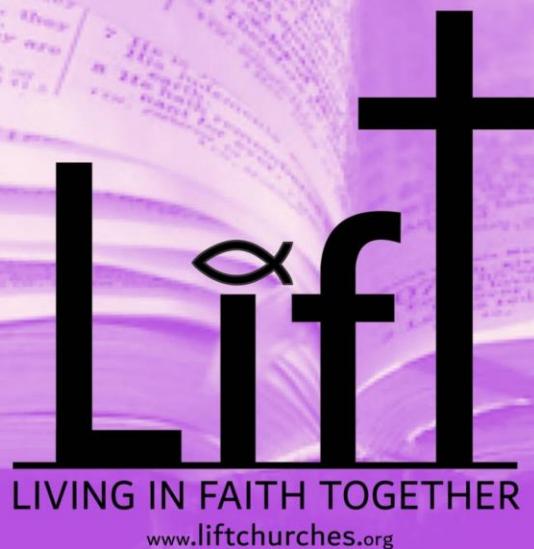


# *Sing with All the Saints in Glory*



## A Lenten Devotional Resource

## **Introduction**

For Lent 2023, the LIFT Parish is offering a devotional resource. Like our Advent booklet, it will again be a printed resource and content shared on social media. The theme, *Sing with All the Saints in Glory*, is taken from a midweek Lenten series from Sundays and Seasons. St. Mark Lutheran Church in Fremont will be using this theme for Wednesday night services. The series, and this devotional based on it, uses the lives of the saints commemorated on the church calendar during these weeks of Lent. We have included several first-hand accounts of faithful saints, written by members of LIFT congregations. These will mostly appear on Mondays. We are also including prayer themes, scripture texts, and other resources from the Lenten series. Holy Week will include some of my reflections.

In Lutheran understanding, the communion of saints is not some all-star lineup of theological super heroes, although we do keep a calendar of faithful role models to remember. A saint is a redeemed sinner, named and claimed by God in the waters of baptism.

As we sing with all the saints in glory, we do commemorate those saints who get hospitals and churches named after them, but we also remember the countless host of saints that sometimes get overlooked. We remember those people forgotten by history books, but loved and remembered by God. We remember saints of every time and every place:

Prophets and martyrs. Apostles and deacons.

Evangelists and bishops. Pastors and Sunday school teachers.

Artists and accountants.

Musicians and scientists.

Grandparents and godparents.

Cousins and neighbors.

Students and farmers.

Soldiers and refugees.

Lutherans and Pentecostals.

Catholic and Orthodox.

Republicans and Democrats.

Communists and cops.

Tiny babies and seasoned centenarians.

Those who battled cancer.

Those who completed suicide.

Those who pray and those who cry.

Those who suffer and those who celebrate.

Saints triumphant. Saints victorious.

We feebly struggle. They in glory shine.

We remember all the saints of God.

During this Lenten season, my prayer is that the stories of these saints may inspire us and keep pointing us to Jesus as we encounter the power of the cross and the mystery of the resurrection.

God's peace be with you,

Pastor Paul Bailie

## February 22

### Ash Wednesday

Years ago, I went hiking by myself on a crisp Spring day, not knowing that, even with sunshine and blue skies, there was still snow on the ground as I got to higher altitudes. I had never been on the trail before, and even though I had a map, it was still sometimes very hard to find where I was going. At points I would come to forks in the trail, and I was unsure where to go. I started to rely on footprints. If I saw footprints in the snow, I figured other hikers had been before me and that it was a relatively safe and correct route. I finally got to the point where the snow had drifted so, the trail was uncertain. I could not see footprints. I turned back, disappointed, but I did not see footprints, so I did not know where to go.

In our Christian journey, we are not walking in untrodden territory. We have footprints ahead of us. Jesus blazes the trail from death to new life. Behind him are the footprints of the saints. Faithful forebears have trusted God and taught us how to live, and die, with Christ. We remember famous saints listed in the calendar at the front of our hymnal, but we also remember ordinary saints who impacted our lives.

This Lent, as we prepare for Easter, we recognize that we are not alone. In the Creed, we confess belief in “the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.” On this Ash Wednesday, we mark our own mortality. WE know that all of us will eventually die. But with faith, we know that death does not have the final answer.

*Holy God, as we begin this penitential season, we know that we are imperfect and mortal. We need your love. We need your community. Help us learn from your faithful saints and guide us to follow you. Amen.*



## February 23

### Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, martyr, died 156

Polycarp was bishop of Smyrna (in present-day western Turkey) and a link between the apostolic age and the church at the end of the second century. He is said to have been known by John, the author of Revelation. In turn he was known by Iranaeus, bishop of Lyon in France, and Ignatius of Antioch. At the age of eighty-six he was martyred for his faith. When urged to save his life and renounce his faith, Polycarp replied, “Eighty-six years I have served him, and he never did me any wrong. How can I blaspheme my king who saved me?” The magistrate who made the offer was reluctant to kill a gentle old man, but he had no choice. Polycarp was burned at the stake, his death a testimony to the cost of renouncing temptation.

