

**ST. ANDREW'S HALL**  
**2025**  
**Lenten Devotion Guide**







**St. Andrew's Hall**  
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# Welcome from the Dean

*Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. (Philippians 4:4-7)*

**W**elcome to the 2025 St. Andrew's Hall Lenten Devotion! We pray this resource will be a tremendous blessing to you and your congregation as we journey towards Easter together. Philippians 4 proclaims God's presence in a troubled world, with an invitation for us to turn to God with gentleness, free from anxiety. These precious words from Scripture are very much needed in the current cultural moment of division and fear.

As you use this St. Andrew's Hall Lenten study guide, I pray the daily Scripture readings and thoughtful reflections from members of our community will strengthen and encourage you on your journey of discipleship. Feel free to share this guide with members of your family, church, and broader community. The practice of daily Scripture reading and prayer is a key action for we who are apprentices of Jesus and seeking to live as his hands and feet in the world. Our work and witness as disciples of the risen Lord are best shared with others, for the journey is long and the road can be winding.

Even if you read this devotional booklet on your own, know that others across North America and around the world are reading these same words daily, praying these prayers, and reflecting on the goodness of God in our midst. During this season of Lent, Christians set aside time to reflect on the significance of God sending Jesus to share life with us, to show us God's heart for this broken yet beautiful world. From the cradle at Christmas to the cross of Good Friday to the empty tomb of Easter Sunday, we sense God's reconciling and redeeming love for the world.

Thank you for joining with us at St. Andrew's Hall throughout this 2025 Lenten season. As a college of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, St. Andrew's Hall has been a gospel witness on the University of British Columbia campus since 1955. This year, we celebrate our 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Christian witness and hospitality. The vision God has given us is to discern and equip the future church that God is bringing. As a result, St. Andrew's Hall educates and equips missional leaders through teaching, hospitality, and witness for Christ's church of tomorrow, today.



The Reverend Ross A. Lockhart, PhD,  
Dean of St. Andrew's Hall

# Ash Wednesday, March 5

## **MATTHEW 6:1-6, 16-21**

*Beware of practicing your piety before men in order to be seen by them; for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.  
(Matthew 6:1)*

**The observance of Lent** is one of Christianity's oldest pious practices. Almost as old is the observance of Ash Wednesday to start the forty days of Lent. The themes that are emphasized in these liturgical "practices of piety" include Jesus's temptation in the wilderness, our sinfulness and susceptibility to temptation, and our preparation for the events of Holy Week.

There is no biblical text that mandates that the ancient Christian tradition of Lent should start on Ash Wednesday, or that certain practices should always take place. But in Matthew 6, Jesus instructs the disciples about the practices of piety that should characterize the life of faithful Jews. These include alms to the poor, public prayer, fasting, donations to the temple, and forgiving the transgressions of others. Jesus makes clear that these practices are important parts of the public witness of faithful Jews.

Following the teaching of Jesus, they are continued in the practices of the emerging Christian movement. But these practices of public piety are subject to Jesus' critique and revision. Piety can be practiced as a way to impress others. It can be public for the wrong reasons. Where that happens, the piety becomes the self-serving distortion of the kindness of God to which we are called to witness.

As the church year comes full circle and returns to Lent, we can discover the problematic distortions of our piety and receive anew the blessings of Christ's healing grace.

*Lord of forgiveness and renewal, as You guide us through this Lenten journey, give us the courage to acknowledge how we distort the practices of piety and how to claim the forgiveness that You alone can empower. AMEN.*

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**Rev. Dr. Darrell Guder** is emeritus professor of missional and ecumenical theology at Princeton Theological Seminary. Since 2015, he has served as the Senior Fellow in Residence at St. Andrew's Hall and resides in Seattle, Washington.

# Thursday, March 6

## 2 CORINTHIANS 5:20B–6:10

*We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. (2 Corinthians 5:20)*

**For those of us born and raised** since WWII in Canada, the current climate of fear and anxiety surrounding us is a new feeling. Those who have come here seeking freedom likely feel disappointed that such distress is occurring within our own country and serious calamity nearby. It seems every day we read of people victimized by the worst of human behaviour.

Paul's words remind us to place no obstacles in the way of anyone (including ourselves!) seeking hope in the gospel—the ultimate message of freedom! As we grapple with questions of how to be faithful and how to respond to global and local events, Paul reminds us that we already have all that we need to endure and, indeed, thrive in these days. We have been given God's grace and the power of knowledge, patience, love, and truthful speech that come from God. As St. Teresa of Avila observed, "If I have God, I want for nothing. God alone is sufficient."

Each day that we spend time resting in Scripture and prayer, in worship and the work of faith, we are strengthened to overcome whatever might happen in this life. Now and always is when God listens, and now is the time of salvation. Thanks be to God.

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**Rev. Janet Taylor**, a former St. Andrew's Hall resident, is minister of Braeside Presbyterian Church in St. Albert, Alberta.

*Prince of Peace and Lord of Love, bless me with wisdom and patience and help me to never lose sight of Your presence in my life, for if I possess You, I possess everything. Grant me strength and courage for the living of these days. AMEN.*

# Friday, March 7

## JOEL 2:1-2, 12-17

*Turn to me now, while there is time. Give me all your hearts.  
Come with fasting, weeping, mourning. (Joel 2:12, TLB)*

**In the reading before us today**, Joel speaks of the blessing that is possible for Israel, if only they would repent:

Who knows? Perhaps even yet he will decide to leave you alone and give you a blessing instead of his terrible curse. Perhaps he will give you so much that you can offer your grain and wine to the Lord as before! (Joel 2:14, TLB)

Given the blessings that awaited them, one would assume the people eagerly ran to God's invitation to repent. Unfortunately, people, including ancient Israel, resist repentance with every ounce of their being.

Maybe it's because they thought they still had time. Or maybe they were distracted with other things that took away their focus from God. Either way, it's not easy for them to repent, even though Joel, among other prophets, repeatedly, entreated them to turn to God and leave its faults and failures, its sins, behind.

*"Turn to me now, while there is time. Give me all your hearts."* This verse can either be read as a harsh commandment from God, or as His desperate attempt to beg the Israelites—and us today—to turn back to Him, our Creator, before the time is up.

