

**Artist Statement on the Cover:
The Lamb and the Light**

Stained glass windows are designed to filter the light of the sun, bringing to life their stories of divine inspiration. When these windows come to life, they symbolize the illumination of our minds with divine knowledge. Colors communicate the love and grace of God that saturate our world. We are reminded of the gift of Christ the light, who shines in the darkness.

—Sharon Henderson McHugh

A MESSAGE FROM THE RECTOR

The Community of Followers

“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.” John 8:12

Dear People of St. David’s,

The season of Lent is upon us—forty days when we as individuals and as a community have an opportunity to turn and follow Jesus in a new way or to turn and renew our life with God. It is a season when we can make a turn in our lives or a re-turn to enter more deeply into the life that is really life and become more and more the persons God created us to be. It is also a season when we can turn to carve out a little or a lot of time for God each day that we may grow in our love of God and of everyone around us.

This Lenten book of meditations and Lenten activities at St. David’s offer some ways for us to take that turn in our lives to follow Christ more openly as we spend time with the scriptures, reflect with the writers on what the life with God is about, and become more mindful of God’s presence with us always and the community of love that God invites us to share in.

I hope that this Lent will be a holy time for all of us as we turn to the love and presence of God in our lives and grow in our love of God, of one another, and this world that God has made.

Grace and Peace.



The Rev. W. Frank Allen
Rector

A MESSAGE OF INTRODUCTION AND THANKS

“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.” 1 Corinthians 12:4-7

This Lenten devotional is a labor of love by many people. *Forty individuals* contributed their prayerful meditations, and *Communications Director Lauren Machowski* laid out the book. *Domenica Rafferty* served as coordinator, communicating with writers. There are indeed many gifts and much service went into the book you hold in your hands. Thank you.

After a number of years, *Gillian Waldron* retired as editor of the Lenten book. We are grateful for her years of service in this important spiritual offering. We are thankful for the countless hours of behind-the-scenes work *Domenica Rafferty* contributed as she stepped up to coordinate this project. When a meditation touches you, please do thank the writer—and *Domenica*—for bringing the insights of our individual parishioners into our hands in this Lenten devotional.

You may notice a few things different this year. We worked to list what Bible translation people use, in order to help our own biblical engagement—different translations often highlight concepts in distinctive words that can be helpful to compare to the translation you normally use. If a passage does not have a translation listed, it comes from the NRSV, or New Revised Standard Version, which is what we hear in our Sunday readings. Other translations used include: NIV, New International Version; RSV, Revised Standard Version; NASB, New American Standard Bible; KJV, King James Version; CEB, Common English Bible; ESV, English Standard Version.

You will also notice a few visual meditations contributed by artists. We hope visual learners will appreciate this new way to connect spiritually and artistically.

Finally, we provide an invitation “*Let us pray*” rather than the phrase “Collect for today.” Although many parishioners know that “collect” means a formal prayer that “collects” or concludes the prayers of the community, we find a more active invitation might be helpful. The prayers, or “collects,” can be used as a way to enter or exit your own private time of prayer this Lent, while the meditations can be used to prompt your own Bible reading and spiritual reflection.

Many blessings on your Lenten journey.

The Rev. Emily Zimbrick-Rogers, Assistant Rector for Discipleship and Fellowship

LENT

Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper Mission Trip Fundraiser
Tuesday, February 25th | 5:00pm & 6:00pm | St. David's Hall

Ash Wednesday – Wednesday, February 26th

7:00am | Church

12:00pm & 6:00pm | Chapel

Ashes to Go | 6:30-8:30am | Wayne Train Station

Lenten Offering:

Living in Community: St. Benedict's Rule of Life

Sunday, March 1st, 8th, and 15th | 4:00pm

Center for Spiritual Growth

Taizé Worship and Eucharist

Sunday, March 1st | 5:00pm | Church

Stations of the Cross

Fridays during Lent & Holy Week

6:00pm | Chapel

Good Friday, April 10th | 11:00am | Chapel

Lenten Choral Evensong

Sunday, March 29th | 5:00pm | Chapel

Garden of Reflection

Wednesday, April 8th – Friday, April 10th | Church

Gospel in the Garden: Reading through Mark's Gospel

Wednesday, April 8th | 6:00pm | Church



HOLY WEEK

April 5th – April 12th, 2020

Palm Sunday, April 5th

8:00am, 11:15am, & 5:00pm | Church
9:15am | Chapel

Stations of the Cross

Monday, April 6th – Wednesday, April 8th | 6:00pm | Chapel
Good Friday, April 9th | 11:00am | Chapel

Maundy Thursday, April 9th

Foot Washing, Holy Eucharist & Stripping of the Altar

7:00pm | Chapel

All Night Prayer Vigil

8:00pm | Church

Good Friday, April 10th

Worship Services

12:00pm | Church

6:00pm | Chapel

Holy Saturday, April 11th

Easter Egg Hunt & Flowering of the Cross

9:30am | Fairgrounds

Easter Vigil, Holy Baptism & Holy Eucharist

7:00pm | Chapel

Easter Sunday, April 12th

8:00am, 11:15am & 5:00pm | Church

9:15am & 11:15am | Chapel

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 26

Ash Wednesday

Suggested Readings: Psalm 103 or Psalm 103:8-14; Joel 2:1-2, 12-17 or Isaiah 58:1-12; 2 Corinthians 5:2b-6:10; Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

Let us pray:

Almighty and everlasting God, you hate nothing you have made and forgive the sins of all who are penitent: Create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we, worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness may obtain of you, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; though Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

I have loved this collect or prayer since I was a child because I've found such comfort in the concept that God constantly forgives our sins. Perhaps I've always loved it because as a child, I sinned ... a lot. I'm still guilty of sinning on a daily basis, as are all humans. But, particularly when I was a child, I seemed to live in a constant state of sin. I wasn't intentionally rebellious but it was more testing boundaries and finding my own identity in a strict household. Regardless of the majority of my sin being developmentally appropriate in hindsight, at the time it felt like I struggled with sin more than the average teenager. At times, I felt downright wretched and the idea that God knew that part of me and forgave me every time was incredibly comforting. It was a lifeline my teenage self desperately needed to hear. I was good even when I wasn't. I was worthy even when I didn't feel like it. *I was loved.*

In Psalm 103:10, we read, "He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor requite us according to our iniquities." That's the beauty of God's gift of forgiveness. He doesn't treat us according to what we do or give us what we deserve. Nope, not my God. He loves me, as is, with no strings attached. I can't earn it, nor can I do anything to make it go away. God's love is an ever-present gift in my life, which humbles me to my core. This powerful gift which I have been given by my Father in heaven is a gift I try to pass on as a parent to my own children. Quite frankly, I'm not sure I'd be able to give the gift of no strings attached forgiveness and ever-continuing love if it hadn't first been given to me every day of my life by God. Extending this kind of love and compassionate forgiveness is how we can nurture better relationships and, subsequently, communities in our everyday lives. I encourage you to accept the gift of God's unconditional and ever-present love in your life, even when you question whether you deserve it. Then you pass it on to those around you who need it the most.

Susan Barber is a child of God, wife to Josh, and mom to Jace (9), Ella (7), Wren (4), and Mila (2). St. David's is her family's home away from home and she is grateful for its presence in their lives and the relationships it has presented.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 27

Thursday after Ash Wednesday

Suggested Readings: Psalm 23 or 1; 1 Peter 5:1-4; Matthew 5:1-10

Let us pray:

Direct us, O Lord, in all our doings with your most gracious favor, and further us with your continual help; that in all our works begun, continued, and ended in you, we may glorify your holy Name, and finally, by your mercy, obtain everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

The New Testament passage in Peter speak loudly to me about Servant Leadership.

Although Peter is presumably talking to church elders, I imagine he is addressing us all, because we are all leaders in one way or another. We can be leaders not just publicly, but quietly, at church, in business, in our families, and in our communities.

What is asked of those whom Peter is addressing is what makes and is expected of a true servant leader. Acknowledging that he is one of them, he demonstrates his humility and respect for them. He wants them to feel that they are all part of the community while teaching them that we are all called by the Good Shepherd to be good shepherds. He advises them that the expectation is to lead willingly, with a servant's heart.

The Beatitudes in Matthew 5 describe the ideal character for every Christian. Humbling ourselves, caring for others, showing empathy, keeping the peace, seeking the right answer, standing up for what is true – it's all in there if you read Matthew's account of the Sermon on the Mount. By adopting these traits, our leadership style can be positive, compassionate, and ethical for the good of all.

We can live into our theme for this year, A Community for the World, just by behaving the way Jesus asks us to. As we seek to know God better ourselves, let us serve unselfishly so we can influence, equip, and empower those we are shepherding to become their best selves. Together we can work to accomplish God's purpose for us.

Betsy Aikens has been at St. David's for 37 years. She has participated in many ministries, and currently, making music is the spiritual practice that best feeds and sustains her. She and her husband are empty-nesters taking care of a beloved dog and two kittens.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 28

Friday after Ash Wednesday

Suggested Readings: Psalm 119:33-40; Proverbs 9:1-6; Luke 4:14-21

Let us pray:

Support us, O Lord, with your gracious favor through the fast we have begun; that as we observe it by bodily self-denial, so we may fulfill it with inner sincerity of heart; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

“You that are simple, turn in here!” To those without sense Wisdom says, “Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed. Lay aside immaturity, and live, and walk in the way of insight.” Proverbs 9:4-6

My mother was a very wise woman. When I was young, however, I consistently tested that wisdom because she appeared to me to be an overly protective mother. Frequently, she would try to dissuade me from doing certain things, and I would look at this protectiveness as an impediment to my growth saying, “I need to make my own mistakes and learn from them.” So off I would go only to find, ultimately, that she was right. Fortunately, there were no statements of “I told you so” even though that would have been well-deserved!

At times, the same has been true in my Christian life. Early in my adult life when I was not associated with a church or denomination, I’m sure our Father was speaking to me in his wisdom. However, at the time, I didn’t hear him and again would go on my merry way making mistake after mistake. As I’ve grown in my relationship with God, I’ve learned that his wisdom is boundless and that all I have to do is ask for his guidance and, importantly, follow it. I thank God every day for helping me to be less “simple” and for all the gifts he has given me and his guidance to use these gifts to best serve him and walk in the way of understanding. I thank him for the St. David’s community, for his consistent love, and the blessed gifts of family and friends.

Glory to God and his wisdom! I pray that our leaders and those of other countries pay attention to his wisdom and guidance and learn to live together in peace in 2020 and onward.