## **February 24**

### **By Pastor Matt Wheeler, St. John Lutheran Church**

Two faithful and very loving people of God who have greatly influenced my life and faith passed away in recent months. Dick and Joanne Meek, members of the church where I grew up in Toledo, would take a young, hungry college student (very literally – I was hungry a lot in college!) out to eat, or for a cup of coffee, about once a month. These dear saints modeled great patience, kindness, faithfulness, and generosity in so many facets of life. We'd gather for conversation, prayer, and lots of joyful laughter as we'd talk about life and faith over lunch or coffee. Very simply, yet so meaningfully, these two took an interest in my life and what God was up to. And that meant the world to me.

One gathering over lunch together during my college years, they raised a question. "Matt, have you ever thought about seminary?" I told them that the thought had crossed my mind before – and I was doing my darndest to push that thought out of my mind! They told me they saw gifts in me that could serve God's church, not to give up too easily on the thought of pastoral leadership, and that if I would ever have any questions about seminary or serving as a pastor, they would always be willing to listen and share feedback. It wasn't just that they said these things. But the way they shared these words of support and promises, I knew they meant it. Joanne and Dick were great listeners and encouragers.

I'm so grateful that these two mentors and friends, who I miss immensely, took the time out of their busy lives, once a month or so for a few years in a row, to get to know me and offer such affirmation. The light and love of Christ shines upon them and through them still.

## **February 25**

### **Elizabeth Fedde, deaconess, died 1921**

Fedde was born in Norway and trained as a deaconess. In 1882, at the age of thirty-two, she was asked to come to New York to minister to the poor and to Norwegian seafarers. Her influence was wide-ranging, and she established the Deaconess House in Brooklyn and the Deaconess House and Hospital of the Lutheran Free Church in Minneapolis. She returned home to Norway in 1895 and died there.

## **February 26**

### **First Sunday in Lent**

*Sing with all the Saints in Glor, verse 1*

Sing with all the saints in glory,  
sing the resurrection song!  
Death and sorrow, earth's dark story,  
to the former days belong.  
All around the clouds are breaking,  
soon the storms of time shall cease;  
in God's likeness we awaken,  
knowing everlasting peace.

Text: William J. Irons, 1812-1883, alt.

**February 27**

**By Maureen Pump, SAM, Grace Lutheran Church**

When I think about who taught me to pray, or who helped me discover my God given gifts and the call on my life, I always think about Pastor Paul Fuchs.

In 1992 I received a call from Pastor Paul inviting me into his office for a conversation. I could not imagine why he wanted to talk to me. Maybe my son had gotten into trouble in Confirmation?? I was so surprised to learn that the conversation Pastor Paul wanted to have with me was not about my son but me. He was offering me a position on his staff!

I was a happy homemaker at the time and not looking for work. I have a high school education and could not imagine what position I was qualified to fill at Grace. I expressed these thoughts to Pastor Paul and he assured me he saw things in me, I didn't see in myself. After talking with my husband, a lot of thought and loss of sleep I accepted a part time position on the staff at Grace as Minister of Hospitality. Pastor Paul assured me I had exactly the qualifications he was looking for. Because I had been a volunteer for many years, in many areas, he witnessed my organizational skills, I knew a lot of people because I am born and raised in Fremont and have been at Grace all of my life and to top it off, he liked that, in his words, "I am a warm and friendly person." Pastor Paul went on to describe my position as an apprenticeship and assured me I would learn on the job. Which I did.

It was not long after coming on the staff that my position was moved to full time, my title changed to Lay Associate and I began leading Bible Studies. I realized I have the gift of teaching and facilitating. After a couple of years, I took on youth leadership and enjoyed working with both grade school and high school children. At our weekly staff meetings Pastor Paul "made" me start doing the opening prayer without writing it out! I was so nervous, but as the weeks went on I realized I could do it. I could let God work through me and give me the words I needed. Eventually I began conducting funerals and then the opportunity came to deliver the message. With great fear I delivered my first message at a Lenten service. After the service, our Associate Pastor at the time, Joel Remmers, said to me, "You've got what it takes" so preaching became part of my ministry.

I assure you, at no point did I feel qualified, and according to man's standards, I was not. But God had a plan for me and little by little revealed to me the gifts he had already planted in me. Each new thing I did was a complete act of faith and each time I was amazed to find out I could do it! No one is more amazed by that than me. Don't misunderstand, there were some failures along the way! There is absolutely no question in my mind that anything I accomplish is by the power of God working through me.

Now thirty years later, I look back and still am amazed at the journey God has had me on. The gifts he has placed in me that I had no idea I had. Over the years I have taken many classes which enabled me to serve as a Syntonically Authorized Minister. I continue to educate myself and fine tune my abilities but I never forget it is God who placed the abilities in me and then opened Pastor Fuch's eyes to see them.