We all know that we will not live in this world forever. And this season of Lent could also be a time when we are called to closely examine our lives and seek to be more faithful followers of Christ—or to simply turn to Him if we have put our focus on something else. Lent is also considered a season to let go of things that get in the way of our relationship with God. This is why some people "give up" things for the season, and others take on new practices or focus on things in a new way. But more than just "giving something up," our passage today asks us to return to God while there is still time.

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**Nehemia Neuhisa** is a Presbyterian student at Vancouver School of Theology/ St. Andrew's Hall. He lives in SAH Residence and currently serving as Children and Youth Pastor for Richmond and Vancouver Taiwanese Presbyterian Church while also serving as worship pastor at Cavell Gardens and Dunwood Senior Housing.

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*Gracious God, we come before You with repentant hearts. For we have sinned against You in thought, word, and deed. Thank You for not abandoning us to our mistakes, but for reaching out instead to bring us home. Help us to walk in newness of life, empowered by Your Spirit, AMEN.*

# Saturday, March 8

## PSALM 51:1-17

*Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.  
(Psalm 51:10)*

**Sometimes the best way** to respond to prayer is with prayer. Psalm 51 is a prayer for cleansing and pardon, expressing a deep desire for renewal and restoration in God. Below I offer up a prayer of re-collection, written in response to this psalm.

*Restore to me...*

*I am a beloved child of God. Fearfully and wonderfully made. Created with care and held as precious in God's eyes.*

*I confess how quickly I can forget this truth. How I try to control the uncontrollable. How I insist on pushing past my bodily limits. How I take on the world as though I were an infinite being.*

*I so easily get caught up in trying to be God, rather than to be of God.*

*Empty me of clutter, distraction, dissatisfaction, anxiousness, and preoccupations.*

*Remind me that my worth is not defined by worldly standards.*

*At my deepest place I am not my job, my successes, my ambitions, my righteousness.*

*At my deepest place I am not my failures, my mistakes, my arrogances, my grudges, my prejudices.*

*At my deepest place I am more than my gender, my ethnicity, my social standing, my body shape and size.*

*Forgive me for thinking I am less than I am.*

*Forgive me for believing I am anything other than Yours.*

*I am a beloved child of God. Fearfully and wonderfully made. Created with care and held as precious in God's eyes.*

*Today I remember that my soul's identity is found in the triune God. May I find my rest and renewal in You.*

*May this prayer recollect our being and recall our souls back home to God. AMEN.*

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**Andrea Perrett** is a pastor at CapChurch in North Vancouver and a former CML Associate.



# First Sunday of Lent, March 9

## LUKE 4:1-13

*Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. (Luke 4:1,2)*

### On Temptation

There is a standard way of interpreting the story of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness that goes something like the following...

Jesus went out into the wilderness and was tempted. He resisted every temptation, with a right interpretation of Scripture as his guide. (As opposed to the devil, who knowingly misinterpreted Scripture.) At that point, the preacher turns an admonishing eye to the congregation and says something like, "When you are tempted, as you will be, resist temptation with Scripture as your guide." There is nothing wrong with that way to read the text when we are preparing ourselves for Good Friday and Easter. The Lord knows we are all subject to temptation. And for our physical, emotional and spiritual health, it is a good idea to resist!

But, the temptations of Jesus are far beyond anything I face. Nobody will tempt me with the prospect of ruling all the kingdoms of the earth. Oh yes, there are analogies. Maybe the passage is about desiring positions of power and honour. "Resist the temptation of ambition!" But really, being, say, a Dean, is pretty small potatoes compared to what Jesus faced. Something similar could be said about the other temptations too.

These are Jesus' temptations, a test in preparation for his work as Messiah and Saviour, undergone for our sake. "For our sake," like everything else in the story of Jesus. One might as well say in the Creed, "Born of the Virgin Mary, tempted for our sake, suffered under Pontius Pilate..."

And our role in all this? Is it to focus first on our own temptations? Or is it to think again of all that the Saviour underwent, in the words of another creed, "for us and for our salvation."

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**Rev. Dr. Stephen Farris** is a retired Presbyterian minister, Professor of Preaching Emeritus of VST and Dean Emeritus of St. Andrew's Hall. He also gives in to temptation more than is good for him.

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*Heavenly Father, we bless You for the gift of Jesus Christ, whose life, ministry, death, resurrection and ascension sets us free from sin and death. We praise You that for our sake, Jesus not only resisted temptation but overcame Sin itself in self-sacrificing action of the cross. AMEN.*

# Monday, March 10

## PSALM 91:1-2, 9-16

*I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress my God, in whom I trust." (Psalm 91:2)*

**Lent is the season that calls us** to abide in the presence of the Most High—to intentionally dwell and rest in the shadow of the Almighty. It is a time to slow down and reflect on who God is and how we are to respond to our God. Psalm 91 offers a rich tapestry of imagery, where God is portrayed as a refuge, a fortress, and a protective shadow. A place where we will find solace in times of trouble.

The psalm also speaks to the deep relational intimacy God offers. We are shown that God's expansive love is as strong as a fortress, yet as gentle as a feather: a love that meets us precisely where we are and in the measure we need. It fortifies us in our weakness, offering unshakable protection while soothing us in our vulnerability with tender care. God's love is deeply personal, tailored to each of us in God's perfect wisdom.

Having received a gift such as this, how can we not respond? God invites us into an active role—we can become more mindful of the practices that keep us rooted in our faith: fasting, prayer, reflection. We understand these traditions are not ends in themselves but pathways to transformation, guiding us into sacred spaces where we abide in the Lord's presence.

The psalmist doesn't promise a life free from trials and tribulations. We are, however, assured that God walks with us through the wilderness and that His faithfulness gives us the strength to persevere.

Lent is a time to reflect, knowing that Christ's journey to the cross embodies the ultimate trust and obedience to the Father's will, offering His life in love so that we may dwell in the presence of God forever.

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**Rev. Shirley Carleton** is a graduate of the Master of Divinity program at VST and a big fan of the staff and faculty of St. Andrew's Hall. She is an ordained minister with St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Amherstburg, Ontario.

