

# Meditations for Lent

Compiled by Members and Friends

# ST ANDREW'S

St. Andrew's Church  
2012

[www.lutherancampuscenter.org](http://www.lutherancampuscenter.org)

## Introduction

We begin a Lenten Journey of Spiritual Practice on Ash Wednesday. It is a time to remember.

We remember whose we are and who we are.

We remember that we are named and claimed and wrapped in the Grace of God as revealed in Jesus the Christ.

We remember that we live this grace for our neighbors in the world.

In Lent we reconnect to this truth as we intentionally pay attention to what Walter Brueggemann describes as:

*"a new humanness,  
rooted in holiness  
and practiced in neighborliness."*

This meditation booklet is created by members of the St. Andrew's community who shared original writings and/or favorite poems prayers and songs. These are reflections from students, grad students, townies, "somethings", OWLS, board members, visitors, and FOLS.

So with gratitude to the many contributors this is a helpful tool for your Lenten prayer-filled time. May it affirm your journey and connect you with others as we live into a new humanness, rooted in holiness and practiced in neighborliness.

Blessed Lent,

Pr. E

(Cover design by Peter Keefe)

from WOMEN'S UNCOMMON PRAYERS

**Ash Wednesday**  
**by Mrs. Gretchen Olheiser**

Stepping from the brightness of Epiphany  
I enter an unfamiliar place called "Lent."  
My eyes are slow to adjust to the change.  
I blink black tears and stand still wondering  
if my eyes are open or closed,  
for nothing visible lies before me.

My senses tell me there are objects ahead -  
prized places, sacred spaces.  
There is no sense of urgency;  
time has fallen away leaving forty days and forty nights  
to explore this unknown, yet somehow familiar place;  
touching, feeling, knowing holy moments

*shared by Corrine Hatcher*

### **To Know or Not To Know**

Hard questions come in life. Questions like ‘Why is this happening?’ and ‘When will it end?’

The Bible tells the stories of two people on each end of the spectrum of Knowing versus Not Knowing. These are the stories of Jesus (in the Gospels of the New Testament) and Job (the book of Job in the Old Testament).

I believe that Jesus was True God and True Man at the same time. As a result, Jesus knew from his time as an infant what his entire life would be until his death on the cross. Imagine what Jesus must have felt at 12 years old in the Temple of Jerusalem when the rabbi’s proclaimed Jesus to be a child prodigy and marveled at his understanding of their scriptures, and all the while Jesus knew that these same rabbi’s would be screaming for his blood in 21 years.

Next consider Job. In Chapter 1 verses 6 to 12, we learn the reason for the first round of calamities to befall Job. In Chapter 2 verses 1 to 6, we learn the reason for the second round of calamities to befall Job. But Job never knows the reasons. Not even at the end of the story, when The Lord blesses Job more abundantly than at the start of the story, does Job have a clue what it was all about.

I no longer ask myself these questions. It’s enough to know that God is for me, God is with me, and God is in control at all times.

Shared by Stephen Stubbs

### REFLECTION 3

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A few years ago early in Lent I pulled into my driveway and my neighbor yelled: “We don’t have any electricity. The transformer is out!” Within a few hours the electric company restored the power and within a few days I had my understanding of Lent challenged and subsequently enlarged.

I understood Lent as a time to be reflective on both what I had done and what I had considered doing. It was important to recognize ones sinfulness in anticipating the glorious proclamation of a Risen Christ. Reflecting on the loss of the electric power provided me with a framework of something else which is also very important in Lent: Divine Power transforms our situations to a higher level of impact than we as creatures can imagine.

A few years ago the struggling ELCA congregation in Mattoon, Illinois faced the grim reality their church would be forced to close and the people realized they faced a synodical time-line: Sell the building before the end of the year and the congregation could direct where its assets could be distributed. Immediately the people thought of social services it had supported in the community, the state and fighting world hunger. A suggestion was made that St. Andrew’s Lutheran Campus Center would be a place where an investment could be made in students lives. The picture was clear: the impact of campus ministry may go far beyond the campus. Lives can be impacted on the campus, yes, but students may develop a sense of God’s presence in their lives which will last a lifetime. That congregation made the decision to invest several thousand dollars in St. Andrew’s program.

That decision came alive this year. From the discouragement and sense of failure in the Mattoon congregation has developed an exciting and stimulating program on the University of Illinois campus. Divine Power transformed the assets of a congregation into an exciting Faith and Science In Dialogue on this campus. Someone said it was as though Rheticus himself was with us!

We can now yell to our neighbors: “We have electricity. Our transformer is working!”

Shared by Pr. Kenneth Truelove

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Decades ago, we were friends and neighbors to the family of a Greek Orthodox priest. Their Lenten discipline excluded not only meat but dairy products. When I suggested that must be difficult for young children, the mother replied that, fortunately, they liked beans! A few days later she came by with a delicious pastry, full of nuts and dripping with honey. Laughing, she acknowledged the irony of forbidding hamburger and allowing instead such delicacies.

Most of the time we think of Lent as a time either to give up something, or to practice some good behavior (prayer, Bible reading) that we know we really should do anyway. These are taken as signs of repentance. But Jesus urged us not to show our repentance by putting on long faces, rather to wash those faces and "doll up" (Matt. 6:16-18). Probably his main point was that we shouldn't show off how pious we are. But there's more: Repentance only makes sense because forgiveness is offered. That's good news (gospel). So smile -- and have some baklava!