I encourage everyone to never be afraid to try new things. Never think you are not qualified or good enough. You will find out pretty quickly if you really do have the ability and if not, then it was something good you learned about yourself. But, if you step out in faith, you just might be surprised to discover what God has placed in you to be used in ministry!

## **February 28**

### **Psalm 145**

<sup>1</sup>I will extol you, my God and King, and bless your name forever and ever.  
<sup>2</sup>Every day I will bless you, and praise your name forever and ever.  
<sup>3</sup>Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; his greatness is unsearchable.  
<sup>4</sup>One generation shall laud your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts.  
<sup>5</sup>On the glorious splendor of your majesty, and on your wondrous works, I will meditate.  
<sup>6</sup>The might of your awesome deeds shall be proclaimed, and I will declare your greatness.  
<sup>7</sup>They shall celebrate the fame of your abundant goodness, and shall sing aloud of your righteousness.  
<sup>8</sup>The LORD is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.  
<sup>9</sup>The LORD is good to all, and his compassion is over all that he has made.  
<sup>10</sup>All your works shall give thanks to you, O LORD, and all your faithful shall bless you.  
<sup>11</sup>They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom, and tell of your power,  
<sup>12</sup>to make known to all people your mighty deeds, and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.  
<sup>13</sup>Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures throughout all generations. The LORD is faithful in all his words, and gracious in all his deeds.

## **March 1**

### **George Herbert, hymnwriter, died 1633**

As a student at Trinity College, Cambridge, England, George Herbert excelled in languages and music. He went to college with the intention of becoming a priest, but his scholarship attracted the attention of King James I. Herbert served in parliament for two years. After the death of King James and at the urging of a friend, Herbert's interest in ordained ministry was renewed. He was ordained a priest in 1630 and served the little parish of St. Andrew Bremerton until his death. He was noted for unfailing care for his parishioners, bringing the sacraments to them when they were ill, and providing food and clothing for those in need. Herbert is best remembered, however, as a writer of poems and hymns such as "Come, My Way, My Truth, My Life" (ELW 816).

## **March 2**

### **John Wesley, died 1791; Charles Wesley, died 1788; renewers of the church**

The Wesleys were leaders of a revival in the Church of England. Their spiritual discipline (or method) of frequent communion, fasting, and advocacy for the poor earned them the name "Methodists." The Wesleys were missionaries in the American colony of Georgia for a time, but returned to England discouraged. Following a conversion experience while reading Luther's *Preface to the Epistle to the Romans*, John was perhaps the greatest force in eighteenth-century revival. The brothers' desire was that the Methodist Societies would be a movement for renewal in the Church of England, but after their deaths the societies developed a separate status. Charles wrote more than six hundred hymns, including "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing" (ELW 270), "Christ, Whose Glory Fills the Skies" (ELW 553), and "Love Divine, All Loves Excelling" (ELW 631).



## **March 3**

### **By Michelle Englehart, Trinity Lutheran Church**

The person that comes to my mind first is my Mom, Pat. After many years of a less than pleasant marriage that produced 4 children, she had the strength and faith to move on from that relationship.

Even though she didn't know how it was going to work out, she knew somehow it would. While working several jobs to feed those hungry mouths, she ALWAYS had room at the table for anyone who needed a meal.

We sat with so many different people at our dinner table because of the grace that she showed to her fellow man. Her talents were being an amazing cook and a wonderful listener. She shared these gifts with those in need, whether they were hungry for food or hungry for someone to be kind to them.

When Jesus broke bread with his disciples he taught us to give of oneself, and this is what my mother did at our dinner table. Though we didn't have much, there was ALWAYS enough for one more, and she knew that God would provide when she invited those who were hungry to break bread with our family. (Fishes and Loaves comes to mind).

## **March 4**

### **Themes for Prayer:**

For those preparing for baptism  
For parents, grandparents, and godparents  
For Sunday school and confirmation teachers  
For camp counselors  
For pastors, deacons, evangelists, and missionaries  
For college and seminary professors

## **March 5**

### **Second Sunday in Lent**

*Sing with all the Saints in Glory, verse 2*

Oh, what glory, far exceeding  
all that eye has yet perceived!  
Holiest hearts for ages pleading  
never that full joy conceived.  
God has promised, Christ prepares it,  
there on high our welcome waits.  
Ev'ry humble spirit shares it,  
Christ has passed the eternal gates.

Text: William J. Irons, 1812-1883, alt.

## **March 6**

### **By Pastor Mark Bogen, Grace Lutheran Church**

When I think about singing with all the saints in glory, I think of my dad. His name was Pernie Bogen, and he was born in 1909 near the home of his grandfather, Peder Bogen, who had immigrated from Norway in the late 1880's, and became a homesteader in the southeast corner of South Dakota.

Dad's first love was farming, and he did so with horses during the early years of his adult life. My grandfather had moved off the farm and into the nearby village of Hendricks, Minnesota, to start a Dodge Cars and Trucks, and Case machinery business, and, finding it difficult to hire reliable help, asked my dad to come to town to work with him, which he reluctantly agreed to do.