Janet Helms is a member of the Vestry, serving the commissions of Finance and Pastoral Care.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 29

Saturday after Ash Wednesday

Suggested Readings: Psalm 86:1-11; Isaiah 58:9b-1; Luke 5:27-32

Let us pray:

Almighty and everlasting God, mercifully look upon our infirmities, and in all our dangers and necessities stretch forth your right hand to help and defend us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

“It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick.” Luke 5:31, NIV

“And if you spend yourselves on behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday.” Isaiah 58:10, NIV

Something my late sister said to me in a heated discussion has always stuck with me. I said something like, “You need to pull yourself up by your bootstraps,” to which she responded, “Cindy, not everyone has the capacity to do that.” Wow, did I get hit with a message of compassion and grace for which I am forever grateful.

I’d like to believe that I was always compassionate, but upon reflection I realized that was not the case. When I graduated college and was working in NYC, I would often pass homeless people and think, *Should I give them money? What if it’s a scam? Can’t they help themselves?* I’m grateful that after the discussion with my sister, as well as maturity and deepening faith, I no longer think that way. I conscientiously smile at everyone I encounter. Instead of walking past a person asking for money on the streets, I say hello, offer a smile and a little financial support. It’s not mine to judge whether it’s a scam, but it is mine to be kind and to be an example to others.

I would like to share a visual mantra that I created and try to live by.



Cindy Roach and her husband, Tim, and their twin boys have called St. David’s Church home for over 21 years. They enjoy serving in many ways.

SUNDAY, MARCH 1

The First Sunday in Lent

Suggested Readings: Psalm 32; Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7; Romans 5:12-19; Matthew 4:1-11

Let us pray:

Almighty God, whose blessed Son was led by the Spirit to be tempted by Satan; Come quickly to help us who are assaulted by many temptations; and, as you know the weaknesses of each of us, let each one find you mighty to save; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

“You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with glad cries of deliverance. I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you.”
Psalm 32:7-8

When I was discerning a call to ordained ministry, I was sure I was unfit. It took over 10 years from call to ordination. It was God’s plan and the process was long and at times seemed impossible to complete. Whoever said God never gives you more than you can handle does not know God.

Change is constant if you are following God’s plan. I had nothing but change over those years and was often tempted to quit. In my life, I have often said no to God, not me; call someone else. I let difficulties drive my decisions about responding to God’s call. But in spite of this, I felt the presence of Christ and when I was in over my head, I was able to turn it over to God.

It is in these times, when we are open to what God is calling us to do, we can become closer to God. We begin to become what God has called us to be, to become all that we should be. It is when things are the most complicated, that you need to be in prayer asking for direction and guidance. I have since learned that the really complex things are the things we really need to do. If we turn it all over to God, we will find the way, the light, and the truth.

The Rev. Ken McCaslin is a vocational deacon who serves at St. David’s. His current ministry is as the executive program director of the hospital lay chaplaincy program, which is a new ministry of the diocese. This is a ministry of laity as they visit Episcopalians in the hospital.

MONDAY, MARCH 2

The First Week in Lent

Suggested Readings: Psalm 84:7-12 or 23; Philippians 4:10-13; Luke 14:1, 7-14

Let us pray:

Almighty and everlasting God, mercifully increase in us your gifts of holy discipline, in almsgiving, prayer, and fasting; that our lives may be directed to the fulfilling of your most gracious will; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

“I have learned to be content with whatever I have ... I can do all things through him who strengthens me.” Philippians 4.10, 13

In my darkest days and in the challenges of daily life, I find comfort in these words from Philippians. The verses before verse 13 invite me to pause.

Paul is drawing a connection here between contentment and the strength that God gives. As I sit in silence to explore this connection, I draw on my own feeling of contentment and immediately find myself in my sweet spot, my center. That inner center eluded me for most of my life. Several years ago, early in my journey toward a contemplative prayer life, I participated in a guided meditation and, after being led into an inner silence, I was invited to consider how it was that God saw me at that moment. What I experienced was extraordinary because, in an instant, I was present with the Gillian that God deeply knows. A sense of joy and surprise came over me. My spirit was proclaiming, “There I am!” “There I am!” In that prayer, God gave me the gift of experiencing the deepest core of my identity in God. Pure belovedness surrounded me.

I return with regularity to an inner silence bringing only an intention to be present with God and to receive the divine love that is always within, nurturing and strengthening me. Contentment is holding with God the essence of who I truly am and living into the strength that accompanies that sense of being me.

Today’s collect reminds us that holy disciplines and prayer are gifts. Through prayer, God offers us the gift of contentment that comes from an awareness of God’s unwavering love. When we can claim that contentment, we find ourselves, as the old Shaker hymn describes, in the place just right.

Gillian Waldron is a wife, mother, grandmother, and a spiritual director at St. David’s Center for Spiritual Growth.

TUESDAY, MARCH 3

The First Week in Lent

Suggested Readings: Psalm 98:1-4(5-10) or 103:1-4, 13-18; Isaiah 49:5-6;
Luke 9:2-6

Let us pray:

Grant to your people, Lord, grace to withstand the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, and with pure hearts and minds to follow you, the only true God; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

This psalm reminds me that God's love doesn't need any strengthening – it is just there, and it always will be. We can all think of times we've praised God for his love, forgiveness, grace and mercy, but it's hard to understand how his love comes so freely. The psalm shows that God loves us because he is a father, and we will always be his children. We are God's idea, and we are part of his community.

The idea of community is important. When my wife and I moved to Wayne, we spent several months "church-hopping," trying to find the right place. Then our next-door neighbor invited us to try St. David's. We immediately felt welcomed and at home, and we started to weave our lives into the church community. What a blessing that has been.

Sometimes it's tough to embrace the truth that we're loved by God or even our neighbor. But God has compassion on us and takes care of his community. God loves us whether we walk away from him, or hopefully, walk a little bit closer to him. Either way, the psalm tells us that nothing can separate us from God's love.

So how do we respond to this loving grace? I'm sure we'll find a way. We are loved, and are never outside of God's love. When things aren't going our way and we can't think of a reason to praise God, we can think of the community at St. David's, and we can all find things that are praiseworthy. Then when we've finished praying, we can start asking ourselves, "How can we better share God's love and grace with others?"

Rod Herrell lives in Wayne with his wife and three children. He enjoys spending time with his family, playing golf, and fishing.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 4

The First Week in Lent

Suggested Readings: Psalm 51:11-18; Jonah 3:1-10; Luke 11:29-32

Let us pray:

Bless us, O God, in this holy season, in which our hearts seek your help and healing; and so purify us by your discipline that we may grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

**“And the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast, and everyone, great and small, put on sackcloth. ... When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil ways, God changed his mind about the calamity that he had said he would bring upon them; and he did not do it.”
Johan 3:5, 10**

When’s the last time you listened—I mean really listened—to what someone had to say? I’ll admit that sometimes, when a friend shares a story or concern, I begin crafting a response in my head—while she’s still talking! I don’t mean to be dismissive. I really do want to support my friend, but it’s not easy to listen without an agenda or ready response. It’s especially challenging in today’s world, where there’s no shortage of opinions or forums in which to share them. However, as one of my dear friends says, “There’s a reason we have *two* ears and *one* mouth.”

Jonah had an unpleasant message to deliver to the town of Nineveh. Yet, the Ninevites listened to his message without argument or interruption. I’m great at talking to God, but listening is another story. Quieting my mind is difficult, especially with three young children circling around and a phone that’s always buzzing.

This Lenten season, I’m challenging myself to truly listen to what God has to say—about my choices, my struggles and his plan for my life. I hope you’ll join me.

Kate Myers lives in Wayne with her husband and three daughters. At St. David’s, she is involved with MATCH (Mothers and their Children) and Women’s Fellowship.

THURSDAY, MARCH 5

The First Week in Lent

Suggested Readings: Psalm 138; Esther 14:1-6, 12-14; Matthew 7:7-12

Let us pray:

Strengthen us, O Lord, by your grace, that in your might we may overcome all spiritual enemies, and with pure hearts serve you; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.”

Matthew 7:7-8, NIV

As an educator, this passage resonates with me daily. I often encourage my students to **ask** for help or **seek** solutions because if they don't ask or seek, they are often left alone to solve or identify solutions to problems. This regularly leaves them with a feeling of frustration or loneliness and causes them to become blocked and unable to work towards an answer.

As a Christian, I struggle with the same advice I give to my students. Too often I fail to **ask** God for help or **seek** when I believe a problem is too difficult to solve. I tend to get in my own way and I can't see the forest for the trees. However, when I allow myself to be vulnerable and **seek** God and allow myself to **knock** on God's door, I find that God opens the door for me. I am given a window into God's wisdom, allowing me to receive solutions I have been seeking.

During this period of Lent, I challenge myself to **seek** God's wisdom and love daily. I seek this so that I may be able to walk through God's door and trust that I will receive the gifts I **seek** to be able to do God's work with clarity and conviction.

Rod Kellett was welcomed into the ministries of St. David's in 2002. It was through the church where Rod became re-acquainted with a childhood friend whom he married two years later. Rod grew up in Villanova and has been active in many different ministries at St. David's.

FRIDAY, MARCH 6

The First Week in Lent

Suggested Readings: Psalm 130; Ezekiel 18:21-28; Matthew 5:20-26

Let us pray:

Lord Christ, our eternal Redeemer, grant us such fellowship in your sufferings, that, filled with your Holy Spirit, we may subdue the flesh to the spirit, and the spirit to you, and at the last attain to the glory of your resurrection; who live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

“I wait for the LORD; my soul waits; and in his word I my hope.”

Psalm 130:5

In Matthew’s reading, we are reminded how difficult this life of faith can be. Jesus points out that anger and grudges are similar to murder! We need to do better than just follow rules and laws. We have to work hard at living in a real relationship with God and with each other.

And one reflects the other: How can we ask for God’s help, for forgiveness and mercy, if we don’t give the same to others? In the Lord’s Prayer, we say, “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.” I can think of more than a few times I’ve let anger, resentment, or frustration fester for far too long. I’m grateful for our patient God who has helped me to reconcile and move on.

Every day brings news of the angry and divided world we live in. In contrast, our loving community of St. David’s, its many opportunities for worship, learning, serving, and fellowship, and the participation of so many who serve God by loving and serving each other, shows what the power of God in our lives and our community can be. We can become who God is calling us to be.