Shared by Esther Portnoy

## REFLECTION 5

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I was raised in faith by a liberal pastor. While the sun's rays danced through stained glass I learned to burp on command and sing the ABC's with a mouthful of water. I played hide and seek in the cemetery, because my pastor believes that children's laughter honors the dead. My pastor was a terrible enforcer of the "try one bite of everything" rule during the weekly kid's program. According to my pastor, God's kingdom will have appeared on Earth when doctors announce that vegetables cause cancer and the only cure is chocolate. During Christmas we were taught that despite the myths about Santa only giving us presents if we were "good for goodness sakes" Jesus loved us no matter what. As I got older, my pastor informed my uptight-rule-following teenage self that it is easier to ask forgiveness than to ask permission. After all, God forgives all our sins. When I was ready to judge others, my pastor reminded me that we have created God in our own image when he hates the same people we do. But actually, my pastor never allowed us to make God a he. God is neither strictly male, nor female; God is our mother and our father. Because of my pastor I know that the lines between right and wrong are messy, no matter what some Christians like to claim. My pastor knows that the Bible is too complex to be taken literally, and that using it to judge the world is not simple. The Bible says that when an eye strays upon something unholy it must be plucked out, and when a hand sins against God it must be cut off. My pastor taught me that until there is a community of one-eyed-one handed people in this world, no one has the right to claim they are living strictly according to the Bible. Anyone who condemns others will find that my pastor loves to debate. At annual conference my pastor proudly wears a rainbow colored stoll in support of God's homosexual children. My pastor is strong-willed and passionate, but loving and understanding. When a member of my church killed his friend and mentally handicapped himself drunk driving, my pastor saw him through the trial and the years to follow. But like any Christian, my pastor struggles with understanding God's message. When my pastor's own brother committed suicide, she refused to believe he was going to hell. Eventually, my pastor felt called to serve God from a non-profit ministry. Now that my pastor does not step up to the pulpit each Sunday she can more openly acknowledge the questions she wrestles with every day. Those who meet my pastor continue to be inspired by the strength of her faith. Everything I know, and everything I am is because of my pastor. I was raised by a liberal pastor. I am proud that she is my mother

Shared by Marin Thompson

## REFLECTION 6

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"I beg of you, to have patience with everything unresolved in your heart and to try to love the questions themselves as if they were locked rooms or books written in a very foreign language. Don't search for the answers, which could not be given to you now, because you would not be able to live them. And the point is to live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps then, someday far in the future, you will gradually, without even noticing it, live your way into the answer."  
--Rainer Maria Rilke, 1903

Shared by Rachel Grove



## REFLECTION 7

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“Teach Me, My God and King”

<http://nethymnal.org/html/t/e/teachmmg.htm>

Teach me, my God and King,  
In all things Thee to see,  
And what I do in anything  
To do it as for Thee.

A man that looks on glass,  
On it may stay his eye;  
Or if he pleaseth, through it pass,  
And then the heaven espy.

To scorn the senses' sway,  
While still to Thee I tend:  
In all I do be Thou the Way,  
In all be Thou the End.

All may of Thee partake;  
Nothing so small can be  
But draws, when acted for Thy sake,  
Greatness and worth from Thee.

If done to obey Thy laws,  
E'en servile labors shine;  
Hallowed is toil, if this the cause,  
The meanest work divine.

This is the famous stone  
That turneth all to gold;  
For that which God doth touch and own  
Cannot for less be sold.

“All things are full of God, and everyone takes their portion from that fullness” (*True Christian Religion* 364).

“The Lord's providence is in the minutest things of all, from the first thread of human life even to the last, and afterwards to eternity” (*Heavenly Secrets* 5894).

## REFLECTION 8

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"Thus in the midst of busyness, double-mindedness is to be found. Just as the echo dwells in the woods, as stillness dwells in the desert, so double-mindedness dwells in the press of busyness. That the one who wills the Good only to a certain degree, that he is double-minded, that he has a distracted mind, a divided heart, scarcely needs to be pointed out.

Nay, the press of busyness into which one steadily enters further and further, and the noise in which the truth continually slips more and more into oblivion, and the mass of connections, stimuli, and hindrances, these make it ever more impossible for one to win any deeper knowledge of himself.

It is true, that a mirror has the quality of enabling a man to see his image in it, but for this he must stand still. And yet one hardly dares say this to one of these busy ones, for however rushed he otherwise may be, yet upon occasion he has plenty of time for a multitude of excuses by the use of which he becomes worse than he was before: excuses whose wisdom is about the same as when a sailor believes that it is the sea, not the ship, that is moving."

- Purity of Heart by Soren Kierkegaard

And that was written almost 150 years ago!

Shared by Jason Fisher  
Board of Trustees

I can't even count how many times before a meal I give thanks to God for the blessing he has bestowed on me in bringing food to my table and nourishment to my body. I feel that when I give thanks during this time that I'm not just saying thank you for this meal, but for the rich earth, rain, farmers, truck drivers, supermarkets, etc. that allow so many of us to eat so well each day. In prayer, I also remember that there are many going without warm food on their table; I feel called to extend my supper table. Although this may not be very practical in my dining room, Empty Tomb and the food pantry at Saint Andrew's Lutheran Campus Center allow me to extend my table spiritually.

In extending hospitality to neighbors in need, together we receive substance for our spirits and in this act of mutual humbleness become closer to God.

Delivering food is one of my favorite things to do each month; I feel blessed to have the opportunity to be welcomed into homes all over Champaign-Urbana and experience God's ability to relieve our burdens.

Shared by Sarah Curtiss

**William Wordsworth's "Ode: Intimations of Immortality."**

There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,  
The earth, and every common sight  
    To me did seem  
    Apparelled in celestial light,  
The glory and the freshness of a dream.  
It is not now as it hath been of yore;--  
    Turn wheresoe'er I may,  
    By night or day,  
The things which I have seen I now can see no more.

...

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting;  
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,  
    Hath had elsewhere its setting  
    And cometh from afar;  
    Not in entire forgetfulness,  
    And not in utter nakedness,  
But trailing clouds of glory do we come  
    From God, who is our home:  
Heaven lies about us in our infancy!  
Shades of the prison-house begin to close  
    Upon the growing Boy,  
But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,  
    He sees it in his joy;  
The Youth, who daily farther from the east  
    Must travel, still is Nature's priest,  
    And by the vision splendid  
    Is on his way attended;  
At length the Man perceives it die away,  
And fade into the light of common day.