The 1950's was a big decade for dad, as he got married, had a couple of kids, took over the business following the death of my grandfather in 1952, sold out the business in 1957, and began working at the local Retirement Home as a personal care assistant, where he worked for the next twenty years, until his retirement. Dad's retirement years were limited by a paralyzing stroke at age 68, and he died at age 72, living long enough to see me ordained as a pastor.

Dad had a strong Christian faith, and he taught me well by example. He was always ready to admit his mistakes, and in dealing with conflict, he was quick to use the advice of Jesus in Matthew 18. Bible reading and prayer were a big part of his life. Sometimes I would wake up early and go downstairs, only to find dad already up, sitting in his chair praying. I knew he was praying because his eyes were closed, his hands folded, and his lips were moving, although he did not make a sound.

For him, the Sunday church service was not to be missed, and one of my clear memories of worshiping with him was to hear him sing. For many of the familiar hymns, dad always sang the bass line. I'm looking forward to joining him in the heavenly choir -- I'll chime in and sing tenor on "Just As I Am" and many other of our favorites, I'm sure!

### **March 7**

#### **Perpetua and Felicity and companions, martyrs at Carthage, died 202**

In the year 202 the emperor Septimius Severus forbade conversions to Christianity. Perpetua, a noblewoman, Felicity, an enslaved woman, and other companions were all catechumens at Carthage in North Africa. They were imprisoned and sentenced to death. Perpetua's father, who was not a Christian, visited her in prison and begged her to lay aside her Christian convictions in order to spare her life and spare the family from scorn. Perpetua responded and told her father, "We know that we are not placed in our own power but in that of God."

### **March 8**

#### **Isaiah 61:1-4**

<sup>6</sup>1The spirit of the Lord God is upon me,  
because the LORD has anointed me;  
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,  
to bind up the broken-hearted,  
to proclaim liberty to the captives,  
and release to the prisoners;  
<sup>2</sup> to proclaim the year of the LORD's favour,  
and the day of vengeance of our God;  
to comfort all who mourn;  
<sup>3</sup> to provide for those who mourn in Zion—  
to give them a garland instead of ashes,  
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,  
the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.  
They will be called oaks of righteousness,  
the planting of the LORD, to display his glory.  
<sup>4</sup> They shall build up the ancient ruins,  
they shall raise up the former devastations;  
they shall repair the ruined cities,  
the devastations of many generations.

### **March 9**

#### **Hebrews 12:1-12, 12-13**

<sup>12</sup>Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, <sup>2</sup>looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.

<sup>12</sup> Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees,<sup>13</sup> and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed.

### **March 10**

#### **Harriet Tubman, died 1913; Sojourner Truth, died 1883; renewers of society**

Harriet Tubman was born into slavery in Maryland and remained enslaved until about age thirty when, fearing she would be sold and moved farther south, she escaped with the help of the Underground Railroad. After that, she helped about three hundred others to escape until slavery was abolished. After the Civil War, her home in Auburn, New York, became a center for women's rights and served the aged and poor.

Sojourner Truth, too, was born into slavery, in New York state. Her birth name was Isabella. After slavery was abolished in New York in 1827, she was freed and, while working as a housekeeper, became deeply involved in Christianity. A number of years later, she discerned a call to become a preacher. Taking the name Sojourner Truth, she set out on an evangelistic journey, where people found her testimony to be deeply moving. In later life, she also became a popular speaker against slavery and for women's rights.



### **March 11**

#### **Themes for Prayer:**

For those persecuted for their faith  
For an end to systemic racism  
For the deaconess community  
For all women in ministry  
For those working for civil rights and social justice

### **March 12**

#### **Third Sunday I Lent**

#### **Gregory the Great, Bishop of Rome, died 604**

Gregory was born into a politically influential family. At one time he held political office and at another time he lived as a monk, all before he was elected to the papacy. Gregory's work was extensive. He influenced public worship through the establishment of a lectionary and prayers to correlate with the readings. He established a school to train church musicians. Gregorian chant is named in his honor. He wrote a treatise underscoring what is required of a pastor serving a congregation. He sent missionaries to preach to the Anglo-Saxons who had invaded England. And at one time he organized distribution of grain during a shortage of food in Rome.

### **March 13**

#### **By Sue Peck, St Mark Lutheran Church**

I come from a split family. I don't mean mom and dad were divorced or anything like that, but - dad was raised by a completely Baptist family. Mom, on the other hand, came from a Lutheran family. On a lot of weekends,

we went to grandparents' house and of course, church on Sunday morning. My siblings and I were in Sunday School at Hope LUTHERAN Church in Fostoria most of the time, but when we were with my dad's family on Sunday, it was Baptist church in Fostoria. What I love most was the "old time religion" songs that we sing still. Love those "tell the story", "how great though art", "just as I am" songs.

But those Sundays with my grandparents in Vickery, Ohio – Good Shepherd– it was all about "grace", "forgiveness", and "nothing we could do to not get that grace and forgiveness".