Sandy Arnold is a long-time member, who serves on the Vestry and on the Pastoral Care, St. David’s Episcopal Day School, and Communications Commissions. Sandy and her husband, Jamie, are 9:15 regulars on the back left.

SATURDAY, MARCH 7

The First Week in Lent

Suggested Readings: Psalm 34:1-8 or 124; Hebrews 10:32-39; Matthew 29:9-14

Let us pray:

O God, by your Word you marvelously carry out the work of reconciliation: Grant that in our Lenten fast we may be devoted to you with all our hearts, and united with one another in prayer and holy love; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

In Hebrews 10, I'm drawn to verses 35 and 36: "So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised" (NIV). In life, it can be easy to lose our self-esteem, self-assurance, and faith in ourselves—in other words, our confidence. Everyone needs an encouraging boost or a helping hand occasionally. Our St. David's community provides a safe environment and a community that believes in us and sees us as our better selves.

In our community, we embolden each other to have confidence in our faith and ourselves. When we pray together, when serving our ministries, when laughing at fellowship events, or singing in the choir, the Holy Spirit is present and we build each other up. We may have differences, but we share a common belief in Jesus Christ. Building an inclusive community takes effort and awareness of our fellow parishioners' needs so we can recognize when someone needs an encouraging word, an empathetic ear, a welcoming hug, or a smile. It takes practice.

They say that to become an expert at a skill you need thousands of hours of practice. These hours of practice allows the surgeon, the pilot, or police officer to confidently perform under stress and remain level-headed when things go wrong. Our St. David's community allows us to practice and strengthen our faith so we're confident, even courageous, when faced with adversity. At worship, at our ministries, and in fellowship, we practice our faith and build our communities so that "When you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised."

Tom Johantgen and his wife, Leslie Roy, joined St David's soon after marriage and had their three daughters baptized in the church. They enjoy active participation in many ministries and the fellowship of St. David's community.

SUNDAY, MARCH 8

The Second Sunday in Lent

Suggested Readings: Psalm 121; Genesis 12:1-4a; Romans 4:1-5, 13-17;
John 3:1-17

Let us pray:

O God, whose glory it is always to have mercy: Be gracious to all who have gone astray from your ways, and bring them again with penitent hearts and steadfast faith to embrace and hold fast the unchangeable truth of your Word, Jesus Christ your Son; who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.” John 3:16-17, NIV

When I opened up the scripture to John’s Gospel that I was to reflect on for my meditation, tears immediately sprung to my eyes. How many times have I been given John 3:16-17 to reflect on in times of sorrow, doubt, and fear? How often do we need to be reminded that God’s plan is rooted in love and grace?

In 2013, my aunt collapsed very unexpectedly. Despite the quick actions of my uncle, her doctors, and all the prayers she received, she didn’t survive. My family was in shock, and my faith was shaken. This passage, given to me from people I trust most in the world, reminded me that God is Love. God and Jesus weren’t punishing us, testing us, or turning their backs on us. Rather, they were supporting us in our time of sorrow and loved us so much that they would carry us forward.

I’m the first to admit that God and I don’t always agree and my trust can be quickly rescinded. God and I argue and debate. Sometimes I storm off to my room, and sometimes I break down in tears and demand to know why. However at the end of the day, I know that God loves me. God loves every human being, and God loves every little thing that makes up the world. Knowing that is what assures me I will always have an ounce of faith.

“And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.” 1 Corinthians 13:13

Bailey Kimmel is a cradle Episcopalian who grew up at St. David’s. Since graduating Rutgers University and completing a year with Seattle Service Corps, she helps with the youth groups and was recently made a Postulant for Holy Orders by the Diocese of Pennsylvania. Bailey will be attending seminary in fall of 2020 to continue discernment toward the priesthood.

MONDAY, MARCH 9

The Second Week in Lent

Suggested Readings: Psalm 19:7-11 (12-14) or 119:97-104; Wisdom 7:24-28; John 5:19-24 or John 14:23-26

Let us pray:

Let your Spirit, O Lord, come into the midst of us to wash us with the pure water of repentance, and prepare us to be always a living sacrifice to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

“And the Father will love them ...” John 14:23

We are in the season of Lent, a time of renunciation and of sober reflection on our sins and failings. A time of repentance and cleansing.

But don't forget about joy. The passages I was assigned all seem to be saying that the ecstatic comfort of knowing whatever we must confess, we are loved and held by a power far greater than any temptation we might wish to defeat, mightier than our shame at not always being able to win.

“And those who hear will live ...” John 5:25

This is the promise, the reassurance these passages offer us over and over. The agent of this life is described in many different ways: the Wisdom passage calls it wisdom, John calls it the Father and the Son, the psalmist calls it the Lord. The reason we fast during Lent—giving up non-essentials and stripping distractions away—is so that we can understand the nature of the life we are called to—a life of comfort and the peace that passes all understanding. And thus we can finally know that all the roads toward this life lead inward, to that incandescent place where our own holy spirit is stored.

Life does what it does, and we might not always feel joy. There are days when even happiness can feel like a distant memory or, worse, an unrealistic hope. This is when we turn to our prayers, remembering these promises in trusting expectation of the resurrection we know is to come.

Jodi Monster and her family have been members of St. David's for 15 years. She is currently pursuing an MFA in fiction at Temple University.

TUESDAY, MARCH 10

The Second Week in Lent

Suggested Readings: Psalm 50:7-15, 22-24; Isaiah 1:2-4, 16-20;
Matthew 23:1-12

Let us pray:

O God, you willed to redeem us from all iniquity by your Son: Deliver us when we are tempted to regard sin without abhorrence, and let the virtue of his passion come between us and our mortal enemy; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

“Therefore all that they [the scribes and Pharisees] tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds: for they say things, and do not do them.” Matthew 23:3, NASB

“Do as I say and not as I do” is commonly used to describe someone who is “all talk and no action.” Similarly, we say so-and-so can “talk the talk” but they don’t “walk the walk.” These expressions harken back to various biblical references to hypocrisy such as Jesus’ words in one of today’s readings about the scribes and Pharisees. To me, this speaks to the first two elements of our stewardship pledges of “time, talent, and treasure” and putting our Christian beliefs into action for the betterment of God’s community.

Treasure, or pledging, is critical to funding our beautiful church properties, our outstanding staff, and the myriad of ministries we support. However, it is the devotion of one’s time and talent (which also requires giving of one’s time) that demonstrates our Christian faith through how we live our lives. Whether it’s as a Stephen Minister holding someone’s hand during a difficult time, offering beautiful choral voices to enhance worship, making casseroles for St. John’s, hosting the Interfaith Hospitality Network, or delivering meals to families in need, there are so many ways at St. David’s to get involved and “walk the walk.” You will reap rewards in return. Not only will you forge and deepen relationships with fellow parishioners, but you will also benefit from the warm and wonderful feeling of knowing you’ve touched someone and impacted their life for the better. Look out! You may even find yourself “running the run” like so many selfless people at St. David’s. During this Lenten season, get involved, reach out and show your love for others as Christ loved us, by the gift of your time.

Mona Kirby and her husband, Brian, joined St. David’s in 2004. She feels so fortunate that they and their three children (now in their 20’s) call St. David’s their church home. Through their participation (such as her current service on the Vestry), Mona can attest to the rewards reaped from involvement in this welcoming, nourishing community.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11

The Second Week in Lent

Suggested Readings: Psalm 31:9-16; Jeremiah 18:1-11, 18-20;
Matthew 20:17-28

Let us pray:

O God, you so loved the world that you gave your only-begotten Son to reconcile earth with heaven: Grant that we, loving you above all things, may love our friends in you, and our enemies for your sake; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

“Be gracious to me, O Lord, for I am in distress ... But I trust in you. O Lord; I say, ‘You are my God.’” Psalm 31:9-16

Life isn't always easy. We all have challenges we face, from small to life changing; there are always challenges. The Psalm today reminds me that even in times of distress, when “my eye wastes away from grief” or when “I am the scorn of all my adversaries,” my trust should be in God. God can deliver us from the hand of our enemies and “save us with his steadfast love.”

During the Christmas season this year, it seemed whatever I read or listened to focused on darkness and light. The image was comforting. After these short, dark days, there is a promise of long days of light. There is no light without the darkness. We need the darkness as much as we need the light. Our times of distress are the darkness and while it may not seem like it, God is present. Often it is in our most difficult times that our relationship with God can grow the most. Spiritual author Richard Rohr writes, “We must wait and work with hope inside of the darkness, even our own—while never doubting the light that God always is, and that we are too.”

God is with us as we walk through the darkness. We need to pay attention; trust in God as we look for the light.

Eddie Lewis has been a member of St David's for 15 years. Her husband, John and she are parents to two adult daughters. Eddie is a reading teacher and enjoys spending time with her family, reading a good book, and spending time outdoors.

THURSDAY, MARCH 12

The Second Week in Lent

Suggested Readings: Psalm 1; Jeremiah 17:5-10; Luke 16:19-31

Let us pray:

O Lord, strong and mighty, Lord of hosts and King of glory: Cleanse our hearts from sin, keep our hands pure, and turn our minds from what is passing away; so that at the last we may stand in your holy place and receive your blessing; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

My eighth-grade teacher was the legendary Miss Decker. Miss Decker seemed to be at least one hundred and fifty years old and was sharp as a tack. She believed in memorizing poetry, and Psalm 1 was one of her favorites—King James Version, of course! Every day as the bell rang for lunch, she called on us to recite, at random. Of course we had to stand up at our desks and pick up where the previous girl had left off. If we faltered, we sat down. If we succeeded, we could go to lunch! Pity the poor girl who hadn't learned her psalm; she had a very short lunch time.

Certain phrases have stuck in my mind forever, like “nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.” That hit the spot with the “catty” stage in which we eighth-grade girls were living. The psalm made it clear that the blessed ones were *not* sitting in the seat of the scornful. It occurred that this truth might actually impact my daily life and behavior!

“Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment” was also appealing for a different reason. It was reassuring to hear that God is in charge, and it still is. The scripture we have lived with and captured in our hearts often sustains us by coming to mind when it is most needed. And it's as good a reason as any to love the scriptures.

The Rev. Elizabeth Colton is the clergy in charge of Pastoral Care, Family Ministries, and St. David's Episcopal Day School. She previously taught music all over the world and was ordained to the Vocational Diaconate in 1992 and the priesthood in 2004. She has served as rector of Grace Church and the Incarnation, Trinity Gulph Mills, and interim rector of All Saints' Torresdale.