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*God of refuge and strength, we come to You with hearts open to Your love and guidance. As we walk through this Lenten season, help us to dwell in Your presence. May we follow Christ's example of trust and obedience, finding our hope and courage in You alone. In Jesus's name we pray. AMEN.*

# Tuesday, March 11

## ROMANS 10:8B-13

*[I]f you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him. (Romans 10:9)*

**When I was in my late teens**, my sisters and I tried to give up many things for Lent. My older sister would give up chocolate, my younger sister sweets, and I would give up unhealthy foods. Do you see a trend here? We all tried to give up food items, like a diet. Lent seemed like an odd time to be more disciplined. I think I understood the concept of it, but ultimately, I did not understand the purpose.

When Paul addressed the Jews, they were in a similar predicament. They were consumed with rituals, practices, and rules, but lacked purpose. Paul reminded the Jews that God was near to them and accessible. Matters of the heart were more important and the heart produced the reality of our understanding. Paul says, “If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (Romans 10:9). The legalism of rituals and practices were not as important as what was believed in their hearts. Indeed, the confession that came from their heart brought them salvation.

As I matured in my relationship with Christ, I began to grasp the purpose of Lent on a deeper level. The purpose of sacrificing something good in our everyday lives is not for discipline, or forming better morals, but solely to nurture our relationship with Christ. Friends, our sacrifice this season has Kingdom impacts, and is a realignment of our heavenly assignment.

So, as you declare Jesus as Lord and Saviour, as you confess with your lips and believe in your hearts, this season, may we grow closer to Christ. As we sacrifice and make room this season, may it be for the One who chose the cross, that we may reap salvation, and abundance in the Kingdom of God.

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**Joe Ragbir** grew up in Montreal and moved to Beautiful British Columbia, Canada in September 2022. He is currently pursuing his MDiv at VST. He has found joy at Tenth Church and building deeper relationships within the community. His passions and hobbies involve hanging out with friends, training at the gym, and playing board games.

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*For reflection: How will you live out your confession, belief, and declaration of Christ as Lord? How will you live out this saved life?*

# Wednesday, March 12

## DEUTERONOMY 26:1-11

*The Lord brought us out of Egypt... and he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. So now [we] bring the first of the fruit. ...Then [we]... shall celebrate with all the bounty that the Lord your God has given to [us]. (Deuteronomy 26:8-11)*

**When the Israelites entered the promised land**, they were commanded to bring the first fruits of their harvest to God, acknowledging God's provision and faithfulness. Deuteronomy 26:1-11 details the ritual of offering these first fruits, a beautiful reminder of the importance of gratitude and remembrance in our lives.

We see God's hand at work in every aspect of our lives, from the smallest blessings to the grandest miracles. Just as the Israelites were reminded to recount their journey and God's provision, we too are called to remember and give thanks. In verses 5-10, they recite their history, acknowledging their humble beginnings and the mighty acts of God that brought them to a land flowing with milk and honey. Lent is the perfect season to do the same as what the Israelites were instructed to do.

While reflecting on this passage, three practices come to mind that we can seek to emulate during Lent.

- 1 **Gratitude.** We can take a moment each day to thank God for God's blessings to us. What are the "first fruits" in your life that you can offer back to Him?
- 2 **Remembrance.** We can reflect on our own journey. How has God been faithful to you? Remembering God's past faithfulness strengthens our trust in God for the future.
- 3 **Generosity.** We can consider how we can share our blessings with others, just as the Israelites were called to offer the first and best of their harvest.

By reflecting on this passage, we can deepen our appreciation for God's continuous presence and care in our lives. What are you thankful for today?

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**Patricia St. James Smith** is a student at VST working on her MDiv. She lives in the Garden of Eden in Nova Scotia and wears many hats including pulpit supply at a nearby Presbyterian Church as well as a part-time clinical dietitian in a long-term care facility.

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*Heavenly Father, we thank You for Your unwavering provision and faithfulness. Help us to always remember and give thanks for Your blessings. May we live lives of gratitude, generosity, and trust in Your promises. AMEN.*

# Thursday, March 13

## ISAIAH 42:1-9

*Here is my servant ... I will put my Spirit on him, and he will bring justice to the nations. (Isaiah 42:1)*

### **The church and the servant's mission**

Isaiah 42 presents the vision of a servant commissioned by God to bring forth justice to the nations. This servant is the ideal Israel, but his mission extends beyond the confines of Israel to the nations, illuminating the universal scope of God's redemptive purpose. Isaiah 42 depicts the servant as a light to the nations, and its commitment to justice and righteousness embodies God's character and purpose for his world. However, the second part of Isaiah (chapters 42-55) also highlights Israel's failure to fulfill this mission. Israel becomes trapped in its own disobedience. This reality points to the broader narrative of redemption, which finds its ultimate resolution in Jesus Christ, who will take upon Himself the mission his people failed to accomplish.

Jesus, the Lord's Servant, serves as a template for the life and mission of the church. Today, the church is called to continue this servant's mission, embodying justice, mercy, and humility in a world that often values power and domination. Although the church may struggle and falter, there is hope because its mission is sustained by the Spirit who empowers us to participate in God's redemptive work. The church in Latin America exemplifies this sacrificial and faithful witness to the gospel. A significant model was Oscar Romero, a prophetic voice of justice and mercy in El Salvador, who spoke truth to power and inspired many to do the same. Because of God's grace and the gift of His Spirit, despite our imperfections, we can be instruments of God's peace and justice.

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**Rev. Daniel Martinez** serves as Minister at St. Andrew's Presbyterian, Duncan, BC. A graduate of Regent College and VST, Daniel continues to connect with St. Andrew's Hall through the programs of the Centre for Missional Leadership.

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***Heavenly Father, empower us with Your Spirit to embody the character of Jesus, the true Servant, to be Your beacons of hope, service, and justice in a hurting world. AMEN.***

# Friday, March 14

## LUKE 9:1-6

*He told them: "Take nothing for the journey—no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no extra shirt." (Luke 9:3)*

**While traveling through an airport recently**, I saw a fellow passenger who was clearly upset over some kind of flight delay. The passenger was yelling some rather choice words, and demanding action from the customer service agent. As I passed by, I noticed the passenger was wearing a T-shirt featuring a palm tree emblazoned with the words, "NO BAD DAYS!" I couldn't help but smile a little at the irony.