I loved them both – but I'd never give up my Lutheran upbringing, and so made sure that my two kids knew those Baptist songs – especially while driving on long trips in the car. So thanks to both Grandma and Grandpa Rasp & Grandpa and Grandma Prowant. (Mom & Dad, too!)

### **March 14**

#### **Ephesians 1:15-23**

I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love towards all the saints, and for this reason I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power. God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

### **March 15**

#### **Isaiah 55:6-12**

Seek the LORD while he may be found,  
call upon him while he is near;  
let the wicked forsake their way,  
and the unrighteous their thoughts;  
let them return to the LORD, that he may have mercy on them,  
and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

For my thoughts are not your thoughts,  
nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD.  
For as the heavens are higher than the earth,  
so are my ways higher than your ways  
and my thoughts than your thoughts.

For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven,  
and do not return there until they have watered the earth,  
making it bring forth and sprout,  
giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,

so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;  
it shall not return to me empty,  
but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,  
and succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

For you shall go out in joy,  
and be led back in peace;  
the mountains and the hills before you

shall burst into song,  
and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

### **March 16**

#### **Matthew 25:31-40**

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, “Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.” Then the righteous will answer him, “Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?” And the king will answer them, “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.”

### **March 17**

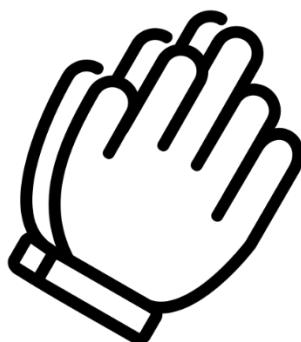
#### **Patrick, bishop, missionary to Ireland, died 461**

At sixteen, Patrick was kidnapped by Irish pirates and sold into slavery in Ireland. He himself admitted that up to this point he cared little for God. He escaped after six years, returned to his family in southwest Britain, and began to prepare for ordained ministry. He later returned to Ireland, this time to serve as a bishop and missionary. He made his base in the north of Ireland and from there made many missionary journeys with much success. In his autobiography he denounced the slave trade, perhaps from his own experience of being enslaved. Patrick's famous baptismal hymn to the Trinity, “I bind unto myself today” (ELW 450), can be used as a meditation on Lent's call to return to our baptism.

### **March 18**

#### **Themes for Prayer:**

For the earth  
For missionaries  
For musicians, artists, liturgists, and all who lead worship  
For places and times for retreat and contemplation



## **March 19**

### **Fourth Sunday in Lent**

#### **Joseph, Guardian of Jesus**

The gospels are silent about much of Joseph's life. We know that he was a carpenter or builder by trade. The Gospel of Luke shows him acting in accordance with both civil and religious law by returning to Bethlehem for the census and by presenting the child Jesus in the temple on the fortieth day after his birth. The Gospel of Matthew tells of Joseph's trust in God, who led him through visionary dreams. Because Joseph is not mentioned after the story of a young Jesus teaching in the temple, it is assumed that he died before Jesus reached adulthood.

## **March 20**

### **By Pastor Tim Miller, Faith Lutheran Church**

Acts 16:1 – “Paul came to Derbe and then to Lystra, where a disciple named Timothy lived, whose mother was Jewish and a believer.” *Timothy is the first second-generation Christian mentioned in the New Testament. His mother Eunice and grandmother Lois (2 Timothy 1:5), had become believers and had faithfully influenced him for the Lord. Although Timothy’s father apparently wasn’t a Christian, the faithfulness of his mother and grandmother prevailed* (Life Application Study Bible, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI 2011).

This scripture and description really hit home for me, for multiple reasons. One, my name is Timothy; and two, my mother and grandmother were believers and I don't think my father was, but like Timothy in the Scriptures, the faithfulness of my mother and grandmother prevailed.

I can't think of a time in my life, whether things were good or bad, whether I did something right or very wrong, where my mother and/or grandmother didn't show me God's love, even the time the police brought me home when I was kid for being in a place I shouldn't have been, doing something I shouldn't have been doing.

I never knew my mother was a Christian or a believer as we never went to church, but after she died, my sister gave me our mother's Bible; something I didn't even know she had. The cover was bent up and worn, many pages were dog eared and marked with notes, and certain verses were underlined. It was very easy to see that my mother spent a lot of time reading and studying her Bible.

I've been through a lot in my short 49 years and when I look back on my life, it's plain to see that my mother raised me with Christian values. Had she and my grandmother not shown me God's love in all the ways they did, I truly don't know where my I would be at in my life right now. I never fathomed I'd be a pastor of a church, someone who didn't go to church and seemed as far from God as I could possibly be, but I know I'm here because of the faithfulness of my mother and grandmother and I know they are both smiling down on me from heaven. I love you mom. I love you grandma. And thank you both.