FRIDAY, MARCH 13

The Second Week in Lent

Suggested Readings: Psalm 86:11-17; Deuteronomy 6:20-25; Acts 8:26-39;
John 4:31-38

Let us pray:

Grant, O Lord, that as your Son Jesus Christ prayed for his enemies on the cross, so we may have grace to forgive those who wrongfully or scornfully use us, that we ourselves may be able to receive your forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

As I read through each of the assigned scriptures searching for my devotional theme, I realized that each passage focused on trust and guidance. The passages made me ponder on when my trust was blind and innocent and how did it transform into guarded and protected. I believe we are born with trust and grace, which are two precious gifts that God has given us. To me our experiences prior to kindergarten that relate to trust follow us for the rest of our lives. When we feel distrust more than likely we can look upon those informative years to see where that link is broken. Unfortunately, over time our trust may become depleted; that person who we love has now dismissed us, promises given then broken, something beloved taken away or the heartbreak of a loss in a relationship. Each time our trust is broken we can become weary and guarded; eventually we can become so guarded we become defensive, isolated, or lonely.

Each of the scripture readings for the day has a message of trust and the guidance and forgiveness that it can bring. In the psalms, David is asking for God's guidance and is expressing his trust and love in God. For Deuteronomy, Moses is sharing the story of the trust one must have in God for he has delivered them from slavery and has given them the commandments, which are guiding principles. The Ethiopian in Acts finds trust in the teaching that Philip has shared with him, which encourages him to then take the final step of baptism. And finally, in John, Jesus tells of the trust he shares with disciples and from there they will find the spiritual food.

How do you build and maintain your trust? What is given and what is received? Is it transactional or a covenant?

Tim Phelp serves as the Rector's Warden of St. David's. He truly loves the deep fellowship at St. David's in witnessing Jesus Christ together. Outside of church, he enjoys spending time with his wife, Mindy, and daughter, Anna, especially wandering the property at Longwood Gardens on a sunny day.

SATURDAY, MARCH 14

The Second Week in Lent

Suggested Readings: Psalm 103:1-4 (5-8) 9-12; Micah 7:14-15, 18-20;
Luke 15:11-32

Let us pray:

Grant, most merciful Lord, to your faithful people pardon and peace, that they may be cleansed from all their sins, and serve you with a quiet mind; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

I had the pleasure of reading *The Return of The Prodigal Son* by Henri J. M. Nouwen with the St. David's Centering Prayer Group a few years ago, which opened my emotional sense of my identity with all three characters in Luke's gospel. I saw myself in the younger son's greed, the elder son's vengefulness, and the father's compassion.

When I leave my spiritual home, I become demanding and heartless, like the younger son. I betray my family and community values. I am living in a distant country. I am engulfed with anger, greed and loneliness. I have denied my God who calls me "My beloved."

My part as the elder son is the resentment I have shown to others. I have worked harder and better than you. I have done my duty while you have not, but I have been passed over for that higher position. Like the elder son who stayed home, I have become a lost man. Jealousy has ripped my soul open. I have become sinful and lost emotionally.

My Lord is always having a big celebration for me. Like the younger son, I am invited to the party when I ask forgiveness for my sins. I was dead and have come back to life. I was lost in sin but know I am found. The father said to the elder son, "My son you are with me always and all I have is yours." God has kept nothing for himself and given all his love to me.

Robert White has been a member of the St. David's family for over 35 years. He counts it a pleasure to have known many wonderful clergy and parishioners who helped him to deepen his spiritual life.

SUNDAY, MARCH 15

The Third Sunday in Lent

Suggested Readings: Psalm 95; Exodus 17:1-7; Romans 5:1-11; John 4:5-42

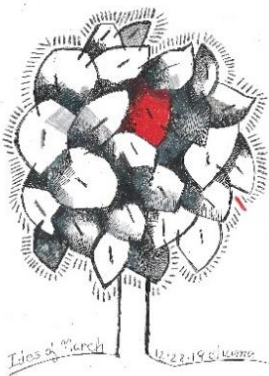
Let us pray:

Almighty God, you know that we have no power in ourselves to help ourselves: Keep us both outwardly in our bodies and inwardly in our souls, that we may be defended from all adversities which may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

At age fifty, I moved into a tiny condominium in one of the western suburbs not far from the bookshop where I then worked. The most imposing feature on those grounds surrounding my condo had been a large beech tree rumored to be the oldest living thing in the county, a shared source of pride for each of its residents. But after a few years living there, I learned the tree had weakened with age, the limbs in danger of coming down, and so the entire tree was taken down, leaving only a stump. But in the space left by that vacated tree, I still see a tree.

Our lives are made up as much by things no longer there, as they are by things that remain. And we anticipate things to come like children do Christmas. So we are often caught between a list of things to do, and the carcass of things done.

I have this crazy idea that prayer is embedded in deed, not ritual, and that ritual is there for those not yet strong enough to stand without it. Though like an ancient tree that eventually falls, who could be that strong?



Ed Louma grew up in Wisconsin and ended up living in Philadelphia and Wayne, where he worked at a bookshop for many years. He is a writer who has published a book titled Without Knowing It and continues to share his writing and art with the St. David's community through his iconic tree drawings.

MONDAY, MARCH 16

The Third Week in Lent

Suggested Readings: Psalm 42:1-7; 2 Kings 5: 1-15b; Luke 4: 23-30d

Let us pray:

Look upon the heart-felt desires of your humble servants, Almighty God, and stretch forth the right hand of your majesty to be our defense against all our enemies; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

“As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.” Psalm 42:1-2, NIV

Psalm 42 compares the thirst a deer has for water to the thirst one’s soul has for the Lord. These verses represent the eagerness one has to have a relationship with God, to make God a part of their life. The scripture says, “When can I go and meet with God?”

This question simply asks when we will feel God’s call and how to welcome it in our lives. Sometimes we want to form a deeper relationship with the Lord, but we do not know how. How does one quench the thirst for the Lord? It is common for us to often struggle to find the answer, as expressed in verse 3: “My tears have been my food day and night, while people say to me all day long, ‘Where is your God?’”

The people in this scripture indicate that simply asking where God is can help end our suffering and further feel his presence. God will help wipe away our tears; with God’s help, you will be healed. God’s call to us is similar to an invitation. When he invites us to come and trust in him, it is now up to us to accept his calling. The love the Lord has for us is so immense, we can always count on him for help. If we trust in him and accept his invitation to a life of forgiveness and everlasting love, we shall be rescued.

Hilary Wittboeft is a sophomore at Radnor High School and has attended St. David’s her whole life.

TUESDAY, MARCH 17

The Third Week in Lent

Suggested Readings: Psalm 97:1-2, 7-12 or 96:1-7; 1 Thessalonians 2:2b-12; Matthew 28:16-20

Let us pray:

O Lord, we beseech you mercifully to hear us; and grant that we, to whom you have given a fervent desire to pray, may, by your mighty aid, be defended and comforted in all dangers and adversities; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

These readings and collect remind us that even in the most difficult of times, the Lord is with us. He wants to protect, nurture, and defend from evil those who are faithful and trust in his will. He asks us to share the good news of the Gospel with everyone.

I equate this idea of wanting to care, protect, and teach others with that of a parent and child. As a parent of two young children, this is something that I try to do. I want to protect my children, but at the same time, I want them to occasionally stumble so they learn to pick themselves up.

It's the same with God. We know he is watching over all of us, but it is our job, along with his guidance, that we find this path. The Lord celebrates with us in our accomplishments and joy, and allows us to also fail, but with our faith, we know that he is always there to keep us safe. We need to trust in the knowledge that he will help to guide us down the path that he ultimately has for us, even when we don't always know what that path might be. We are faithful that he will never become tired and will continue to defend and protect all of those who believe in him.

May this Lenten season be a special time for you and your family to rest in that truth.

Sarah Schoettle sits on the Vestry and is a member of Family Ministries and Outreach Commissions. She and her young family are regulars at the 11:15 service.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 18

The Third Week in Lent

Suggested Readings: Psalm 122 or 34:1-8; Sirach 47:8-10; Luke 24:44-48

Let us pray:

Give ear to our prayers, O Lord, and direct the way of your servants in safety under your protection, that, amid all the changes of our earthly pilgrimage, we may be guarded by your mighty aid; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Making the case for prayer

“I sought the Lord, and he answered me. ... Blessed is the one who takes refuge in him.” Psalm 34:4, 8, NIV

David through the psalms entreats us to *pray*. Today’s readings make the case for the power of prayer.

They say that it takes about 40 days, plus or minus, to break a habit or create a new one. Each Lent is another opportunity. Today, March 18, is about midway in Lent. It is also my late mother’s 112th birthday. She taught me to pray. Would she remind me of the power of prayer today?

Am I on the way today to greater connection to God in prayer, at this point in the middle of March? Am I in need of a retread on my habits? Perhaps I can use these readings today to *re-establish my prayer habit* in my life, to praise the Lord and glory in the Lord.

“When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears, and rescues them from all their troubles.” Psalm 34:17

Helen Meeks Horstmann is a gardener and retired orthopedic surgeon. She is active in and especially enjoys Centering Prayer at St. David’s and is not as old as her mother.

THURSDAY, MARCH 19

The Third Week in Lent

Suggested Readings: Psalm 89:1-29 or 89:1-4, 26-29; 2 Samuel 7:4, 8-16; Romans 4:13-18; Luke 2:41-52

Let us pray:

Keep watch over your Church, O Lord, with your unfailing love; and, since it is grounded in human weakness and cannot maintain itself without your aid, protect it from all danger, and keep it in the way of salvation; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

This lovely collect really emphasizes the importance of our relationship with the Lord via the Church and the essential human need to protect it from our weaknesses, so that we may continue on our journey onwards to the heavenly kingdom following the grace of God.

**“Thus says the Lord of hosts: ... I have been with you wherever you went.”
2 Samuel 7:9**

God’s covenant with David is a glorious message from God that truly establishes David’s relationship with him and his loving commitment to our Lord through the dark passages of time to the glories of being kept through the steadfast love of our Savior.

“God ... gives life to the dead.” Romans 4:17

Romans 4 offers a guiding message that should remain with all of us.

I will never forget a few very dramatic hours when my oldest son was involved in a near-fatal car accident; countless prayers were sent up to the Lord—and they were answered!

In Luke 2, we find the story of Jesus and his parents who went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. When he was 12 years old, he did not return with them. Three days later, Jesus was found in the Temple, listening to teachers and asking them questions. In answer to his parents’ concern about his whereabouts, he asked, “Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?”