...

    O joy! that in our embers  
    Is something that doth live,  
    That Nature yet remembers  
    What was so fugitive!  
The thought of our past years in me doth breed  
Perpetual benediction: not indeed  
For that which is most worthy to be blest,  
Delight and liberty, the simple creed  
Of Childhood, whether busy or at rest,

With new-fledged hope still fluttering in his breast:--

--Not for these I raise

The song of thanks and praise;

But for those obstinate questionings

Of sense and outward things,

Fallings from us, vanishings,

Blank misgivings of a creature

Moving about in worlds not realized,

High instincts, before which our mortal nature

Did tremble like a guilty thing surprised:

But for those first affections,

Those shadowy recollections,

Which, be they what they may,

Are yet the fountain-light of all our day,

...

Hence, in a season of calm weather

Though inland far we be,

Our souls have sight of that immortal sea

Which brought us hither;

Can in a moment travel thither--

And see the children sport upon the shore,

And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.

...

We will grieve not, rather find

Strength in what remains behind;

In the primal sympathy

Which having been must ever be;

In the soothing thoughts that spring

Out of human suffering;

In the faith that looks through death,

In years that bring the philosophic mind.

...

The clouds that gather round the setting sun

Do take a sober colouring from an eye

That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality;

Another race hath been, and other palms are won.

Thanks to the human heart by which we live,

Thanks to its tenderness, its joys, and fears,

To me the meanest flower that blows can give

Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

Mark 10: 32-34, 46-52.

Jesus' win over death marked the beginning of new age where the old ways of the world shall give way the new ways of the Spirit. These are ways of sincere love, forgiveness, solidarity, unselfishness and hope. These are the keys for a wholesome existence.

Nonetheless, over and over we are unable to see that the ways to the world can only and slowly lead us to death. The power of the Spirit, on the other hand, can defeat death and bring us to newness of life. The chief priests were not able to see what the blind Bartimaeus saw - the healing power of the Christ. Very often our hearts can see better than our eyes. As we approach as a Church the time when we celebrate the victory of light over darkness, what is it that blinds you heart and prevents you to see?

Gracious God of love, help us to let go of our human brokenness and embrace the awesome new life of the Spirit in Christ Jesus, our Savior. Amen.

Shared by Mauricio Vieira

## REFLECTION 12

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Jesus is Just Alright - Doobie Brothers  
Lyrics and YouTube Link  
Gospel Hip Hop and a Gregorian Chant Meet

On YouTube:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SwbGjzF3mB0>

### Lyric:

Jesus is just alright with me, Jesus is just alright, oh yeah  
Jesus is just alright with me, Jesus is just alright

I don't care what they may say  
I don't care what they may do  
I don't care what they may say  
Jesus is just alright, oh yeah  
Jesus is just alright

Jesus is just alright with me, Jesus is just alright, oh yeah  
Jesus is just alright with me, Jesus is just alright

I don't care what they may know  
I don't care where they may go  
I don't care what they may know  
Jesus is just alright, oh yeah

Jesus, he's my friend; Jesus, he's my friend  
He took me by the hand; Led me far from this land  
Jesus, he's my friend

Jesus is just alright with me, Jesus is just alright, oh yeah  
Jesus is just alright with me, Jesus is just alright

I don't care what they may say, I don't care what they may do  
I don't care what they may say, Jesus is just alright, oh yeah

Shared by Randy Laugges

## REFLECTION 13

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*Dear friends at St. Andrew*

*Whenever I'm far away from home I like to sing the hymns from my childhood (something that I did a lot while living in Urbana). Especially I love the hymns by the Danish pastor and parliamentarian N.F.S. Grundtvig. I like to turn on the music and sing along – so turn on the music in the bottom and dream away to a sunny spring day with lilies in the Danish nature.*

***The sun, in all its strength, is soaring***

The sun, in all its strength, is soaring  
Above the throne of grace, restoring  
Once more our Whitsun lily-days;  
And in mild summer's shining rays,  
Now more than angels' songs proclaim  
Their harvest hope in Jesus' name.

Through short cool summer nights, the  
trilling  
Of woodland nightingales is spilling,  
As those the Lord has called his own  
Sleep quietly till night has flown;  
In dreams exploring heaven's ways,  
They wake to greet the Lord with praise.

And now a breath, divinely stealing  
Through dust and leaves, has come  
revealing,  
Delectably beneath the sky,  
The way to Paradise close by,  
And at our feet the meadow sings  
With streams of joy from living springs.

It is the Spirit who composes  
All nature's rhythms, and discloses  
The selfless love which comes by choice,

To hearten us with truth's own voice,  
And speaks the Word made flesh, who  
died:  
Now raised to heaven and glorified.

Let deep sounds wake in celebration,  
And praise the Lord of earth's salvation;  
All languages be taken up  
Within the Eucharistic cup,  
And at the table of the Lord,  
His Church's full-voiced praise be  
poured.

In Jesus' name, each tongue now blazes,  
As gentiles share the chosen's praises,  
For in this cup of God's own Son  
All mother tongues are fused as one;  
In Jesus' name, loud voices blend,  
In alleluias without end!

Our God and Father, matchless Giver,  
Your kingdom's rose will bloom for ever;  
As suns we rise and set, made one  
In glory with your only Son;  
And for the heart we gave to you,  
You gave us Christ and heaven too!

I al sins glans nu straler solen by N. F. S. Grundtvig (1783-1872) translated by Alan Gaunt (born 1935) after a literal translation by A. M. Allchin.

English translation © Stainer & Bell Ltd  
9 9.8 8.8 8.

The tunes can be found on <http://www.dendanskesalmebogonline.dk/salme/290/239/1/1/>



## REFLECTION 14

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### A Meditation by Thich Nhat Hanh

As we are together, praying for peace, let us be truly with each other.