As followers of the risen Jesus, we know that moving through this beautiful, beloved yet broken world that God made surely means that there will indeed be some bad days. Jesus sent His followers out to proclaim the good news, but was realistic that some would reject the message and the disciples were simply to knock the dust off their sandals and move on. Lent is known as a penitential season, forty days (excluding Sundays) during which we slow down, examine our lives in community, and walk together from Ash Wednesday to the final days of Jesus' ministry, Good Friday and Easter.

Together, we shout hosanna as Jesus enters Jerusalem. Together, we take a seat at the Last Supper. Together, we huddle in the Garden of Gethsemane and watch the betrayal. Together, we stand outside the High Priests house and hear the denial three times. Together, we watch the trial and torture of our Saviour. Together, we stand at the foot of the cross and weep.

There is no doubt: following Jesus includes witnessing some "bad days." But, by grace, we know that our journey does not end in a tomb, but begins there. Soon we will gather in that place. Together, we will unpack the "hallelujahs!" we've stuffed away for Lent and let the trumpet blast as we sing the songs of Easter. But perhaps for some of us reading this today, there is comfort simply in knowing bad days are to be expected as we follow Jesus in a fallen world, amidst the ruins of Christendom. Take heart. Jesus has gone ahead. He holds life in all its abundance and cares deeply for you and me.

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*Lord Jesus, on this Lenten Journey, help us to travel lightly acknowledging that in the course of our baptized lives of discipleship there will be days that we might see as good or bad. But in all of life, in the centre of life, is Your resurrected glory and power. AMEN.*

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Rev. Dr. Ross Lockhart serves as Dean of St. Andrew's Hall.

# Saturday, March 15

## ROMANS 4:13–25

*He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed—the God who gives life to the dead and calls into being things that were not. (Romans 4:17)*

**Have you ever prayed for something** for so long that you wondered if it was worth spending another breath on the request? Or waited to see whether something would happen, with doubt growing that it never would?

That must have been Abraham's experience as he waited to see how God would keep the promise made before he left his home for another one. As beneficiaries of hindsight and the Scriptures, we know that God came to Abraham and Sarah in their impossible age to bear a child, a promised seed for the nation to come.

In Romans 4:17, Paul describes the God of Abraham as "the God who gives life to the dead and calls into being things that were not." And in response, faith is not described as doctrines and dogmas but rather as full persuasion and trust in God's promises as a reality on its way. And this was credited to Abraham as his righteousness.

I find myself in a season of life where God's promises are unfolding with each day. A few years ago, I left my home, full-time ministry, family, and friends to enroll in school on the other side of the country. Many wanted me to stay home, while others questioned why I would leave everything to become a student again. St. Andrew's Hall and VST have been wonderful places to land, and this was where I started to uncover an old desire towards a new ministry, and where I met the partner I've been praying for since time immemorial.

Although the road ahead is still unclear as I embark on further studies and prepare to be married this year, I look back to how God called this all forth from nothing. And seeing what has happened today, I give God thanks with a renewed confidence for whatever will come.

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**Rev. Angie Song** is an ordained minister in the PCC and a Ph.D. candidate at VST and University of Pretoria. She is a thankful former resident of St. Andrew's Hall.

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*God of things unseen, grant us the grace in this Lenten season to commune with You and know You again as the One who gives life to the dead and calls into being things that were not. AMEN.*

# Second Sunday of Lent, March 16

**GENESIS 15:1–12, 17**

*Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.  
(Genesis 15:6)*

**My mother often made** a certain suggestion whenever I had an exam coming up. It usually followed the pattern, “If you score 90 or above out of 100, I’ll buy you something.” She made many such offers to me, but the one I remember most was when I was in third grade and about to take an exam. As usual, my mother presented me with the familiar offer: “Chanil, if you score 90 on this exam, I’ll buy you a bicycle.” I really wanted that bicycle at the time because all my friends rode their bikes to school. While I knew how to ride a bike, mine was so old it didn’t seem fit to take to school. So I studied hard in hopes of getting a new one. When exam day arrived, I was confident I could score 90 or above because I had prepared diligently. But, to my great disappointment, the result was 87. The moment I arrived home, I burst into tears in front of my mother. Looking back, there were probably many mixed emotions, but the biggest feeling was regret that I hadn’t reached my goal despite working so hard. Yet my mother quietly held me and then took me to a bicycle shop. She bought me the most popular bicycle at that time, saying she was proud of me.

In fact, when I look back on it, my mother always made offers she believed I could realistically accomplish. She never even mentioned anything that would be impossible for me. And even if I couldn’t achieve those goals, she would still do whatever she could for me regardless, simply because she loved me.

God’s proposal to Abraham was also rooted in His love and care for him. Accordingly, God asked Abraham to do something Abraham was capable of. He gave the proposal in consideration of Abraham’s circumstances, capabilities, and situation, which was based on His caring. More importantly, even though Abraham failed to fulfill God’s command by not splitting the birds, in the end, God kept the promise He had made—because God loved Abraham.

The same God who loved Abraham loves us today. It means He fulfilled His promise to us on the cross. Even though we may fail to follow God’s commandments, the God of love has accomplished what He promised. I pray that your day is filled with the grace of the God who keeps His promises.

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**Rev. Chanil Lee** is an associate pastor at Disciple Methodist Church. He is also enrolled in the Durham/VST Ph.D. program, majoring in Homiletics. Chanil and his family live at St. Andrew’s Hall.

*I pray that the love of God, who keeps His promises, will be upon all of us. AMEN.*



# Monday, March 17

## PSALM 27:13, 14

*I remain confident of this:*

*I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.*

*Wait for the Lord;*

*be strong and take heart*

*and wait for the Lord.*

*(Psalm 27:13, 14)*

**As I was thinking about waiting**, I came across this lovely quote, “Waiting is not only about what you will receive at the end of the wait. Waiting is about what you will become as you wait.”