What an incredible revelation! In order that we may continue on our journey to the Heavenly Kingdom, we should keep in close touch with our Church and all it has to offer. Let us go to the House of the Lord!

Penny Watkins loves classical music and gardening. She is grateful for family connections in the United Kingdom and in the United States.

FRIDAY, MARCH 20

The Third Week in Lent

Suggested Readings: Psalm 23 or 1; 2 Corinthians 6:1-10; Matthew 6:24-33

Let us pray:

Grant us, O Lord our Strength, a true love of your holy Name; so that, trusting in your grace, we may fear no earthly evil, nor fix our hearts on earthly goods, but may rejoice in your full salvation; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

As I begin to write, I think about Emerson's words:

There is a guidance for each of us, and by lowly listening we shall hear the right word . . . Place yourself in the middle of the stream of power and wisdom which flows into your life. Then, without effort, you are impelled to truth and to perfect contentment.

I like the idea of one "right word" speaking to me in scripture, rather than having to try to understand an entire writing all at once. Each time I read something, I look for that "right word" and realize that the word may change depending on the day.

The "right word" for me today is Shepherd. We aren't used to seeing many shepherds where we live. Yet when I think about the nature of a shepherd, it is of a very physical and intimate presence. The sheep know the shepherd's voice, sounds, smell, and footsteps and he or she knows them. He lives where they live, protects them from harm and guides them to water when they are thirsty. Her staff has a hook on the end and when she needs to, she pulls them back by the neck. He is a loving presence for his flock. Like a shepherd, God meets us in our ordinary, daily lives here on earth and provides spiritual care and guidance all the days of our lives.

Of all the psalms, Psalm 23 is the most comforting for me. The visual of God as a shepherd with rod and staff, here to guide me, helps free me from the stresses of daily life. When I read this psalm, I know that I have only to follow the Lord, my Shepherd, and all will be well. If I will remember this promise as I go about my days here on earth, I can find truth and perfect contentment.

Carol McKiernan leads Centering Prayer at St. Thomas of Villanova Church and in Chautauqua Institution, NY. She also regularly attends Centering Prayer groups at St. David's Church and Villanova University.

SATURDAY, MARCH 21

The Third Week in Lent

Suggested Readings: Psalm 145:8-13; Philippians 4:4-9; Luke 6:17-23

Let us pray:

O God, you know us to be set in the midst of so many and great dangers, that by reason of the frailty of our nature we cannot always stand upright: Grant us such strength and protection as may support us in all dangers, and carry us through all temptations; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

“And all in the crowd were trying to touch him, for power came out of him and healed all of them.” Luke 6:19

In Luke 6, we find Jesus on a level place as he is descending the mountain from where he had prayed overnight. I am in awe and tremble as I imagine the energy that Jesus conveyed to his disciples and to the crowd after his night of prayer on the mountain. I feel the energy holding the community.

Beloved theologian Henri Nouwen writes:

Jesus was truly free. His freedom was rooted in his spiritual awareness that he was the Beloved Child of God. He knew in the depth of his being that he belonged to God before he was born, that he was sent into the world to proclaim God’s love, and that he would return to God after his mission was fulfilled. This knowledge gave him ... the power to respond to people’s pains with the healing love of God ...

... To be chosen as the Beloved of God is something radically different. Instead of excluding others, it includes others. Instead of rejecting others as less valuable, it accepts others in their own uniqueness. It is not a competitive, but a compassionate choice... our awareness of being chosen opens our eyes to the chosenness of others.

St. Paul and the psalmist speak to the experience of being the beloved in Christ. Being grounded in prayer, the “peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:7). We can, by the grace of God, be free in knowing that we, like Jesus, are God’s beloved.

Laurie Robinson is an integrative nutrition health coach and recently completed a program from the Penn Program for Mindfulness. She is passionate about sharing how mindfulness and mindfulness techniques helps our minds learn new ways to reduce stress, practice stillness and being rather than doing, and connect with God. She and her husband, David, have four children and one grandchild.

SUNDAY, MARCH 22

The Fourth Sunday in Lent

Suggested Readings: Psalm 23; 1 Samuel 16:1-13; Ephesians 8:8-14;
John 9:1-41

Let us pray:

Gracious Father, whose blessed Son Jesus Christ came down from heaven to be the true bread which gives life to the world: Evermore give us this bread, that he may live in us, and we in him; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Day in and day out, routine tasks of school, work, and balancing the seemingly endless events in life consume our daily thoughts. We find ourselves concerned with constantly planning for the future and worrying about the items not yet checked off of our To-Do lists.

In the midst of the chaos, it is easy to forget the purpose of our routines. One item on our To-Do lists that I find is often overlooked is reflecting on our underlying yet driving force: faith.

Our faith is the force behind our daily routines and endless To-Do lists whether we realize it or not. As the collect states, “Evermore give us this bread, that he may live in us, and we in him.”

Faith is not only driving our routines, but it is motivating us to keep pursuing our goals. This is also a comforting thought. Even when we get caught up in our busy lives, God is keeping up with our fast-paced lives right beside us. God will always be with us to comfort us, guide us, or motivate us to finish those To-Do lists.

God is there for each of us, reminding us that we are not alone, and that we do not have to take on the world by ourselves. His “blessed Son Jesus Christ came down from heaven to be the true bread which gives life to the world” and breathes life into us so that they we may carry on with our lives, further strengthened and without fear.

Hanna Fay is a junior at Marple Newtown High School. She loves being involved at school in student council and varsity tennis, and at St. David's in the youth group, Hip Hop Hippo feeding ministry, and as an acolyte.

MONDAY, MARCH 23

The Fourth Week in Lent

Suggested Readings: Psalm 33:6-11 or 98:1-4; Acts 17:22-31; Matthew 5:11-16

Let us pray:

O Lord our God, in your holy Sacraments you have given us a foretaste of the good things of your kingdom: Direct us, we pray, in the way that leads to eternal life, that we may come to appear before you in that place of light where you dwell for ever with your saints; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

“You are the salt of the earth ... you are the light of the world.”

Matthew 5:13-14

“The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth ...” Acts 17:24, NIV

As we prepare for the miracle of resurrection, all of the biblical passages for today, Old and New Testament, speak of assurance. Assurance that God is the source of creation. Assurance God has anticipated everything we need to be in sync with his desire for us to participate as active members in the world around us. It is this reminder that gives us confidence that the sustaining supplies of faith and love are enough, and are to be used interactively with those who are outside the Lord’s desired plan for humanity.

Water, salt and light are basic building blocks for survival; all created by God and accessible to us. All three of these basic elements become more than their everyday substance in the scriptures. We are reminded to use the fundamental building blocks of our faith to sustain our life’s journey in Christ; to profess our beliefs when tested by others, and not fear our own pending earthly demise as we move to eternal life.

As we read and pray the collect for the day, consider the simplicity of God’s gift of the sacraments—bread and wine—which become so much more than their earthly substance with Christ’s death and resurrection. Our reward for faithfulness and an active, connected life with God seems unbelievable, yet is ours if we simply believe his Son’s life, death, and resurrection transform the simple things around us into tools of grace and love for us to use every day. As Paul shared with the people of Athens, “He has given proof of this to everyone...” (Acts 17:31, NIV).

Byard Ebling grew up next to churches throughout northeast PA as the son of a Lutheran minister. He currently is a member of Saint David’s Vestry and enjoys the fellowship of Men’s Bible Study on Friday mornings and attends church with his wife, Barbara.

TUESDAY, MARCH 24

The Fourth Week in Lent

Suggested Readings: Psalm 31:15-24; Revelation 7:13-17; John 12:23-32

Let us pray:

O God, with you is the well of life, and in your light we see light: Quench our thirst with living water, and flood our darkened minds with heavenly light; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

“But I trust in you, O LORD; I say, ‘You are my God.’ My times are in your hand; deliver me from the hand of my enemies and persecutors. Let your face shine upon your servant; save me in your steadfast love. Do not let me be put to shame, O LORD, for I call on you; let the wicked be put to shame.” Psalm 31:15-17

Long ago, when I first read Psalms as an adult, I was put off by the author’s prayers that God destroy the writer’s enemies. I did not think that my enemies, such as they were, were so bad that they should be destroyed. Moreover, I did not think someone should be destroyed simply because that person chose to oppose me. Destruction seemed somewhat harsh. And what about those who “trespass” against me in the familiar Lord’s Prayer?

Then someone gave me an insight into a way to interpret Psalms. Psalms need not be seen as vindictive. The enemies in Psalms could be referring to the enemies of God. And to the extent that I have ungodly thoughts, I was my own enemy, or perhaps my own thoughts could be my enemy. And so I ask God to destroy those of my thoughts that are self-defeating and dark—whatever that steers me away from the light.

At the age of 69, I am in my happiest state of mind. My mind continues to fight dark spots in my thinking. The thought of “flooding my mind with heavenly light” is so compelling and beautiful that it strengthens my resolve to turn to God in all things.

Barbara Glaser grew up in Radnor and moved away after college. In 2007, she moved back to Radnor from Texas. She and her husband have a son.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 25

The Fourth Week in Lent

Suggested Readings: Psalm 45 or 40:5-11 or Canticle 3 or 15; Isaiah 7:10-14; Hebrews 10:4-10; Luke 1:26-38

Let us pray:

O Lord our God, you sustained your ancient people in the wilderness with bread from heaven: Feed now your pilgrim flock with the food that endures to everlasting life; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

“Then Mary said, ‘I am the Lord’s servant. May it be with me just as you have said.’ Then the angel left her.” Luke 1:38, CEB

In May of 2018, while on vacation with my husband, Nate, in Miami, I learned that I was pregnant with my daughter, Charlotte. This was not something that we had planned. Nate and I were completely freaked out. We thought that our life as we knew it was over. All we did for that afternoon was sit in our hotel room and cry about how nothing was ever going to be the same. I ended up calling my mom. She calmed me down and talked to me about how much of a blessing this was. She said how God put this into our life because God knew that we were ready to be parents, and that I could trust God with this.

Of course, my mom was right. Charlotte was born on January 23, 2019, and I can honestly say I have never been more thankful that God gave me her. She truly lights up my life, and I couldn’t imagine going through life without her.

When I read this passage, specifically Mary’s response to the angel Gabriel, I was perplexed at how trusting she was of the Lord. As we all know, Mary was an unmarried virgin at this announcement, which was a *huge* no-no at the time. Mary knew that by saying yes to this, she faced an uphill battle of scorn, ridicule, and even possibly death. She could’ve easily been rejected by her soon-to-be husband, Joseph. She had to put her complete trust in God and in God’s plan.