Let us pay attention to our breathing.

Let us be relaxed in our bodies and our minds.

Let us be at peace with our bodies and our minds.

Let us return to ourselves and become wholly ourselves.  
Let us maintain a half-smile on our faces.

Let us be aware of the source of being common to us all and to all living things

Evoking the presence of the Great Compassion, let us fill our heart with our own compassion - towards ourselves and towards all living beings.

Let us pray that all living beings realize that they are all brothers and sisters, all nourished from the same source of life.

Let us pray that we ourselves cease to be the cause of suffering to each other.

Let us plead with ourselves to live in a way which will not deprive other beings of air, water, food, shelter, or the chance to live.

With humility, with awareness of the existence of life, and of the sufferings that are going on around us, let us pray for establishment of peace in our hearts and on earth,  
Amen.

A wordless skit performed to Lifehouse's *Everything* is a powerful reminder of the love of God. The moving story provides hope during the long journey of Lent, as we await Jesus' death and resurrection for the forgiveness of sins. The skit begins by showing a young woman's innocent and blissful relationship with Jesus. Too soon, however, she is tempted by material things portrayed as deceptively pleasant. The young woman soon becomes engulfed in a dark world characterized by alcoholism, bulimia, and self-injury. Just as she hits rock bottom and contemplates suicide, she remembers that Jesus was the only true joy she's ever experienced. As the song lyrics proclaim "you're all I want; you're all I need," the young woman fights to be reconnected with Jesus. Sin separates her from Jesus, though, and violently pulls her away from Him. Jesus frees her by shoving sin out of the way, and the two rejoice that they are once again connected. As an emotional representation of God's love, this skit gives me a renewed sense of faith every time I see it.

"Lifehouse's Everything Skit" on youtube: [goo.gl/ofzZN](https://goo.gl/ofzZN)

Lyrics for *Everything* by Lifehouse: [goo.gl/w3d1e](https://goo.gl/w3d1e)

Reflection by Kelsey Peterson

Sweetly Broken - lyrics

To the cross I look, to the cross I cling  
Of it's suffering I do drink  
Of it's work I do sing

For on it my Savior both bruised and crushed  
Showed that God is love  
And God is just

Chorus:

At the cross You beckon me  
You draw me gently to my knees, and I am  
Lost for words, so lost in love,  
I'm sweetly broken, wholly surrendered

What a priceless gift, undeserved life  
Have I been given  
Through Christ crucified

You've called me out of death  
You've called me into life  
And I was under Your wrath  
Now through the cross I'm reconciled

Chorus:

In awe of the cross I must confess  
How wondrous Your redeeming love and  
How great is Your faithfulness

(2x's)

Chorus:

Artist - Jeremy Riddle

## REFLECTION 17

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Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless  
his holy name..... Psalm 103:1

Psalm 103 has become one of my favorite Psalms. It is a psalm of thanksgiving for God's goodness. The psalmist reiterates what God has done and that He is just, merciful and gracious, compassionate, forgiving and heals. The psalmist reminds his readers to remember all of God's benefits.

I do not recall anytime in my life when I believed that God had forsaken me. On the other hand, I believe that He has been present with me throughout my life in the person of the Holy Spirit; guiding me, protecting me, blessing me with every good. If I were to single out a special time of God's presence it would have to be when I suffered a heart attack in 1995. By chance.....no, maybe it was God's doing .....my family doctor was scheduled to come to my house for a meeting this memorable evening. He observed my changed condition, recognized the symptoms, and summoned an ambulance and followed in his car to the hospital to make sure I was being taken care off. After being stabilized I was transported by ambulance to two more hospitals. Bypass surgery was performed at the last hospital.

Throughout this experience and recovery I knew that I was at the mercy of a loving God and I trusted whomever God's servants were that ministered to my physical needs. My healing and recovery was not without some set backs and disciplined therapy. I can truly Bless the Lord to this day for all of His benefits toward me, for the gifted medical professions and all the various skills and medicines available at that time. "Bless the Lord, all his works, in all places of his dominion. Bless the Lord, O my soul" Psalm 103:22.

Shared by Emil Blobaum

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## REFLECTION 18

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While visiting the St. Louis Art Museum one carving stood out among the many pre-nineteenth-century images of Christ. A Spanish painted wood carving entitled *Blessing Christ* from the late 13<sup>th</sup> or early 14<sup>th</sup> century by an unknown artist caught my eye.



It was the expression on Jesus's face that made an impression. It seemed to me at least that there was a faint smile on His face, which stood in contrast to many of the other early Christian artworks. Countless paintings, statues and altarpieces from the time period emphasized the authoritative divinity of Jesus by using stern expressions and aloof stares. While establishing Jesus's God quality, these artworks somewhat separate Him from us: the heavenly from the mortal.

In this statue, however, the slight smile draws attention to the fact that while Jesus was fully God, He was also fully human. And as such He probably did His fair share of smiling. This is such a simple realization, but one that is important to remember during Lent when we're faced with so much of the heavy solemnity of religion. It's important to remember that Jesus did smile and still smiles with us.

**Shared by Lauren Vosseller**

Rather often in my life I've encountered the sense that either I or another person who happens to be in my presence was in the right place at the right time. It was certainly no doing of mine. These moments I perceive as Godly coincidences.

I continue to be awed by these experiences. Sometimes they present themselves as quick offers of help from unexpected sources: the woman behind me in the check-out lane at a grocery in a poor area of Washington, D.C. covers my bill of \$1.65. It wasn't hard to see I was searching frantically in every pocket hoping I would find enough. When my daughter and I, managing a rented canal boat in the English Midlands, could not maneuver ourselves off a sandbar no matter how hard we tried. A lone man passing by on the tour path called out "I say, may I be of some assistance?" How can it be that the only person at hand happens to have been a 35 year retiree from the British Inland Waterways? His instructions had us off and floating in short order.

