of how our culture perpetuates them. As followers of Jesus, we do not want to be "chasing after the wind," but instead we are to pursue the prize of God's upward call in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:14). Consider beginning a practice of responding to the constant barrage of advertisements with a verbal thanks to God for all that you already possess.

Today, allow yourself to be interrupted. These interruptions can be the means by which God invites us to serve others and through which we find our greatest joy.

### **Saturday, March 21**

Today offer the Wesleyan covenant prayer as your own prayer:

Lord, I am no longer my own, but yours. Put me to what you will; rank me with whom you will. Put me to doing; put me to suffering. Let me be employed for you or laid aside for you, exalted for you or brought low for you. Let me be full; let me be empty. Let me have all things; let me have nothing. I freely and heartily yield all things to your pleasure and disposal. And now, O glorious and blessed God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, you are mine and I am yours. So be it. And the covenant I have made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven. Amen.

### **Week Beginning March 22**

**Theme: Giving**

### **Sunday, March 22 Fourth Sunday in Lent**

Sabbath! Participate in worship today. If you are not able to attend Westover Hills UMC, tune in to a church service on TV or online, or create a worship experience for you or your family around the dinner table or during a journey into the community.

### **Monday, March 23**

**Scripture: Matthew 6:19-21**

In the gospels, Jesus speaks about money and possessions more than he speaks about worship, prayer and Scripture study *combined*. One of the keys to the good life is to learn to be content with what we have, instead of always desiring something more, something new or something else. We cultivate contentedness

### **Thursday, March 12**

**Scripture: Matthew 8:14-17**

Read the passage twice. With which character in the story do you most closely identify? Why? How do you view the other characters in the passage? How is Jesus interacting with each character? Does anything surprise you?

### **Friday, March 13**

**Scripture: Matthew 8:23-27**

Read today's passage while engaging your senses. After you read it, use your senses to enter into the story. What do you see? What are you hearing? Are there tastes or smells? What can you touch? Be as descriptive as you can. Entering the story in this way can help bring it to life!

### **Saturday, March 14**

**Matthew 10:26-31**

How does it feel to know that you are valuable to God? How has your time with God this week drawn you closer to the God who loves you more than you can imagine? How have you been doing with your five daily "thank you" prayers? Take stock of how things are going, not so that you can berate yourself for not doing everything perfectly, but so that you can rejoice in each attempt to be connected to the God who loves you.

## **Week of March 15**

**Theme: Service**

### **Sunday, March 15 Third Sunday in Lent**

Sabbath! Participate in worship today. If you are not able to attend Westover Hills UMC, tune in to a church service on TV or online, or create a worship experience for you or your family around the dinner table or during a journey into the community.

### **Monday, March 16**

**Scripture: Isaiah 6:8**

God's primary way of working in the world is through people. When you offer your morning prayer of "thank you" every day this week, add one more sentence: "Lord, here I am, send me." Then pay attention every day to how God is asking you to interact with those around you.

### **Tuesday, March 17**

**Scripture: Isaiah 1:11-17**

The words of the prophets are often hard to swallow. They had a way of calling out the people and their leaders on behavior that was not godly. In many cases, the prophets condemned worship that was not backed up by deeds of kindness and justice, saying that worship without these things was worthless. As Christians, we turn our belief into action on behalf of others, particularly those who are on the margins of society. Sometimes this group includes the poor, but often it includes the poor in spirit which we can find anywhere. Today, share a smile and a hello with every person you come in contact with – at work, at school, out in the community. Choose at least two people today for whom you can offer a silent prayer. The prayer can be as simple as "God, bless this person today!" You don't need to let them know

you are praying. Notice how your smiles, greetings and prayers affect you.

### **Wednesday, March 18**

**Scripture: Matthew 20:25-26**

Look for a way to show kindness today. Maybe a neighbor could use a note or a meal. Is there a friend who could use an encouraging text or phone call? Is there someone from church that you haven't seen in a while? Take the time to reach out!

### **Thursday, March 19**

**Scripture: Ephesians 2:10**

The Common English translation of Ephesians 2:10 is "Instead, we are God's accomplishment, created in Christ Jesus to do good things. God planned for these good things to be the way that we live our lives." It is amazing to think that we were created to serve others. If this is why and how we were created, then to do anything else is to swim upstream, against the current. Stay in the flow of God's plan for you today by offering extra kindness to your family. If you live alone, expand the definition to include those who may be your chosen family.

### **Friday, March 20**

**Scripture: Luke 10:25-37**

The story of the good Samaritan may be familiar to many of us. In the ancient world, there was no such thing as a "good" Samaritan, at least that is what the Jews believed. And yet, the Samaritan in this story is the one who comes to the aid of a man who is hurting, going above and beyond to make sure that the man would be cared for even after the Samaritan left him. The Samaritan was the one who allowed his own plans to be interrupted in order to serve another. So often we hurry from place to place and task to task without even noticing those around us.