## **March 21**

### **Thomas Cranmer, Bishop of Canterbury, martyr, died 1556**

Cranmer was serving as bishop of Taunton in England when he was chosen by King Henry VIII to become archbishop of Canterbury, largely because Cranmer would agree to the king's divorce from Catherine of Aragon. Cranmer's lasting achievement is contributing to and overseeing the creation of the Book of Common Prayer, which in revised form remains the worship book of the Anglican Communion. He was burned at the stake under Queen Mary for his support of the Protestant Reformation.

## **March 22**

### **Jonathan Edwards, teacher, missionary to American Indians, died 1758**

Edwards was a minister in Connecticut and described as the greatest of the New England Puritan preachers. One of Edwards's most notable sermons found its way into contemporary anthologies of literature. In this sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," he spoke at length about hell. However, throughout the rest of his works and his preaching he had more to say about God's love than God's wrath. His personal experience of conversion came when he felt overwhelmed with a sense of God's majesty and grandeur, rather than a fear of hell. Edwards served a Puritan congregation, where he believed that only those who had been fully converted ought to receive communion; his congregation thought otherwise. Edwards left that congregation and carried out mission work among the Housatonic Indians of Massachusetts. He became president of the College of New Jersey, later to be known as Princeton University.

## **March 23**

### **Isaiah 58:6-9**

Is not this the fast that I choose:

to loose the bonds of injustice,

to undo the thongs of the yoke,

to let the oppressed go free,

and to break every yoke?

Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,

and bring the homeless poor into your house;

when you see the naked, to cover them,

and not to hide yourself from your own kin?

Then your light shall break forth like the dawn,

and your healing shall spring up quickly;

your vindicator shall go before you,

the glory of the LORD shall be your rearguard.

Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer;

you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am.

## **March 24**

### **Óscar Arnulfo Romero, Bishop of El Salvador, martyr, died 1980**

Romero is remembered for his advocacy on behalf of the poor in El Salvador, though it was not a characteristic of his early priesthood. After being appointed as archbishop of San Salvador, he preached against the political repression in his country. He and other priests and church workers were considered traitors for their strong stand for justice, especially defending the rights of the poor. After several years of threats to his life, Romero was assassinated while presiding at the eucharist. During the 1980s thousands died in El Salvador during political unrest.



## **March 25**

### **Annunciation of Our Lord**

Nine months before Christmas the church celebrates the annunciation. In Luke the angel Gabriel announces to Mary that she will give birth to the Son of God, and she responds, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord." Ancient scholars believed that March 25 was also the day on which creation began and was the date of Jesus' death on the cross. Thus, from the sixth to eighth centuries, March 25 was observed as New Year's Day in much of Christian Europe.

#### **Themes for Prayer:**

For all living in poverty  
For any who are oppressed and vulnerable  
For refugees and immigrants  
For advocates and relief workers

## **March 26**

### **Fifth Sunday in Lent**

*Sing with all the Saints in Glory, verse 3*

Life eternal! heav'n rejoices:

Jesus lives who once was dead.  
Shout with joy, O deathless voices!  
Child of God, lift up your head!  
Life eternal! Oh, what wonders  
crowd on faith; what joy unknown,  
when, amid earth's closing thunders,  
saints shall stand before the throne!

Text: William J. Irons, 1812-1883, alt.

## **March 27**

### **By Kathy Burmeister, Grace Lutheran Church**

On a Thursday morning in 2020 I took my brother-in-law and sister back to Cleveland Clinic for some additional surgery on his knee. We had made the trip several times that summer and since I couldn't go into the hospital because of COVID, I had found a favorite spot along Lake Erie to wait. That's where I was when my nephew called to tell me my brother died unexpectedly. My nephew asked me to call a couple of my brothers and sisters.

After that I was just sitting in my sister's car thinking. I wasn't crying or upset, I was just thinking. I saw a man walking his dog and coming towards the car. He had a baseball cap on with a cross printed on it and his tee shirt read - ASK ME FOR PRAYER. I called him over and told him what had just happened and why I was in Cleveland. He said a wonderful prayer and then asked me my brother's name. It turned out he was a Pastor at a church in Cleveland and he promised that they would pray for my family on Sunday. He was an angel!!!

The saint I'm remembering is my brother who died that day. He was a devoted husband, father and brother. He was a faithful church member and dedicated farmer who trusted God to give him strength to get him through any hard times.

## **March 28**

### **Romans 6:3-11**

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. For whoever has died is freed from sin. But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

## **March 29**

### **Hans Nielsen Hauge, renewer of the church, died 1824**

Hans Nielsen Hauge was a layperson who began preaching about “the living faith” in Norway and Denmark after a mystical experience that he believed called him to share the assurance of salvation with others. At the time, itinerant preaching and religious gatherings held without the supervision of a pastor were illegal, and Hauge was arrested several times. He also faced great personal suffering: his first wife died, and three of his four children died in infancy.

## **March 30**

### **Revelation 7:9-17**

After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands. They cried out in a loud voice, saying,

‘Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!’

And all the angels stood around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshipped God, singing,

‘Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom

and thanksgiving and honour

and power and might

be to our God for ever and ever! Amen.’

Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, ‘Who are these, robed in white, and where have they come from?’ I said to him, ‘Sir, you are the one that knows.’ Then he said to me, ‘These are they who have come out of the great ordeal; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

For this reason they are before the throne of God,

and worship him day and night within his temple,

and the one who is seated on the throne will shelter them.

They will hunger no more, and thirst no more;

the sun will not strike them,

nor any scorching heat;

for the Lamb at the centre of the throne will be their shepherd,

and he will guide them to springs of the water of life,

and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.’

## **March 31**

### **John Donne, poet, died 1631**

This priest of the Church of England is commemorated for his poetry and spiritual writing. Most of his poetry was written before his ordination and is sacred and secular, intellectual and sensuous. He saw in his wife, Anne, glimpses of the glory of God and a human revelation of divine love. In 1615 he was ordained and seven years later he was named dean of St. Paul's Cathedral in London. By that time his reputation as a preacher was firmly in place. In his poem "Good Friday, 1613. Riding westward," he speaks of Jesus' death on the cross: "Who sees God's face, that is self life, must die; What a death were it then to see God die?"

## **April 1**

### **Themes for Prayer:**

For those in hospice or nearing death  
For those mourning the loss of a loved one  
For the unity of all Christians  
For those preparing for baptism  
For the ministry of all the baptized  
For the church as it prepares to celebrate Holy Week

## **April 2**

### **Palm/Passion Sunday**

Some biblical commentators have described the Palm Sunday event as a sort of Political Street Theater. The crowd gathers and welcomes Jesus as King. There is no separation of church and state in the first century, so this is inherently a political act. To say Jesus is king is to say that Cesar is not. It's subversive and gutsy. It's faithful and prophetic. Jesus reigns with love and grace, not like intimidation and violence of the Roman Empire. To follow Jesus is to live the values of God's reign instead of the powers of this world.



We begin Holy Week each year as we reenact this entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. We remember who Jesus is. We anticipate what is to come. With palm branches and shouts of Hosanna, we get to feel like we're welcoming a hero at a ticker-tape parade. Yet, Palm Sunday is not a parade. It's a procession. There is a major difference. In a parade, what's going down the street passing us by is the event. We stand on the road waiting for the floats and the marching band and the beauty queens in the pretty cars, and the local celebrities and politicians go down the line.

In a procession, however, it may be fun to watch the processors go by, but that's not the main point. A procession has a fixed ending point—a destination—a goal. Many times in worship, when we process forward to the altar for Holy Communion, we don't walk to be watched by others, we walk forward to receive this holy meal. When Jesus processes into Jerusalem, he too, has a purpose. He isn't going in for a week of royal luxury. He isn't getting a Jerusalem snowglobe or a souvenir t-shirt. He's facing betrayal, trial, humiliation, death. He will challenge the Temple authorities who have turned the sacred space into a place of commerce. He will keep teaching about God's reign of justice. He will share a meal with his friends. He will be arrested and executed.

*Faithful God, as we begin Holy Week, we praise you for your glory, but we see that your glory is not human glory. Keep us mindful of your presence with us, even in the midst of death and suffering. Amen.*

## **April 3**

### **Monday**

Palm Sunday is exiting, and Easter is beautiful, but we need what's in between. We need Holy Week because of who we are. We need a God who enters our lives, who enters our suffering. We need a God who is no stranger to pain. We need to recognize our own brokenness. Of course, we need a God of triumph and might and power, but we need a god of emptiness. We need a God of emptiness to be filled with our pain, our conflict, our sorrow. We need theology of the cross instead of a theology of glory. We need to have God story part of our story.

## **April 4**

### **Benedict the African, confessor, died 1589**

Born into slavery on the island of Sicily, Benedict first lived as a hermit and labored as a plowman after he was freed. When the bishop of Rome ordered all hermits to attach themselves to a religious community, Benedict joined the Franciscans, where he served as a cook. Although he was illiterate, his fame as a confessor brought many visitors to the humble and holy cook, and he was eventually named superior of the community. A patron saint of African Americans, Benedict is remembered for his patience and understanding when confronted with racial prejudice and taunts.

## **April 5**

### **Wednesday**

The Wednesday of Holy Week is sometimes called Spy Wednesday, remembering when Judas betrayed Jesus and sold him out for thirty pieces of silver. It is a time for us to remember when we have been tempted by monetary gain instead of ethical behavior.

*Almighty God, sometimes we are not faithful. Sometimes we are think that fancy possessions and our own desires are more important than human dignity or love for our neighbor. Keep our thoughts on our need for forgiveness and your abiding presence with us. Amen.*

## **April 6**

### **Maundy Thursday**

#### **Albrecht Dürer, died 1528; Matthias Grünewald, died 1529; Lucas Cranach, died 1553; artists**

These great German artists revealed through their work the mystery of salvation and the wonder of creation. Dürer's work reflected the apocalyptic spirit of his time. Though he remained a Roman Catholic, he was sympathetic to Martin Luther's reforming work. Grünewald's paintings are known for their dramatic forms, vivid colors, and depiction of light. Cranach's work includes many fine religious examples and several portraits of Martin Luther. Cranach was also widely known for his woodcuts.