Sometimes seeds of faith are planted without our knowledge in circumstances which later bear fruit. Once, while Christmas caroling door to door with my daughter and her children, one of our stops in the neighborhood proved to be upon an older lady who was grieving the loss of her husband just buried. She was tearful but cheered by a ray of hope from the singing children and joined us for church on the next occasion. Over the next twenty years she "adopted" our family and became a cherished "Aunt" and friend.

Thanksgivings go to God on each person's account and showers of blessings abound. Keep alert that you don't miss the Lord's henchman or miss being one.

Shared by Violet Schroeder

## REFLECTION 20

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Dear Lord,

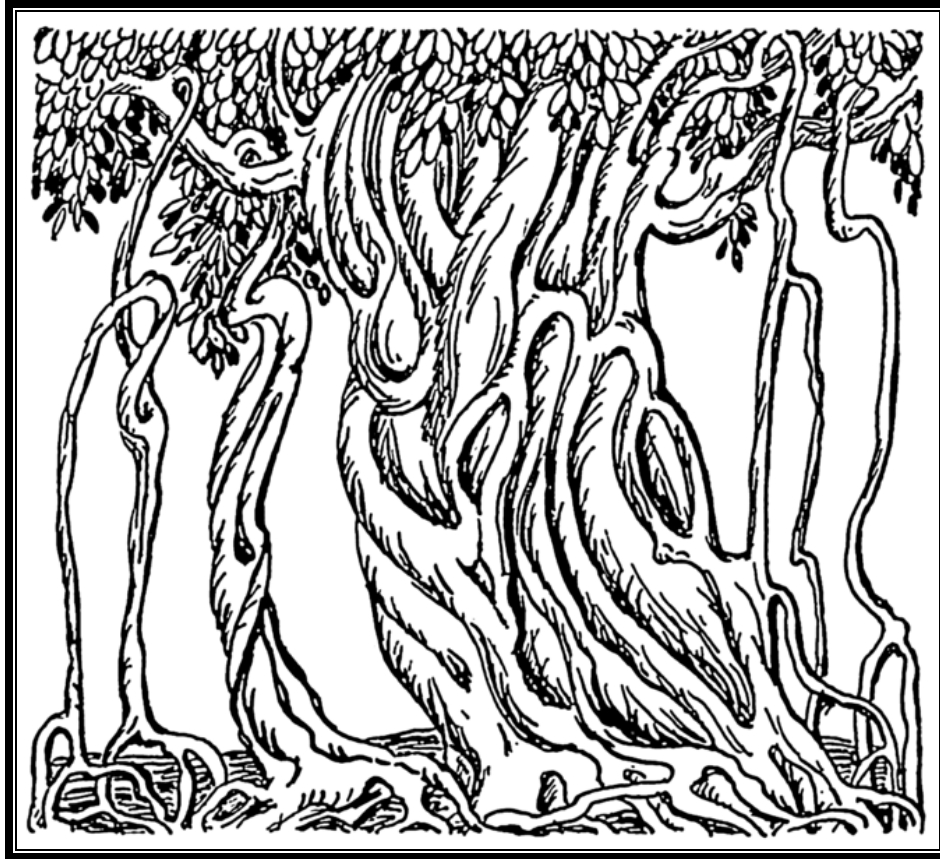
I pray for those who do not have faith, and I pray that you shine your light on them. Guide me in spreading your Word, and telling those of your infinite love. I pray that you guide my meditations during this time of fasting, and grant me strength and courage to help those who are weak in heart and spirit. Amen.

Shared by Chelsea Hart

"Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate.  
Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.  
It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us.  
We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented,  
and fabulous?  
Actually, who are you not to be?  
You are a child of God.  
Your playing small doesn't serve the world.  
There's nothing enlightened about shrinking so  
that other people won't feel insecure around you.  
We are all meant to shine, as children do.  
We are born to make manifest  
the glory of God that is within us.  
It's not just in some of us. It's in everyone.  
And as we let our own light shine,  
we unconsciously give other  
people permission to do the same.  
As we are liberated from our own fear,  
our presence automatically liberates others."

^^ Authored and published by Marianne Williamson ^^





*(Image by Person Cott Foresman. Used by permission Wikimedia Foundation.)*

While in India a couple of years ago, I fell in love with a banyan tree. Through the craziness of nature, the tree sends aerial roots down from the branches. These tentacles grow downward searching for the ground where they take root. This rooted support now allows the branch to stretch out even further with giant arms that embrace the space around it. This inter-related action of the branch sending roots along with these roots holding the branch for the branch to reach out sending even more roots creates a tree of magnificent beauty and amazing structural soundness.

This tree became an image the action of God's Spirit within our life as God's faithful people. As our arms reach out into the world, the Spirit intercedes with tentacles pushing downward to support and hold our very embrace of life. And while we nurture these roots with our care and attention, the spirit grows through us to embrace the world with life.

As we are held and rooted, we embrace the world in wide and open arms. As we embrace the world with wide arms, we are held and rooted. The tree is ever ancient and ever new. Root and branch. Branch and Root. Together, God's active spirit unites with us. A banyan tree spirituality.

## Confessions of a 'Legacy' Lutheran

As a child of a staunch and devoted Lutheran mother, I have had the privilege of being brought up in the faith (in particular the Lutheran faith) and have never had to worry about my salvation. I take the lesson of faith by grace naturally and I know that there is nothing I have done to earn or deserve that grace, or, even though I have the freedom to deny Christ as my savior, I did not have the ability to bring myself to the decision to accept God's gift of salvation because that faith is also a gift.

Even though I don't worry about my salvation, I do worry that I don't appreciate God's gifts nearly enough. I'm so comfortable as a 'legacy' Lutheran that I find myself taking my salvation for granted. Even though I silently thank God for His daily gifts and especially the gift of His Son, I fear that my failure to share that gratitude as a witness is proof of my complacency. In other people's time of need, I lack the ability to share the news of God's grace and wonder why, especially when I have seen other Christians who are able to radiate and share the joy they have from knowing they are saved by grace.