As David takes time to reflect on his current situation, he slowly but surely arrives at the confident conclusion that he will see God in his everyday life. It is in his contemplation of his life with God that his fear is placed in perspective and his faith strengthened. What can we learn from his example?

First, David considers what his experience of God has been and finds that the Lord has guided him and saved him in the past. Given this foundation, David next focuses on what he hopes his relationship with God will look like: being in his presence, delighting in his beauty, and seeking him in a straight path.

When you look back, where has God given you a lamp on your path, or saved you from despair? Many images come to my mind and like David, I want to remember God when I’m visiting my friend in the hospital, or facing a critical conversation about university curriculum, or praying about sending a missionary to a land of persecution. I covet God’s leading and wisdom, for I have none and the challenges are significant.

Lent provides the space to ask forgiveness, be in God’s presence, and listen for His teaching. And it is a time to be filled with gratitude for the glimpses of beauty each day brings. May we dedicate this Lent to becoming the servant God calls us to be, confident in His presence and delighting in His goodness.

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*Let us pray the Lord’s prayer:*

*Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,  
thy kingdom come, thy will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.*

*Give us this day our daily bread.*

*And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.*

*And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.*

*For thine is the kingdom,*

*and the power, and the glory, forever. AMEN.*

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**Mary Rozsa de Coquet** is a well-known advocate for the arts and an innovative philanthropist who serves as an elder at her local church and presbytery, and as a board member at St. Andrews Hall.

# Tuesday, March 18

**PHILIPPIANS 3:17–4:1**

*But our citizenship is in heaven. (Philippians 3:20)*

**Physical, social, and emotional life** are aspects of human development that contribute to overall health and well-being. Likewise, we also need to grow and mature in our spiritual lives as well.

Paul describes a mature Christian as someone who doesn't put their mind on earthly things, but on heavenly things. Paul's language is tough here. Referring to immature Christians, Paul says that their destiny is destruction, and their god is their stomach. Paul is not only alluding here to those who overindulge in their physical appetites, he's also talking about spiritual idolaters who mind nothing but their sensual appetites. They mind earthly things, relish earthly possessions, and put their confidence in themselves.

Several years ago, I spent a month in Europe. Caught up with being in London, with all the things to see, taste, and do, I forgot all about Easter, which landed during my trip. It didn't help that businesses, attractions, and museums were all open over Easter weekend. When Easter Sunday rolled around, my wife wanted to go attend the Easter Service at St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, a famous church known for its music at the corner of Trafalgar Square. Why not? But it wasn't a priority for me. My mind seemed only to be on earthly things—what to do, what to eat, what to buy, and where to go. Yet the service was one of the best things we did on our trip. I needed to be reminded that the resurrection was at the crux of everything. I still need to mature as a Christian—you never stop growing—but I was reminded that day that my citizenship wasn't as a Canadian as I carried my passport around. My citizenship wasn't of this earth, even as I enjoyed my time in Europe, but rather of heaven.

As Paul continues in Philippians 3:20, "Our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body." But until then, our way of life should be in keeping with our true citizenship. An American tourist once visited the home of famous 19th-century Polish Rabbi, Hofetz Chaim. The tourist was astonished to see that the rabbi's home was only a simple room filled with books, plus a table and a bench. The tourist asked, "Rabbi, where is your furniture?" "Where is yours?" replied the rabbi. "Mine?" asked the puzzled American. "But I'm a visitor here. I'm only passing through." Hofetz Chaim responded "So am I."

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**Rev. Albert YS Chu** is the Lead Pastor of the Tapestry Church and former Director of the Centre for Missional Leadership at St. Andrew's Hall.

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*God, thank You that our citizenship is in heaven.  
Thank You for Your grace, which serves as our passport. AMEN.*

# Wednesday, March 19

## PSALM 22:23-31

*Future generations will be told about the Lord, and proclaim his deliverance to a people yet unborn, saying that he has done it. (Psalm 22:30, 31)*

**This psalm shows us** that future generations will look back and proclaim the works of the Lord, recognizing His justice and faithfulness. This message invites us to reflect on how we view the past.

Looking back on what has been left behind can be dangerous when we adopt a nostalgic view, romanticizing past times and believing they were superior to the present. This attitude can paralyze us, hinder our gratitude for what God is doing today, and obscure hope for the future.

On the other hand, revisiting the past from the perspective of recognizing God's action is a beneficial and transformative practice. This happens when we remember past blessings and deliverance, and proclaim His wonders to future generations. This attitude not only helps us in difficult times, but also encourages us to share with others the impact of His love in our history, contributing to strengthening the faith of future generations.

Therefore, we must look back on the past with a grateful heart, recognizing what God has done, and not as an escape from the present. In this way, we are inspired to live today with purpose and hope for tomorrow.

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**Rev. Lucas Bruder de Oliveira** is a VST student who plays piano in St. Andrew's Hall chapel services. Lucas is an ordained minister in the Independent Presbyterian Church of Brazil and a Collaborative Student Minister at St. John's Presbyterian Church in White Rock.

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*Lord, help me to look back with gratitude, acknowledging Your works and proclaiming Your faithfulness, rather than clinging to paralyzing nostalgia. May our story be a testimony of Your merciful and transforming presence. AMEN.*

# Thursday, March 20

## LUKE 13:31-35

*[H]ow often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing. (Luke 13:34)*

**When I first read this passage,** I drew some parallels to what is going on around us lately, especially for our neighbours to the South that want to speak out about injustices and questionable motives from their government. Speaking out and upholding the gospel can be, and has been, dangerous in many parts of the world at different times in human history.

Today it is even more so, including here in what some still supposed to be a “Christian friendly West.” From having one’s reputation slandered, to being removed from a job/vocational position, you can see where some may want to heed the warning of the pharisees that came to Jesus and said, “Leave this place and go somewhere else...” (Luke 13:31). Jesus also knew that what he was saying came with great risk to Himself. He had to “press on today and tomorrow and the next day” (33).

As followers of Christ, we need to follow Jesus’s way. It is not, however, an easy way. Recently, when I watched Bishop Mariann Edgar Budde ask US President Donald Trump for mercy on those he is rallying against, she was very measured, her lips trembled. She knew that what she was saying came with great risk to herself. It’s rare to see such a powerful, public, prophetic act. It made the whole world sit up and notice.