You will come across times in your life where God will place a hardship in your life. Whether that be a job change, losing a loved one, a big move, or an unknown pregnancy! But we can say with confidence:

“Trust in the Lord with all of your heart ...” Proverbs 3:5

Lauren Machowski has been the Communications Director of St. David’s for almost four years. She enjoys cooking, being outside, and relaxing with her family.

THURSDAY, MARCH 26

The Fourth Week in Lent

Suggested Readings: Psalm 106:6-7, 19-23; Exodus 32:7-14; John 5:30-47

Let us pray:



Almighty and most merciful God, drive from us all weakness of body, mind, and spirit; that, being restored to wholeness, we may with free hearts become what you intend us to be and accomplish what you want us to do; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Today's lectionary has an elegant path to a thorny conundrum: "How can you believe when you accept glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the one who alone is God?" (John 5:44).

First the psalmist laments the immaturity and crude behavior of "both we and our ancestors" (Psalm 106:6), then reports God's anger and instinct for punishment, and finally reminds us of Moses' courageous stewardship, one who "stood in the breach before God, to turn away his wrath" (Psalm 106:23). The Exodus passage then puts Moses squarely in that breach—with four desperate arguments for rethinking the destruction of God's people. "And the Lord changed his mind" (Exodus 32:14).

Reading the gospel verses in this context, Jesus' frustration feels palpable! I feel so much empathy for Jesus, where's I'd previously worried the disciples might have been thinking Jesus was speaking in riddles. "If I testify about myself, my testimony is not true" is the least mystifying of a dozen such lines in this exchange!

The glory of God is a human being fully alive! We learn so much in this passage in John's gospel about living in God's glory. We can do nothing on our own. We have to be vigilant about not being misled by humans or culture. Yet if we refuse to come to Jesus, we will not experience the love of God in us. This all leads us back to the prayer for today:

Surrender  **Return to Wholeness**  **Freedom**

After a career in finance, Dana Hall is pursuing a second career as a pastoral care provider. She is currently a lay chaplain at Lanckenau Hospital and a disaster spiritual care chaplain for the American Red Cross. She has been involved in many of St. David's ministries, including the Cuba partnership program.

FRIDAY, MARCH 27

The Fourth Week in Lent

Suggested Readings: Psalm 122 or 133; Ephesians 4:1-7, 11-13;
Matthew 9:35-38

Let us pray:

O God, you have given us the Good News of your abounding love in your Son Jesus Christ: So fill our hearts with thankfulness that we may rejoice to proclaim the good tidings we have received; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

How spectacular was October 5, 2019? A gorgeous, sunny, fall day. Hundreds of eager volunteers ready to serve. Huge crowds of parishioners and neighbors, long-time fair goers and complete strangers, enjoying the gift of the St. David's Country Fair and Auction. "How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity!" (Psalm 133:1, NIV).

To me, it is a triumph that our little fair has taken place for 168 years. It is not a small production. By the time a wrap up meeting is held, our wonderful volunteers are celebrated, and deserving homes are found for the various treasures donated by our generous community, new items start piling up at the shed doors.

It is truly remarkable the ceaseless amount of time, energy, and manpower required to put together this six-hour event. So how are we able to—and why do we—do it? Because we choose to walk in a manner that is worthy of our calling. And, by walking together, we raise tens of thousands of dollars for our Outreach partners, while welcoming our greater community into the fellowship of our church home.

None of us possess the gifts and talents that a successful fair demands. It requires dedicated leaders and willing collaborators, extroverted promoters and quiet sorters, heavy lifters and delicate hands; but together, following our call and sharing our gifts, we work together in service to a greater good.

“And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.” Ephesians 4:11-12, ESV

As a parishioner of St. David's for nearly 20 years, Missy Katbol has enjoyed watching her three boys grow up, learn, and give back to their church home. She has benefited from volunteer opportunities, including Sunday school, the acolyte program, the flower guild, and the fair.

SATURDAY, MARCH 28

The Fourth Week in Lent

Suggested Readings: Psalm 7:6-11; Jeremiah 11:18-20; John 7:37-51

Let us pray:

Mercifully bear our prayers, O Lord, and spare all those who confess their sins to you; that those whose consciences are accused by sin may by your merciful pardon be absolved; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

“Oh, let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end, but establish the just; for the righteous God tests the hearts and minds. My defense is of God, who saves the upright in heart. I will praise the LORD according to His righteousness, and will sing praise to the name of the LORD Most High.” Psalm 7:9-10, 17, NKJV

I love this passage from Psalms, summarized in 7:8, “The Lord shall judge the peoples” (NKJV). Thank God. Who could live in a world not governed by justice? Knowing that there is a good God who judges each and every one of us keeps me sane; only if there is a good God do Mother Teresa and Hitler have different fates.

We who love God are commanded repeatedly to hate evil. Judgement is love. We judge and punish our children when needed, because we love them. We want them to be good. If I didn’t love my children, I would let them do anything. This would actually be hateful toward them. So we punish our children as needed because we love them. But now, as an adult ... what, I magically, at some age, have outgrown the need for the threat of punishment? I no longer need a Father looking over me? I no longer sin? Ha! What a joke!

I am only more aware each day of the depth of my shame. But what else does judgement do for us? It teaches us the need to apologize, to beg forgiveness, to atone—to become better people. The prayer for today puts our sin into the right perspective—sin does not have the last word in our lives. Thank you, God, again, for the gift of your judgment. Then, only because of his judgment can we get the flip side—God’s other, glorious gift to us: His eternal mercy.

Matt Groves is the Grounds and Graveyard Manager at St. David’s.

SUNDAY, MARCH 29

The Fifth Sunday in Lent

Suggested Readings: Psalm 130; Ezekiel 37:1-14; Romans 8:6-11; John 11:1-45

Let us pray:

Almighty God, you alone can bring into order the unruly wills and affections of sinners: Grant your people grace to love what you command and desire what you promise; that, among the swift and varied changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed where true joys are to be found; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

As I read today's passages, one line from Psalm 130 particularly resonated: "My soul waits for the Lord/More than those who watch for the morning" (verse 6). The whole psalm has a tone of excitement and trust in hoping for God to appear. The visual of waiting, watching, hoping for the morning reminds me of times in my life when I've watched the sun rise. My most treasured sunrise experiences have happened on days of transition—graduations, the last day of summer camp, the day I moved to Philadelphia. These sunrises have felt similar in many ways. Each time, I'm with some of my close friends, and we are groggily gathered outside in the chilly, quiet darkness, awaiting the sun.

In these moments, I am never worried that the sun won't rise. I can relax into the comfort of witnessing a beautiful natural ritual that few others are awake to see. But when I think on my own soul, waiting on the Lord more than those who watch for the morning, I often find myself preoccupied with worries. What if the Lord decides not to show up?

During this season, I typically throw myself into a Lenten challenge of giving up something, in hopes that I can reconnect with God by hitting a self-improvement target. My relationship with God relies on completing my goal, rather than having to trust that God will show up on God's own. That's what Lent is all about, right? Yet in this psalm we are told simply to wait, and hope.

It's a relief to settle into the stillness of the almost-morning. It is with faith that we trust that the Lord showed up yesterday—and will show up again. There is nothing to do but hold our people close and watch for the new day to rise.

Sarah Champlin is St. David's Youth Minister, working with students in grades 5th to 12th and many volunteers. She is involved in leading youth mission trips and other local service work, in addition to establishing a supportive space for youth to explore their faith.

Monday, March 30
The Fifth Week in Lent

Suggested readings: Psalm 23; Susanna 1-9, 15-29, 24-62 or 41-62; John 8:1-11

Let us pray:

Be gracious to your people, we entreat you, O Lord, that they, repenting day by day of the things that displease you, may be more and more filled with love of you and of your commandment; and being supported by your grace in this life, may come to the full enjoyment of eternal life in your everlasting kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Psalm 23. An intimidating assignment. Arguably the most famous Old Testament passage, undoubtedly everyone knows it and has emotionally connected with it at some point. It's a lot to unpack. What do I focus on? Who am I to interpret it for others? What could I possibly add of value? These are some of the thoughts that flooded my mind as I sat down to write this, paralyzed by fear and self-doubt.

My three-year-old son walked in and snapped me out of it to tell me he is scared to walk into his room. He's afraid there's a monster. I give the standard parent response. He says, "I'm not brave. I'm scared. Will you come with me?" I take a minute looking back and forth at my blank computer screen and his little face and say, "You *are* brave. It's brave to say you are scared. It's brave to ask for help. Brave is being afraid to go in the room, but you do it anyway. Of course I'll walk with you, my sweet child. Here, take my hand."

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me."

To me, Psalm 23 is about courage and confidence. It is about the power of affirmations and optimism. It is about reminding ourselves of the truth. Not the lies others may tell us or the lies we tell ourselves, but the truth, power and magnitude of the Lord as our Shepherd. My son reminded me of our responsibility to shepherd each other ... and how truly brave it is to surrender. To be able to say, I am afraid of this dark valley, this monster, this self-doubt, Lord, but I will walk through it anyway with you guiding and protecting me.

Life is fully of dark valleys which help us utilize and understand fortitude. Valleys show us our capacity to trust God and deepen our spiritual connection. Through the darkness we can recognize light and appreciate green pastures. So, whatever your valley may be, take a deep breath, take God's hand, and walk through because you, God's child, are brave.

Valerie Dickman has been a member of St. David's community since 2016. She is wife to Matt and mom to her two little lambs, Nora and James.

Tuesday, March 31

The Fifth Week in Lent

Suggested Readings: Psalm 27:5-11 or 16:5-11; Wisdom 7:24:8:1; John 5:19-24

Let us pray:

Almighty God, through the incarnate Word you have caused us to be born anew of an imperishable and eternal seed: Look with compassion upon those who are being prepared for Holy Baptism, and grant that they may be built as living stones into a spiritual temple acceptable to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

**“Hear, O Lord, when I cry aloud, be gracious to me and answer me!
‘Come,’ my heart says, ‘seek his face! Your face, Lord, do I seek. Do not
hide your face from me.” Psalm 27:7-8**

These two sentences grab me every time I hear or read them. Recently, I have found in my own personal prayer and devotional time the psalms are the place I’m finding God the most. Reflecting on the suggested passages brought me to connect with the two psalms.