Lent reminds us to engage in self reflection and I appreciate and need this nudge. I can only continue to pray that God keeps me in the faith, gives me the ability to put that faith on my lips as well as in my heart and forgives my complacency for His greatest gift, His son.

Shared by Julia Schmidt,  
Board Member

## REFLECTION 24

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O gracious and holy Father,  
give us wisdom to perceive you,  
intelligence to understand you,  
diligence to seek you,  
patience to wait for you,  
eyes to behold you,  
a heart to meditate upon you,  
and a life to proclaim you,  
through the power of the Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

St. Benedict of Nursia

O God,  
You created all things according to your plan.  
In this very moment,  
I know you guide and govern the world.  
Grant me the serenity  
to accept the things I cannot change,  
the courage to change the things I can,  
and the wisdom to know the difference.

Living one day at a time,  
enjoying one moment at a time,  
accepting hardships as a pathway to peace,  
taking as Jesus did,  
this sinful world as it is,  
not as I would have it,  
trusting that you would make all things right  
if I surrender to your will  
so that I may be reasonably happy in this life  
and supremely happy with you  
forever in the next.

I ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Reinhold Niebuhr, theologian

**Shared by Linnea Fox**



## Lenten Prayer of St. Ephraim The Syrian

O Lord and Master of my life!

Take from me the spirit of sloth, faint-heartedness,  
lust of power, and idle talk.

But give rather the spirit of chastity, humility, patience,  
and love to Thy servant.

Yea, Lord and King!

Grant me to see my own errors and not to judge my brother,  
for Thou art blessed unto ages of ages. Amen.

Back in my orthodox days, during Great Lent, we would say this prayer and do a prostration three times during Wednesday night services. I always found this prayer interesting and it gave me good things to think about during lent.

Shared by Timothy Vander Ploeg

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After trying to conjure up a song or poem that most describes how I feel about my faith and God's love, I realized that I didn't have to do any digging at all. The Annunciation from Marty Haugen's Holden Evening Prayer has always spoken to me-

"An angel went from God to a town called Nazareth,  
to a woman whose name was Mary.  
The Angel said to her  
'Rejoice oh highly favored for God is with you'.  
You shall bear a child and his name shall be Jesus,  
the chosen one of God most high  
And Mary said  
'I am the servant of my God, I live to do your will'"

The exchange between Mary and the angel Gabriel has no parallel in terms of true devotion in my opinion.

Thanks be to God,

Shared by Sonja Brouman

Here's the poem I'd like to contribute to the Lenten booklet. It's one of my all-time favorites because my mother always loved trees, and when she was in college, she painted a lovely oil that I have of trees around a lake at sunset. I've been thinking about this poem and the upcoming Lenten season. I'd like to suggest that people read this poem and think about the Tree of the Cross that plays such a central role in Lutheran teaching. In recent years, I've come to realize that the Tree of the Cross is not only about the redemption that took place 2000 years ago -- it's also about how we live our lives today (the Way of the Cross). So every time we see a tree, we can be reminded of the sacrifice of Christ and the life and hope that it brings.

Joyce Kilmer 1886–1918

### Trees

I Think that I shall never see  
A poem lovely as a tree.  
A tree whose hungry mouth is prest  
Against the sweet earth's flowing breast;  
A tree that looks at God all day,  
And lifts her leafy arms to pray;  
A tree that may in summer wear  
A nest of robins in her hair;  
Upon whose bosom snow has lain;  
Who intimately lives with rain.  
Poems are made by fools like me,  
But only God can make a tree.

Shared by Linda Chappell

## **To walk a mile in his shoes...**

There's an old saying, "You don't really know a person until you've walked a mile in their shoes". A friend of mine said this to me recently in regard to a member of my singing group. We had just learned that his young son spent 11 months in a hospital fighting cancer. He is a father of five kids, working nights in a factory and spending the days with his ill son. The family was faced with the financial burden of medical bills, and extra food and travel expenses related to daily trips to the hospital. I would never have known this from singing and chatting with the father. He attends chorus practice with a smile on his face and a happy, but quiet demeanor. Then I think to myself. My life seems like a walk in the park compared to his. Sure I've had my heartache, financial stresses, long work days. But this guy has given up ALL of his free time, ALL of his money, and ALL of his heart to take care of his family and ill son. This story reminds me of what our Lord did for us. Jesus also gave up all his time, all his possessions, and all his heart to live the life of a vagrant traveling the land, healing the sick, and teaching ways of God. Then he went out into the desert for forty days, with nothing to eat nor drink, and though he was tempted by the devil he never faltered. He then entered the city of Jerusalem with great praise and admiration, but he knew what he had to do. A burden no man could take; the sin of the world rests on his shoulders. Jesus, a man of no sins, gave his life so the rest of us could live. What would it take to walk a mile in his shoes (assuming he even had shoes)? We try to understand what it means to give up everything for someone else, but it is so difficult in our privileged society. What does it take to truly make a sacrifice? There is no one answer. It will be different for each of us. A sacrifice, especially during the season of Lent, is something I think everyone should do. It is important for reflection and healthy for our soul. We should always remember, in the end nothing on this planet is ours. Our time, our possessions, and our heart all belong Jesus Christ.

**Shared by Eric Brucker  
Former student/board member**

The first time I heard this song I was on the Wind River Reservation in Wyoming for my first mission trip. The story of how I ended up going on that mission trip is pretty amazing in itself. I had been volunteering at a camp for autistic children that's held at my church every summer. I had stayed late to help clean up because it was the last day and we'd had a party. As I was on my way out, my pastor was on her way in. I had not been to a church service in almost a year and a half so I stopped and chatted with her a little. After the regular "Oh hey! How have you been?" she suddenly asked me if I'd be up for an adventure. I hesitated and asked "What kind of adventure...?" And that's when she invited me to go on the mission trip. Still I was hesitant and wanting to say no, thinking I wouldn't know anyone and assuming my mom would say I couldn't go anyway... But my pastor kept pushing it because she said there was an open spot that was already paid for if I wanted to go.