How about for us as followers of Jesus in today’s trouble world? What’s our responsibility to speak up and speak out in order to bless and mend God’s world? In this season of Lent, how might God be filling with us a longing for justice and righteous with a Kingdom vision?

May we “press on” during this season of Lent. May we follow the way of Christ, desiring to “gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings” (34), even if it is a risk for our comfort and way of being in this world.

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**Rev. Laura Lockhart** is a supporter of the Hall and its ministries, with a background of service in pastoral ministry and Christian education.

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*God of love and justice, You have shown us Your good purposes in Jesus Christ. Grant us courage to join with You in prophetic speech and grace-infused action in this world Christ died to save. AMEN.*

# Friday, March 21

## EXODUS 20:1-17

*I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments. (Exodus 20:5, 6)*

**We have all read the story** of God giving Moses the Ten Commandments, whether on the page, screen, or stage. At first glance, it is a collection of the first laws given to the Israelites after they escaped Egypt.

However, if examined deeper, these commandments are about Israel's relationships with God and with one another. They are part of the ongoing covenant God has with the Israelites.

If God made us have relationships with one another, what happens when we break those relationships? Are they unmendable? Will the brokenness last forever? No. There is always hope; for the Israelites, it came in the form of Jesus.

Throughout the scriptures in the Old and New Testaments, the Israelites have broken the covenants made with God and not followed the laws and teachings. There is still hope. God never entirely turns away from His people, even though we constantly reject Him.

As we progress through the season of Lent, let us remember that we are progressing closer to the cross, but there will always be hope, even when it seems impossible.

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**Alicia Monson** is a first year MDiv student at the Vancouver School of Theology, a candidate for ordination in the Presbyterian Church in Canada, and a resident of St. Andrew's Hall.

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*Dear Lord, grant us peace in this time of knowing what is to come. Be with us as we journey through this season of Lent. AMEN.*

# Saturday, March 22

## LUKE 9:28–36 — THE TRANSFIGURATION

*As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. (Luke 9:29)*

**Luke's story of the Transfiguration** takes place on a mountain, a place of revelation. Both Moses and Elijah had received revelation on mountains—Moses received the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai, and Elijah fled to Mount Horeb where God spoke to him. Now, these two appear on the mountain with Jesus.

Immediately before Jesus takes Peter, John, and James up the mountain, He tells them and the others that He must suffer, die, and be resurrected on the third day. He will tell them this again after they come down from the mountain. What happened on that mountaintop took place between Jesus' two statements of impending change. The Transfiguration of our Lord is a day that gives us a glimpse of the coming future glory of Christ at Easter. It also reminds us that the way to Easter is through the cross.

Like the disciples, perhaps the Transfiguration story has something to teach us about how to live in the midst of change. Change, whether on the mountaintop of life or in the valley of the shadow of death, is a reality for all of us. Mountain top experiences prepare us for the valleys of everyday life. At some level, all of us are dealing with change. Whether we initiate it, or it is presented to us, and we don't want it or are afraid of it, change will happen in our lives. Sometimes it was change we wanted and other times it was change we never wished for or wanted. Whether change is good or bad, desired or unwanted, change always comes with consequences and challenges.

One of the things I am aware of in the midst of change is how many voices begin to speak. Some are outside of me, and some speak from within. There are voices of self-doubt and self-criticism. Some voices tell us to run and hide, and others tell us to fight and resist. Some voices ask questions and want explanations. Others deny what is happening. So many voices cry out for attention. Not every voice, however, is helpful or worth listening to. The story of the Transfiguration says there is only one voice to listen to. The voice of God speaks from the bright cloud overshadowing Peter, James, and John: "This is my Son, my Chosen; *listen to him!*" (Luke 9:35, emphasis added).

What if in the midst of change we sought to hear and listen to that one voice, the voice of Christ? What if we kept our ears open to what He is saying in our life and world today? To let ourselves become aware of and attentive to what He is saying and doing, to let His concerns and desires become our concerns and desires, to let His way of engaging life and the world become our way of engaging life and the world?

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**Rev. David Coull** is a SAH/VST graduate who is now serving in his first call as Minister at Bethel Presbyterian Church, Sydney, Nova Scotia.

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*Gracious and loving God, we are grateful for the mountain top experiences You give us to renew our strength for our daily walk with You. In Jesus name we pray.*  
**AMEN.**

# Third Sunday of Lent, March 23

## EPHESIANS 2:1–10

*For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. (Ephesians 2:8, 9)*

**There is a certain predictability to Lent.** A pattern, an order, a liturgy. We start with John the Baptist and then Jesus in the wilderness. We hear words about renunciation, repentance, cleansing with God's harsh scrub brush to get clean. And maybe you're more disciplined than I am, but my rhythm includes making some promise for the Lenten season before dropping it a week or two in. Wasn't an Enlightenment philosopher who said, "God will forgive me—that's his job"?

If these patterns are familiar, it's important to remember that our Protestant forebears didn't much celebrate Lent. This is a relatively recent reintroduction into the Protestant world, relearned from our Catholic separated kin (Anglicans and Lutherans—I fully expect your angry email denials, but bear with me). One difficult problem for us Protestants is where to stop throwing out traditions. And as we've reestablished liturgical seasons like Lent and Advent, we've found them helpful to a biblical, Reformed sort of faith.

What could be more biblical than repentance?

This is more important since our culture, quickly, picked up really poor understandings of Lent. It's a time for a diet. Or for giving up cussing. Or sex (really! There've been whole movies about that!). In other words, if it's fun, don't do it in Lent. What a dismal understanding of the joy of repentance.

In reality the season of Lent, and all of Christian repentance, is about throwing off things that make us less human. The goal is to leave off injustice and rejoin the side of grace and goodness. It is, then, about becoming more joyful. This is hard to remember, with all the talk of repentance, barely audible over John the Baptist screeching in the wilderness, but it is so. Lent is about what the Catholic theologian James Alison calls "the joy of being wrong."