The writers of the psalms are so real, so personal, so willing to let their deepest, darkest, most confusing and ambivalent –or even contradictory—feelings out to God. They know that God is able to listen and accept us right where we are. But through the ministry of the Holy Spirit we are not left alone. But sometimes it feels like the psalmists had some superhuman ability to connect with God, and we only are spying into their awesome moments with God.

But then I am reminded of how I can in fact make the prayers of the psalmists my own, by repeating them, by writing them out, praying them, memorizing them, reciting them, hearing them in music or creating art inspired by them. I was helped in this direction—that God desires to connect with my needs, my thoughts, my reflections as much as the great heroes of the faith who wrote the psalms—by the women’s fellowship workshop on prayer journaling in January and by reading Flannery O’Connor’s *A Prayer Journal*.

O’Connor is an example of a person who wrote theologically awe-inspiring work, yet struggled in her own faith and prayer life. She writes, “I would like to write a beautiful prayer but I have nothing to do it from. . . . Oh God please make my mind clear. Please help me to get down under things and find where You are.”

I’m encouraged by her honesty, her wrestling, her reaching out to God. When we seek God’s face, we will find God.

The Rev. Emily Zimbrick-Rogers is the Assistant Rector for Discipleship and Fellowship.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 1

The Fifth Week in Lent

Suggested Readings: Psalm 72:11-17 or 145:8-13; Ephesians 3:14-19;
John 18:33-37

Let us pray:

Almighty God our heavenly Father, renew in us the gifts of your mercy; increase our faith, strengthen our hope, enlighten our understanding, widen our charity, and make us ready to serve you; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.



Ashley Masba and her husband, Stephen, have two children, Mikey (3) and Stella (1). They joined St. David's Church after their son Mikey started attending SDEDS. Her background is in design so she created a visual meditation and hopes this glimpse into her faith helps readers strengthen their own faith.

THURSDAY, APRIL 2

The Fifth Week in Lent

Suggested Readings: Psalm 105:4-11; Genesis 17:1-8; John 8:51-59

Let us pray:

O God, you have called us to be your children, and have promised that those who suffer with Christ will be heirs with him of your glory: Arm us with such trust in him that we may ask no rest from his demands and have no fear in his service; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

“Seek the Lord ... seek his presence ... Remember the wonderful works he has done...” Psalm 105:4-5

Recently, in a period of silence, the phrase, “watching is worship” sprang spontaneously to my consciousness. That little phrase struck me as so odd, because watching, waiting, observing, contemplating do not usually feel like acts of worship to me. I tend to treat them as preparation for the real action of worship. “Real Lent” is fasting, spiritual disciplines, and taking on good works, right?

Yet here the psalmist is doing nothing but seeking the presence of God and remembering God’s works. There is no statement of *doing* things or working, taking on or giving up, on the part of the psalmist. Rather there is watching, remembering, contemplating.

Watching is both active and passive. It is waiting to see what happens, what comes next. It is being observant, noticing details. But the watcher does not control, change, intervene on what they see. They witness. Jesus, in today’s gospel reading, says that Abraham, in a mystery of divine timelines, was a watcher who rejoiced when he saw the time of Christ.

What if that little phrase was right? What if watching can be worship? Perhaps watching is another way to approach Lent—watching as Jesus travels to Jerusalem and the cross, watching as our dreams and hopes are raised and then crushed under the heels of principalities and powers, watching as the incarnate God suffers and dies, fully joining us in our humanity. Perhaps, if I sit and watch, I will catch a glimpse of the glory of the suffering, dying, and rising God. And in the presence of this mystery of divine love and life, may I rejoice and be transformed. Amen.

Charles G. Zimbrick-Rogers is married to St. David’s newest clergy member, Emily. He especially enjoys St. David’s graveyard with its quiet stillness.

FRIDAY, APRIL 3

The Fifth Week in Lent

Suggested Readings: Psalm 84:7-12 or 23; Philippians 4:10-13;
Matthew 25:31-40

Let us pray:

O Lord, you relieve our necessity out of the abundance of your great riches: Grant that we may accept with joy the salvation you bestow, and manifest it to all the world by the quality of our lives; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Today's reading from Philippians immediately reminded me of a former colleague who insisted that taking public transportation is the key factor to what makes a person well-rounded.

To me, the key factor to what makes a person well-rounded is what Paul speaks about in verse 12: "I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need." Having little at times, or being in need, and having plenty at times, along with the ability to recognize and be thankful to God in all situations, is truly, to me what makes someone a well-rounded person.

As a "new" mom, I always try to remind myself that every single thing is temporary. Each stage and each situation is temporary. The amazing, the good, the great, the not-so-great and the miserable are all temporary. Having little is temporary, having plenty is also temporary. Nothing is permanent, except for God's love.

When you find that you have plenty, it's a great blessing from God to be able to share. When you find that you have little or you are in need, with God's love and grace God will pull you through. In the process, you will become stronger, wiser and more appreciative of his gifts. As verse 13 says, "I can do all things through him who strengthens me."

The first person to greet St. David's parishioners in person or on the phone, Heather Sill grew up in Delaware County and lives with her husband, Anthony, and their two-year-old son, AJ. She loves spending time with her family, cooking, reading, doing Zumba, and listening to all different kinds of music.

SATURDAY, APRIL 4

The Fifth Week in Lent

Suggested Readings: Psalm 77:11-20 or 98:1-4; Exodus 3:7-12; Luke 6:27-36

Let us pray:

O Lord, in your goodness you bestow abundant graces on your elect: Look with favor, we entreat you, upon those who in these Lenten days are being prepared for Holy Baptism, and grant them the help of your protection; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

The Lord bestows abundant graces on us—despite the fact that we often don’t notice them or know what to do with them.

The first half of Psalm 77 is an example of our mindset when we are in a place where we don’t recognize God’s presence in our lives. The psalmist asks if God has “forgotten to be merciful” or if he has “withheld his compassion” (Psalm 77:9, NIV). The answer comes to the psalmist when he decides to “consider all your works and meditate on all your mighty deeds” (verse 12), which places him in a frame of mind where he can appreciate how truly blessed he is.

When we meditate on God’s works and mighty deeds—not those of the Old Testament, but of those in our own lives—we gain a better vantage point for considering Luke’s gospel. We’re told to “love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you” (Luke 6:27-28, NIV). Now, I readily accept the challenge to do these things for people I love, like, or at least share some values with.

But Jesus is very clear: even sinners do those things for their friends. We need to love, do good, bless, and pray for those people who are not family, friends, congregants, or colleagues. In this age of opinion polarization, it’s too easy to focus our attention on those who share our background and values. Jesus has another idea.

“Love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High!” Luke 6:35, NIV

Patrick Rafferty and his wife, Domenica have loved being part of the Saint David’s community. Patrick enjoys nature photography, hiking, bicycling, and baking rustic Italian bread.

SUNDAY, APRIL 5

Palm Sunday—The Sunday of the Passion

Suggested Readings: Psalm 31:9-16; Isaiah 50:4-9a; Philippians 2:5-11; Matthew 26:14-27:66 or Matthew 27:11-54

Let us pray:

Almighty and everliving God, in your tender love for the human race you sent your Son our Savior Jesus Christ to take upon him our nature, and to suffer death upon the cross, giving us the example of his great humility; Mercifully grant that we may walk in the way of his suffering, and also share in his resurrection; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

“The Lord God has given me the tongue of a teacher, that I may know how to sustain the weary with a word.” Isaiah 50:4

The readings for today are nourishing. They start with: speak a kind word to the weary. What an important reminder.

The ultimate measure of his steadfast love for us is described when we read Matthew 27:11-54. I contemplate the crucifixion, especially the roles of Simon of Cyrene and the two bandits. In Matthew’s version, the two criminals insult Jesus, while Simon carries the cross for Jesus when Jesus could not. The scriptures of the Old Testament are fulfilled in Jesus’ death.

As I prepare to go on St David’s Pilgrimage to Israel this March, one passage in James Martin’s book, *Jesus, A Pilgrimage*, made the message of the crucifixion click with me in a profound way. He cites the theologian, Thomas J. Scirghi, who makes an analogy between Jesus taking on the sins of humanity with that of a parent, who feels the weight of the suffering caused by a criminal child. I also interpret this as that of a parent, who would do anything for the welfare of one’s child. The role of God, our Father; and us, his children. I get it.

In the midst of Jesus’ pain, Simon helped carry the weight of the cross. Today, we Christians can sustain each other. God’s love gives us the strength to sustain our weariness. Thanks be to God!

Kathy Marscher is a retired librarian from the Boston area who was received into the Episcopal Church in the spring of 2018. She lives near one of her sons who lives in Wayne with his wife and two daughters.

MONDAY, APRIL 6

Holy Week

Suggested Readings: Psalm 36:5-11; Isaiah 49:1-9; Hebrews 9:11-15;
John 12:20-36

Let us pray:

Almighty God, whose dear Son went not up to joy but first he suffered pain, and entered not into glory before he was crucified: Mercifully grant that we, walking in the way of the cross, may find it none other than the way of life and peace; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

“Thy steadfast love, O Lord, extends to the heavens, thy faithfulness to the clouds....” Psalm 36:5, RSV

I love this psalm, as well as any reminder of God’s never-ending, unconditional love for us. With a fire crackling in our fireplace while my husband and I enjoy a snug cozy evening, it is easy to feel safe and secure in God’s love. One of the amazing gifts that God offers us is an awareness of the knowledge of his steadfast love in any and all circumstances. His love for us is enormous, all-encompassing, and steadfast, that even in stressful or unpleasant circumstances, we can be nurtured by it.

Raising five children was not without its challenges, and there have been times of anxiety and sorrow, as well as joy. Along my life’s journey, it has been the luxury of feeling God’s steadfast and abundant love for me that has sustained me.

“How precious is thy steadfast love, O God! ... For with thee is the fountain of life; in thy light do we see light.” Psalm 36:7, 9

Domenica Rafferty loves cooking, classical music, and quiet evenings with her husband, Patrick, and a good book. Her children and grandchildren are a delight to her heart. Domenica enjoys Centering Prayer in St. David’s Church.

TUESDAY, APRIL 7

Holy Week

Suggested Readings: Psalm 71:1-14; Isaiah 49:1-7; 1 Corinthians 1:18-31;
John 13:21-32

Let us pray:

O God, by the passion of your blessed Son you made an instrument of shameful death to be for us the means of life: Grant us so to glory in the cross of Christ, that we may gladly suffer shame and loss for the sake of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

This is an outrageous week. Forces of evil are colluding and colliding. Religious leaders, fearful of losing the workable but tense relationship they have with their conquering rulers and the comfortable life it provides them, are plotting to rid themselves of this rebel rabbi.