My hesitation turned to excitement after my mom said I could go and I found out there were people I knew going. The catch? The mission trip started that day.

I had 3 hours to pack up all my stuff and be back in the church parking lot to leave for my "adventure."

That trip was the best thing that ever happened to me. I can't help but believe that it was purely God who allowed my pastor and I to cross paths that morning. The trip changed my faith, my perspective of how other people live, and truly, my life as a whole; and I owe it to that one moment when I was trying to leave the church, and God and my pastor were pulling me back.



## **A Lakota Prayer**

Wakan Tanka, Great Mystery,

Teach me how to trust my heart,  
my mind, my intuition, my inner knowing,  
the senses of my body,  
the blessings of my spirit.

Teach me to trust these things  
so that I may enter my sacred space  
and love beyond my fear,  
and thus walk in balance  
with the passing of each glorious sun.

Shared by Terry Haru

I recently returned from a mission trip to New Orleans working on houses damaged in Hurricane Katrina. While there we received a call from the woman whose home we had worked on a year ago. Barbara had lost her home in Katrina six and a half years ago. She was moving back in while we were there and was spending her first night there since she had been forced to leave in 2005. She asked us to stop by and see her. She wanted to thank us for helping her to return to her home. She told us that God had blessed her with all the volunteers who had helped her to return to her home. As I stood there I felt how God had blessed me to be able to help in a small way. I was in awe as I thought of how God had touched both Barbara and myself by bringing us together through such a tragedy and in the end making both of us stronger in our faith.

When in New Orleans we work through Project Homecoming. Each of us is given a t-shirt to wear the first day. On the back is the phrase "Out of Chaos, Hope". As we anticipate another Easter I am reminded how that phrase was carried out on the first Easter - out of the chaos of Good Friday comes the hope of Easter, the greatest promise of all.

May we remember that out of that chaos that life brings all of us, a hope that never fails was given to us on that first Easter. Thanks be to God

Shared by John Warriner  
President of the Board of Trustees

God does not just deal with this world,  
but deals with it passionately,  
loving it and suffering for it.

“God loved the world so much  
that he gave his only son to it” (John 3:16).

But this is not logic.

This is passion.

How else would God be willing  
to part with God's own son for the sake of us?

Nor is this a result of reasoning.

It is a risk.

And passion always involves risk, does it not?

But only in risking  
will there be new discoveries  
and exciting experiences.

Choan-seng Song

Do you hear God's word? Do you really listen for His word? As usual I was having a busy week and I was running a errand on my lunch hour the other day and drove by a outdoor church sign in west Champaign and it read "To hear God's voice, turn down the world's volume". WOW! I had never thought of this before. I thought about this one statement for the rest of that day. I often feel overcome by the noises of the world around me? Are you distracted by the many noises of the world around you? At work, on the radio or TV, idle gossip between two friends, even the billboards that I read as I travel back and forth to work each day, all of these things plus many more distract me from really hearing God's voice.

There are several verses in the Bible, John 10:27 where Jesus was speaking in the temple and He says "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them and they follow me." This is a very powerful statement encouraging me to listen for His voice. And it tells me that He knows me, even when I'm distracted and not hearing His voice.

Proverbs 1:5 tells us "let the wise listen and add to their learning and let the discerning get guidance".

I know that I am going to slow down and listen for God's word daily, even in the most simple ways. He is there watching and guiding us every day.

May each of you experience a most blessed Lenten season.

Shared by Annette Duitsman  
Board of Trustees

**A Poem by Mary Oliver**

You do not have to be good.  
You do not have to walk on your knees  
For a hundred miles through the desert, repenting.  
You only have to let the soft animal of your body  
Love what it loves.  
Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.  
Meanwhile the world goes on.  
Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain are moving  
across the landscapes,  
Over the prairies and the deep trees,  
The mountains and the rivers.  
Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,  
Are heading home again.  
Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,  
The world offers itself to your imagination,  
Calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting---  
Over and over announcing your place  
In the family of things.

Which laws, then,  
are written  
on the heart?  
All the laws of Moses?  
Just the Decalogue?  
The answer is all of these things,  
and none of them.  
Just these words  
will suffice:  
I am yours, and  
you are mine."  
says (God).  
That is the language  
of love and  
faithfulness.

By Fred Craddock

## What if....

I am often told that I won't be able to do something new until I imagine it.  
I also know that out of the imagining, there is hope.  
Out of the hope there is intention.  
Out of the intention, there is choice.  
Out of the choice, there is action.  
So, I wonder, "What if?"

What if?

What if I so trusted God's profound love for me that I forgot about my own self-consciousness where I questioned my ability or intention and then, finally and totally focused on the need of my neighbor?  
Or on the delight of my neighbor?

What if?

What if I saw the abundance of what I had, rather than the scarcity?  
What would I share?

What if ?

What if I lived into the longing for peace that screams within my heart?  
How would I speak?  
What would I say?  
To whom would I address the cry of my heart?

What if?

What if I knew the name of each person who walked into this center?  
How would I greet them?  
What would they teach me?

What if?

Shared by Pr. Elaine K. Olson

O Holy God, Bright Morning Star,

We give you thanks and praise. In Your tender compassion the dawn from high breaks upon us, as we commence to yet another beginning.

O Holy God, Bright Morning Star

We give you thanks and praise for you have called us from many directions and traditions. Your light has poured into us and formed us anew through challenge and encouragement, through study and prayer, through ancient texts and present contexts, through professors and colleagues, through strangers and friends, through foreign lands and homes of love, through fears and discouragement, through doubts and tears, through long nights and longer days. You have brought us to this new day embraced and held in your abiding love.