Our human posture is more often to be defensive, to insist on our rightness to an irrational degree. But when we admit our sin, we fall hard into the arms of grace. Lent is about joy then, grace, becoming more human, admitting we're wrong and asking God to make us and our neighbours and our enemies more right. Make it so among us quickly, great God of grace. Amen.

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**Rev. Dr. Jason Byassee** is a CML Senior Fellow, the lecturer for the 2024 Guder Scholars Program and Senior Minister of Timothy Eaton Memorial Church in Toronto, Ontario.

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*Dear Lord, we thank You for the promises of the gospel that lead us into life. AMEN.*

# Monday, March 24

## PSALM 63:1-8

*You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek you; I thirst for you, my whole being longs for you, in a dry and parched land where there is no water. ... I will be fully satisfied as with the richest of foods; with singing lips my mouth will praise you. ... I sing in the shadow of your wings. I cling to you; your right hand upholds me. (Psalm 63:4)*

**Years ago, my family traveled to** the Utah desert. While we enjoyed the experience of such a different climate and landscape, the trip was somewhat difficult for my young daughter who felt uncomfortable and thirsty in the severe heat. Unlike the wet West Coast, desert scenery and temperatures help stress the point of David's intense longing for God in this Psalm.

Without the Lord, our lives would be dangerously dry and in desperate need of refreshing water. And just like drinking once was not enough during our stay in Utah, we Christians continue to need refills from God, the spring of living water (Jeremiah 17:13), throughout our lives.

The many storms and difficulties in life wear us down. We quickly get caught up in unhealthy cycles of stress or bad habits, easily forgetting to recharge not only our bodies and minds, but also our spirits.

This time of reflection during Lent is a good aid to point us back toward the well of nourishing water found in God's Word. In Him we don't only receive plain water, we find nourishment so satisfying the psalmist speaks of it as the richest of foods.

Unlike the dry desert, we get plenty of rain here on the west coast. When storms come, birds gather their little ones under their protective wings until the bad weather has passed. David uses this beautiful image to describe how we too can take shelter in the shadow of God's wings. That is a place of greatest safety and love, and available to everyone.

When life feels heavy, remember Jesus's invitation:

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light. (Matthew 11:28-30)

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**Silva Kraal** is a Community Coordinator at SAH. She remains a firm Lutheran despite occasionally donning a John Calvin shirt at community events.

*God, thank You for Your love and protection each new day. AMEN.*



# Tuesday, March 25

## HEBREWS 10:4–10

*Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said:  
“Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you  
prepared for me.” (Hebrews 10:5)*

**Once in elementary school**, a classmate brought in a Magic 8 Ball toy. The whole class gathered around, taking turns asking serious or silly questions and shaking it until it gave the answer we were hoping—usually “yes” or “all signs point to yes.”

All signs point to yes. Throughout Hebrews, the author tries to convey the point that all signs point to Jesus. Psalm 40 is quoted, which though written by King David, points to what God has accomplished in and through Jesus Christ.

Even the Old Testament laws regarding sacrifices and offerings were neither an end in themselves nor enough on their own. Sacrifices had to be repeated over and over because they were only ever meant to be temporary. They were signs that pointed to Jesus, to the once-and-for-all nature of His sacrifice. Sin dealt with finally, forever.

Christ’s sacrifice was all that was needed. And yet, we can have a hard time living out that reality. Sometimes we feel like we’re not enough—that we need to give more, do more, be better. We’re like those children who kept shaking the Magic 8 Ball, hoping our efforts will make things turn out in our favour. But only Jesus’s sacrifice makes us whole and holy.

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**Rev. Elaine Wilson** co-pastors at St. Giles’ Presbyterian Church in Prince George, BC. She is a St. Andrew’s Hall/VST alumnus and currently serves on the Board of St. Andrew’s Hall.

*Lord Jesus, thank You for Your powerful sacrifice that makes me whole and holy. As I journey toward the cross that made all the difference, may I find freedom from feeling the need to sacrifice more when You already accomplished it on my behalf out of Your great love for me. Instead, help me to have a heart like Jesus’s—surrendered in obedience to Your will. AMEN.*

# Wednesday, March 26

## PSALM 45

*My heart is stirred by a noble theme as I recite my verses for the king. (Psalm 45:1)*

**The sons of Korah** were talented musicians ordained to write psalms for public worship since the time of Moses. In composing Psalm 45, they said they were inspired by a noble theme such that the verses flowed effortlessly from their pen.

Perhaps similarly inspired, Handel composed *Messiah* in 1741 in about twenty days, hardly sleeping or eating. His “noble theme” was about the life of Jesus, and adopted lyrics from the King James Bible. Handel’s composition, a three-hour oratorio, featured the magnificent “Hallelujah Chorus,” with its psalmic line, “King of kings, and Lord of lords, and He shall reign forever and ever.” I still remember when I first heard this sung in Massey Hall in Toronto many years ago. My body literally trembled from head to toe when more than a thousand voices in the audience joined in the chorus. When I read the description of the king in the first nine verses of Psalm 45, my spine tingled from muscle memory recognizing the king as Jesus the Messiah.

However, the noble theme of Psalm 45 is more than the lordship of Jesus. Verses 10 and 11 go on to describe the bride—actually you and me. We are advised to leave our old life behind, confess Jesus as Lord, and put on a gown of purity woven with gold as befitting a royal bride.

The noble theme of Psalm 45, then, is a wedding vow. It is the consummation of a love so immense that the king wooed, redeemed, and restored a fallen humanity to become his bride, to become one with his body, to reign with him forever and ever, hallelujah! This divinely inspired Psalm has been proclaiming God’s love for over three thousand years, and will be sung at the great wedding banquet of Christ and his Church.

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**Dr. Victor Ling** is an elder and a cancer researcher. He serves on the Board of Saint Andrew’s Hall.