In John's gospel, as Jesus is speaking about his coming death and resurrection, he's trying to focus us on the future that impels his suffering. Yes, Jesus will die but there is much more than death to come.

And yet, we are left pondering why must this happen? Why all this suffering? But we know the answer. We know that there are some things worth standing for even if we have to die for them.

We all suffer things we would rather not endure because we know if we fail, we will not achieve what we want most. Soldiers, accident survivors, women giving birth, firefighters, people recovering from serious illness and operations, all suffer, some unimaginable amounts of pain. But all have a reason, a vision that drives them forward. Seeing a worthy relationship between the suffering we endure and the fulfillment of the vision for which we are suffering can give us superhuman strength. In other words, having some meaningful end vision allows us to endure suffering.

Jesus endures suffering to bring about a new life for us, to usher us into the realm of God. Jesus purchases this gift with great sacrifice and suffering. Are we willing to accept the gift, to make the commitment and do whatever it takes to bring new life about? This gift is the outrageous extreme of Holy Week.

The Rev. Edward Shiley is a retired Episcopal priest and has been an Associate Rector at St. David's for the past three years. He spends much of his time mentoring the EfM (Education for Ministry) seminars at St. David's.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 8

Holy Week

Suggested Readings: Psalm 70; Isaiah 50:4-9a; Hebrews 12:1-3; John 13:21-32

Let us pray:

Lord God, whose blessed Son our Savior gave his body to be whipped and his face to be spit upon: Give us grace to accept joyfully the sufferings of the present time, confident of the glory that shall be revealed; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Bobby Layne, a quarterback for the Detroit Lions, once said: “I’ve never lost a football game. Sometimes my team was behind when the clock ran out.”

The unknown writer of the Letter to the Hebrews is aware of a clear tension in building a faithful life as a valued Child of God. On the one hand, we occasionally can be part of a valuable team—a community—for love and justice. In such reassuring times we find valuable strength and support. Looking into church history, we can find support within our community,

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

On other occasions, however, we sense we are called to make our own decision in contrast to the popular team. We sense that the love and justice of Jesus Christ—for the sake of even one needy individual—is at stake. Thus our integrity is hanging on our lone decision. Our witness for God’s sake is challenged by the popular trend. It may even be a time in which the team seems to have support from the crowd in the stands. On these occasions, we then are called to look to

“Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.” Hebrews 12:2

It is then Jesus Christ who calls even the “weary and fainthearted” to the throne of God ... from where we might also sense we did not “lose the game.”

The Rev. Bill Wood is Associate Rector at St. David’s and retired as Rector of St. Christopher’s, Gladwyne in 2013. He and his wife, Kristine, were married at St. David’s in 1974, and they have two grown children, son, Cary, and daughter, Alice.

THURSDAY, APRIL 9

Maundy Thursday

Suggested Readings: Psalm 116:1, 10-17; Exodus 12:1-4(5-10), 11-14;
1 Corinthians 11:23-26; John 13:1-17, 31b-35

Let us pray:

Almighty Father, whose dear Son, on the night before he suffered, instituted the Sacrament of his Body and Blood: Mercifully grant that we may receive it thankfully in remembrance of Jesus Christ our Lord, who in these holy mysteries gives us a pledge of eternal life; and who now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

“If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.” 1 Corinthians 13:1-3, NIV

But if I do not have love.

Lent is a time for self-examination, a time of repentance, a penitential time. It really is an intentional time for us to get out of our own way so that we may encounter Jesus more fully. This passage from Paul in First Corinthians is very famous, and we often hear these verses at weddings. When I was recently at a wedding, the preacher spoke not about how a wedding celebrates love that have changed the lives of two people, but rather about darkness.

The love between two people that has drawn them together, the vows that are said, the families and friends that are gathered around to witness is not a celebration of shiny and sparkly love. But rather it is a celebration of a commitment of two people who have vowed to walk into all the dark places in each other's lives and in their own lives with a companion. Marriage is an example to us all of the relationship that we have with Jesus. In Jesus, we have a companion who will journey with us into the parts of our lives that we keep locked behind doors and hidden under carpets.

Do not be afraid during this Lenten season to journey into these parts of our lives that we haven't seen in a while, for we don't go into these places alone. Jesus is with us, and his love and his presence overflows to us.

The Rev. Maurice Dyer graduated from the Virginia Theological Seminary in 2019, and has worked in several churches in California and Washington D.C. He is St. David's Assistant Rector for Mission, Outreach, and Communications.

FRIDAY, APRIL 10

Good Friday

Suggested Readings: Psalm 22; Isaiah 52:13-53:12; Hebrews 10:16-25 or Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9; John 18:1-19:42

Let us pray:

Almighty God, we pray you graciously to behold this your family, for whom our Lord Jesus Christ was willing to be betrayed, and given into the hands of sinners, and to suffer death upon the cross; who now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

My ears are always stung on Good Friday by the opening words from Psalm 22 spoken by Jesus hanging on the cross. God Almighty, who had “emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness,” suffers as we read in Philippians 2. God who created light, who is the light shining in the darkness, experiences darkness and despair.

At Easter, God will throw the cup of death against the wall and shatter it for all people who are, have ever lived or will live.

Jesus had all the words of Psalm 22 in his head, not only these opening ones. Listen to the words towards the end of the psalm: “All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord; and all the families of the nations shall worship before him. . . . To him, indeed, shall all who sleep in the earth bow down; before him shall bow down all who go down to the dust . . .” (verses 27, 29).

Many Christians don’t believe these words. Only the “good” go to heaven some think, forgetting that “no one is good, no not one” (Psalm 53:3). No one can repent often or well enough. No one qualifies.

We who believe already in this life would do well to understand that we are saved only by the Grace of God, by Christ’s “full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world” (Eucharistic Prayer).

The whole world will know this eventually, “when every knee shall bend in heaven, on earth and under the earth” to the crucified and risen one as Philippians 2:10 tells us. That’s the essence of why we are a Community for the World. We condemn the world’s bad behavior and ours, but at the end of this world’s day, we have nothing but good news for all people.

The Rev. Alexander McCurdy, III, worked as a parish priest and school chaplain before returning to graduate school in the 1960s. After retiring from his work in 2003, Sandy offers some of his time for parish visitations and other priestly duties.

SATURDAY, APRIL 11

Holy Saturday

Suggested Readings: Psalm 31:1-4; 15-16; Lamentations 3:1-9, 19-24;
1 Peter 4:1-8; John 19:38-42

Let us pray:

O God, Creator of heaven and earth: Grant that, as the crucified body of your dear Son was laid in the tomb and rested on this holy Sabbath, so may we await with him the coming of the third day, and rise with him to newness of life; who now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Holy Saturday is an unusual day, the only day when The Book of Common Prayer does not allow for a celebration of Communion. I hope and pray that you might take some time today for reflection, prayer, and pondering this day of in-between.

The prayer above focuses our attention on Sabbath rest, connecting us to the Judaism of Jesus' first followers. Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus, Mary Magdalene, and another Mary had to quickly put Jesus in the tomb on Friday, so they could observe the Sabbath that began sundown Friday and went until sundown Saturday. In the gospel, we see the burial activity of the disciples, but also their waiting and sorrow. They rested from activity and sat in the midst of their grief. The disciples didn't know he would rise again.

Holy Saturday is a day like no other. We can enter into the bafflement of both Psalms and Lamentations, the confusion of waiting. We ponder Jesus as actually dead. On Holy Saturday, we, like the first disciples, reflect on the suffering of Jesus and our suffering at losing him, and the real uncertainty of resurrection. Theologian and Benedictine sister Joan Chittister writes about entering into "the emptiness of Holy Saturday."

Holy Saturday allows us to sit in the in-between, which is the space between death and life. Theologian Shelly Rambo writes about this in *Spirit and Trauma: A Theology of Remaining*, which is about the importance of Holy Saturday for understanding trauma. Holy Saturday is where Jesus identifies with those who experience God-forsakenness. God-in-Christ goes to the place of death with us. The love of God and the presence of the Holy Spirit is what remains in that death. As we move into the Easter Vigil and the first celebration of Easter, we come to know how the love of God transcends suffering and death.

The Rev. Emily Zimbrick-Rogers is the Assistant Rector for Discipleship and Fellowship at St. David's. Before coming to St. David's, she worked as a freelance writer and editor and college instructor.

SUNDAY, APRIL 12

Easter Day: The Feast of the Resurrection of Our Lord

Suggested Readings: Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24; Acts 10:34-43; Colossians 3:1-4 or Acts 10:34-43; Matthew 28:1-10

Let us pray:

Almighty God, who through your only begotten Son Jesus Christ overcame death and opened to us the gate of everlasting life: Grant that we, who celebrate with joy the day of the Lord's resurrection, may be raised from the death of sin by your life-giving Spirit; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit one God, now and for ever, Amen.

In the early morning hours, the women came to the tomb to anoint Jesus' body. They had followed Jesus in his ministry. They learned from him. They had received forgiveness and new life through him. They had given their lives over in the belief that Jesus was the Messiah, the Anointed of God, come to save the world. But he was dead, crucified by the Romans at the behest of the Jewish leaders who feared Jesus and the change in the life with God Jesus was preaching.

They came to the tomb in the early morning expecting to find what people have always found in the tomb after the death of someone they loved—death. They expected to find Jesus' body so they could love him in one more way, one more time, by anointing and dressing his body for permanent burial. *What they found was life!*

The angels who had proclaimed Jesus' birth into the world now proclaimed his resurrection and sent them out into the world to tell others. On their way, they met the Risen Lord, calling them to tell others and to look for him, not in death, but in life, for the Risen Lord would be with them always.

And the Risen Lord is with us, too. He comes to our hearts and lives to remove the shadow of sin and death so that we may live our lives connected to God and one another. He comes to our lives to enfold us in God's love and to empower us to tell others by our words and by the way we live our lives. *Christ is Risen!* May God empower us to show and tell others in this Eastertide and in every area of our lives. Amen. Amen!

The Rev. W. Frank Allen has been Rector of St. David's since 1997 and is married to Dr. Amy Allen. They have three grown sons. He loves the Bible and reads through it every year as part of his spiritual practice.

LENTEN MEDITATION JOURNAL

Use this space for your own prayers, meditations on scripture and your life as you walk the Lenten path with Jesus.

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