O Holy God, Bright Morning Star,

We give you thanks and praise as we begin yet again. Free us from our fear. Abide with us in our journey. Lead us and show the way. Watch over us and encourage us. Hold on and love us as we move forward to speak truth, seek justice and show your loving compassion to a world the longs to know that it is loved.

O Holy God, Bright Morning Star,

We give you thanks and praise. Let your light rain down on us this day. Let your light pour into those who teach, counsel, affirm, guide and work at this university. Let your light spill out onto family and friends, colleagues and fellow students and all who have loved and supported these students. May they all be affirmed in their goodness and care.

O Holy God, Bright Morning Star.

We give you thanks and praise. We sing with joy. We praise your holy name. Amen.



***Jesus loves me! This I know,  
For the Bible tells me so.  
Little ones to him belong;  
They are weak, but he is strong.***

***Jesus loves me! He who died  
Heaven's gates to open wide.  
He will wash away my sin,  
Let his little child come in.***

This may be the first hymn learned by many Christians. For sure, this is a hymn that most Christians learned as a child. Usually regarded as a children's hymn: the first verses were penned by Anna Bartlett Warner at the request of her sister, author Susan Warner, for inclusion in her new novel, *Say and Seal*, 1860. In the context of the story, the lyrics were sung by a Sunday school teacher who was comforting a sick little boy. He rocks the child in his arms, and when the child asks him to sing, he begins a new song--Anna B. Warner's "Jesus Loves Me." William B. Bradbury encountered the poem in the novel and composed music for it to include as a published hymn in his series of Sunday school music books, *Golden Shower of Sunday School Melodies*, 1862.

Of the many famous stories about this hymn, one of the most memorable came from the Swiss-German theologian Karl Barth. Tony Campolo cites the context: ". . . Karl Barth delivered one of the closing lectures of his life at the University of Chicago Divinity School. At the end of the lecture, the president of the seminary told the audience that Dr. Barth was not well and was very tired, and though he thought Dr. Barth would like to open for questions, he probably could not handle the strain. Then he said,

'Therefore, I'll ask just one question on behalf of all of us.' He turned to Barth and asked, 'Of all the theological insights you have ever had, which do you consider to be the greatest of them all?'

"This was a remarkable question to ask a man who had written tens of thousands of pages of some of the most sophisticated theology ever put on paper. The students sat with pads and pencils ready. They wanted to jot down the premier insight of the greatest theologian of their time.

"Karl Barth closed his eyes and thought for a while. Then he smiled, opened his eyes, and said to the young seminarians, 'The greatest theological insight that I have ever had is this: Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so!'"

So as we sing the marvelous Lenten hymns in ELW, contemplating their significance and deep spiritual meaning to us in this season of contemplation, introspection, soul-searching, yearning, and worship, we must never lose sight of the very simple, childlike, theological affirmation of the beloved child's hymn:

**"Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so!"**

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I remember the amazing way God brought me back into the flock. I was in a deep, dark place following the dissolution of a ten-year relationship. One day, while browsing books at Jane Addams Bookshop, I noticed a book titled "When Things Fall Apart: Heart Advice for Difficult Times." The title seemed written just for me because my world had fallen apart and I was certainly experiencing a difficult time.

The book was written by Pema Chodron, an American Buddhist nun. Buddhism interested me, but I knew little about it. Then I opened the book to the following passage:

*"...It happened when my husband told me he was having an affair. We lived in northern New Mexico. I was standing in front of our adobe house drinking a cup of tea. I heard the card drive up and the door bang shut. Then he walked around the corner, and without warning he told me that he was having an affair and he wanted a divorce.*

*"I remember the sky and how huge it was. I remember the sound of the river and the steam rising up from my tea. There was no time, no thought, there was nothing--just the light and a profound, limitless stillness. Then I regrouped and picked up a stone and threw it at him."*

I laughed out loud in the middle of the bookstore. Then I bought the book because that nun sounded like my kind of person!

Surprisingly, learning about Buddhism brought me back to my Christian roots. The teachings of the Buddha reminded me of and are very similar to much Christ's teachings. The themes of peace, humility, and love for fellow human beings (all beings, really) are a common thread between the two schools of thought. I felt there had to still be Christian churches that were true to these most fundamental (not fundamentalist) teachings and I resolved to find one. That search eventually led me to Tim and then to the wonderful Sangha (community) of St. Andrews.

P.S. Some time ago I met a retired Methodist minister who happened to be a big fan of the Buddhist monk, Thich Nhat Hanh. I asked him how he reconciled his Christian faith with Buddhism. He said that, for him, Christianity is religion and Buddhism is philosophy. There was no conflict between the two.

## REFLECTION 40



### Christian Fish Bike Rack

Designed by Thomas Schlund and built by Thomas and Donald Schlund and given to St. Andrew's Lutheran Campus Center by the Schlund family.

The Christian Fish Symbol was first used sometime within the first 3 centuries A.D. Christians began using the Greek word for "fish" as an anagram/acronym for "Jesus Christ God's Son, Savior." The fish was a common food of the time of Jesus and also used as a symbol through much of his ministry. Andrew, one of the first disciples of Jesus, was a fisherman.

**A Legend:** As the Christian community grew after the ascension of the resurrected Jesus, they experienced persecution by many. It was dangerous to be a Christian. So, as two Christians met one would draw on the ground the upper half of the fish symbol. Recognizing the symbol, the stranger would add a second curved line to complete the drawing of a fish. It could be drawn quickly or erased quickly if there was not sign of recognition on the part of the stranger that they were indeed a brother or sister in Christ.

#### (Greek) IXQUS-FISH

|   |   |          |          |
|---|---|----------|----------|
| I | - | Iesous   | (Jesus)  |
| X | - | Christos | (Christ) |
| Q | - | Theos    | (Of God) |
| U | - | Yios     | (Son)    |
| S | - | Soter    | (Savior) |