## **April 7**

### **Good Friday**

Were you there when they crucified my Lord? Who was there? Pilate was there: A government official trying to know who to please when, not wanting to take the blame, and not wanting to cause more problems. How often do you try to make deals to negotiate power?

Who was there? The soldiers were there: Law enforcement officers, just doing their jobs, dividing his clothes, and rolling dice for his tunic. How often do you exploit a situation for your own gain?

Who was there? The women were there. In John's Gospel it's: Jesus' mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. They lamented the execution of somebody they care about. How often do you weep when someone close to you suffers?

Who was there? The disciple whom Jesus loved was there. Biblical scholars aren't sure exactly who this is, but Jesus says, "Here is your mother." How often has someone not family felt like family?

Were you there when they crucified my Lord? None of us in right now were actually there in first century Palestine.

There is no magic time machine. It's a place apart. It's a time apart, but there we are. You and I are standing there, shouting: "Away with him! Crucify him!" "Release Barabbas!" There we are, and here Jesus is: dying on the cross.

## April 8

### Holy Saturday

In the earliest centuries of Christianity, baptisms would typically only happen once a year, at the Easter Vigil, on the Saturday night before Easter morning. From sundown until the next sunrise, Christians would gather, light a new fire and the paschal candle, hear readings from the Old Testament, and then celebrate baptism and the communion meal. In the past decades, some Lutheran congregations have begun to rediscover the power of this ancient rite. Some of my previous congregations have found it to be one of the most moving services of the year. Even if we don't have a Vigil in our congregations, these stories remind us of the saving power of God's love and push us with baptismal and eucharistic imagery to our jubilant Easter celebration.

God's story of promise and love does not end when the animals from Noah's ark come onto the dry land. It is a new beginning—a fresh start.

God's story does not end when the children of Israel trod with unmoistened foot across the Red Sea waters. It is a new beginning—a fresh start.

God's story does not end when Jonah gets puked onto the shores on Ninevah. It is a new beginning—a fresh start.

God's story does not end when Jesus shares the meal and washes his disciple's feet.

God's story does not end when Jesus gets betrayed and arrested.

God's story does not end when Jesus hangs on the cross.

God's story does not even end when Jesus says "It is finished."

God's story does not end when the women find that Jesus has risen.

It is a new beginning—a fresh start.

God's story keeps on keeping on. God's story is the Resurrection.

God's story is new life. God's story is at work in the lives of the saints.

God's story becomes our story.

## April 9

### Easter Sunday

#### Dietrich Bonhoeffer, theologian, died 1945

Bonhoeffer (BON-heh-fer) was a German theologian who, at the age of twenty-five, became a lecturer in systematic theology at the University of Berlin. In 1933, and with Hitler's rise to power, Bonhoeffer became a leading spokesman for the Confessing Church, a resistance movement against the Nazis. He was arrested in 1943. He was linked to a failed attempt on Hitler's life and sent to Buchenwald, then to Schönberg prison. After leading a worship service on April 8, 1945, at Schönberg prison, he was taken away to be hanged the next day. His last words as he left were, "This is the end, but for me the beginning of life." *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* includes a hymn (626) by Bonhoeffer, "By Gracious Powers."

# LENT:

EASTER PREPARATION  
FAITH CONVERSATION  
SPIRITUAL PRACTICES  
BAPTISMAL REMEMBRANCE  
INTENTIONAL PRAYER  
SACRED COMMUNITY

## Lent opportunities in our LIFT Congregations:

### **Camino de Vida**

Wednesdays  
8:30 PM Online worship

### **Emmanuel Lutheran Church**

Wednesdays: 7 PM Worship—*Tell the Story: 7 Words from the Cross*

### **Faith Lutheran Church**

Wednesdays: 5 PM *Chosen* viewing  
6 PM Meal  
7 PM Holden Evening Prayer

### **Grace Lutheran Church**

Wednesdays: 5:30 PM Supper  
6:30 Evening Prayer—*Amazing Grace*

### **Hayes Memorial United Methodist Church**

Wednesdays: 6 PM Dinner  
(RSVP 419-334-2605 by Friday)  
6: 30 PM Bible Study—*Gospel of John*

### **St. John's Lutheran Church**

Thursdays: 7 PM Dinner Church—*The Joy of Christ*

### **St. Mark Lutheran Church**

Wednesdays: 6 PM Soup Supper  
7 PM Worship—*Sing with all the Saints in Glory*

## **What is LIFT?**

LIFT (Living in Faith Together) is a unique collaboration of congregations in the Fremont area. We work together for a variety of ministries: Bridge of Hope food pantry, Camino de Vida Spanish language mission start, shared Confirmation programming, Vacation Bible School, car church during the pandemic, various service projects, and fellowship activities. Our mission priorities are:

- Present in our community
- Witnessing to God's love
- Hearing the needs
- Serving our neighbor
- Striving for Justice



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