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*Dear Jesus, we cannot comprehend how immense and relentless is Your love! Help us to give up our old ways and honour You as our Lord. AMEN.*

# Thursday, March 27

## 1 CORINTHIANS 10:6, 7 (NLT)

*These things happened as a warning to us, so that we would not crave evil things as they did, or worship idols as some of them did. As the Scriptures say, "The people celebrated with feasting and drinking, and they indulged in pagan revelry." (1 Corinthians 10:6, 7)*

**In the above verses**, that little word *or* underscores a big truth. One can lead to the other.

Paul warns against two distinct but related pitfalls: craving evil things and worshipping idols. *Cravings are what we desire*—what we think will satisfy us. *Worshipping idols* is about what we *trust*. Both pull us away from God's call. The Israelites craved Egypt's foods (Numbers 11:5). Their longing was also for the comfort of familiarity, forgetting that the cost of it was enslavement.

Craving often leads to misplaced trust. The Israelites built a golden calf, mimicking the idol worship they had seen in Egypt. Their actions reflected deep desire to recreate what they did before, giving them the illusion of control and security they thought they had in Egypt.

How often do our cravings cloud our judgment? We long for success, approval, or control, hoping they will comfort us. We then trust in those things for our sense of security.

As churches, we can fall into the same trap. We crave growth, packed pews, or financial stability, trusting those measures of success to sustain us. We cling to what feels familiar or safe instead of stepping out in faith, trusting God's Spirit to lead, forgetting how those measures of success might have enslaved us.

Lent invites us to pause and ask: *What cravings are blinding us? What are we trusting that isn't God?* True freedom and faithfulness come when we release those things and trust the God who calls us forward into abundant life.

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*God who leads us to freedom, open our eyes to the cravings that blind us and the idols we trust instead of You. Help us to trust Your provision and live out Your greatest commandments with love and courage. AMEN.*

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**Rev. Shalini Rajack-Sankarlal** is the minister at University Community Church in Windsor, Ontario. She is passionate about helping individuals and communities explore what it means to follow Jesus with trust, authenticity, and love. Shalini was also a 2024 Guder Scholar at St. Andrew's Hall.

# Friday, March 28

## LUKE 13:1-9

*Then he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree growing in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it but did not find any." (Luke 13:6)*

**When encountering a parable** like the one in today's reading, it's easy to feel a sense of dread like the fig tree facing the axe. This season encourages introspection, making it the perfect time to examine our fruitless endeavours. However, the vineyard keeper's actions in the parable suggest that nothing nor no one should be cut off or destroyed in the immediate future. Instead, the vineyard keeper says, "Wait a minute boss, this fruitless tree probably needs more nurturing. I will invest my energy this year in digging a trench and caring for this fig tree's roots. Let's see how it does before making any rash decisions!"

Maybe the vineyard keeper's actions reflect what Jesus would say as our advocate. Rather than spending Lent in self-loathing, let's use this time to identify where we need to dig deeper and which aspects of our lives require more nourishment, care, and effort. While we cannot escape final judgment, we can move forward for at least another year, practicing a more careful and nurturing approach to our lives. We can seek out ways of being that are also healthier for others too. Who knows? We may see fruit blossom where there seemed to be no hope last season.

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**Ally McCombs** is a wife, mother, student, singer, ruling elder, and friend. She lives in Shoreline, Washington with her husband and teenage son and is a member of the SAH community as she studies as a PC-USA student at VST.

*Jesus, thank You for being our advocate and vineyard keeper. Help us to move forward offering the same care and nourishment to all we meet. AMEN*

# Saturday, March 29

## PSALM 77

*Will the Lord reject forever?*

*Will he never show his favor again?*

*Has his unfailing love vanished forever?*

*Has his promise failed for all time?*

*(Psalm 77: 7, 8)*

**The psalmist begins today's song** by looking back upon troubling times in years past when the Israelites cried out to God, longing that God would hear a desperate plea for aid. Had God abandoned the psalmist? Was this person alone in the world?

Maybe you can think of times in your life when you've felt alone, even abandoned and uncertain whether there was a future where God would bless you? One of the important lessons I've learned here at St. Andrew's Hall over the years is the healing nature of a caring and compassionate community. Participating in special events like the welcome BBQ for all residents in September, Thanksgiving meal, Christmas service, and end-of-term celebrations, I see how God knits a diverse group of people into a family.

The psalmist recalls that in the darkest moments, God is a divine source of rescue. The psalmist remembers God's faithful presence with Israel as they fled Egypt. "The waters saw you and writhed...the clouds poured down water...your thunder was heard in the whirlwind...your path led through the sea...though your footprints were not seen." In a time of despair and discouragement, God showed up and gave the people of Israel hope and provided a way.

Are you feeling alone or abandoned during this season of Lent, in a time of pandemic restrictions? Remember, our God is a rescuer, one who makes a path forward where we cannot see the way. Through cradle, cross, and tomb, we are adopted into a new family of faith, we are grafted onto Israel, the Red Sea parted now becomes our story, too. As 1 Peter 2:10 says so beautifully, "Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy." Thanks be to God.

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**Andy the Bear** is the Chief Public Relations Officer for St. Andrew's Hall and SAH's official mascot. He can be found in the SAH staff room, reclining on the coach, and greeting everyone as they go about their day.

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*Loving God, thank You that even when we feel discarded or forgotten in life, You remind us through Your living Word, Jesus Christ, that we are treasured, valued and precious to You. AMEN.*

# Fourth Sunday of Lent, March 30

**LUKE 15:1-3, 11B-32**

*Jesus continued, "There was a man who had two sons." (Luke 15:11)*

## **Who are You Coming Home to?**

Fifty years ago, if you mentioned the Parable of the Prodigal Son, a large percentage of listeners would know something about the story you were talking about. Not so much today. This biblical story, like most others, is fading or altogether vacant from most people's memories. I fear this loss, since the Father in this story reveals an unexpected and largely unknown God in our culture today. This is the Father who not only allows his son to shame him by claiming his inheritance but also runs to meet him on his return—shielding him from the village's ridicule before he even reaches home. To top it off, this is the Father who embraces him with abandon and throws a party in his honour to restore him to his place and vocation in the family.

The Parable serves as a window for us to glimpse:

- 1 Jesus' ministry of compassion, welcoming the lost and defeated.
- 2 The lavish nature of God's saving love, which actively seeks out and welcomes a lost and defeated world.
- 3 The entire gospel story of the Bible, which as Miroslav Volf has argued, is about God making a home with humans within creation.

I long for our world to embrace this parable once again. Today, as you read this parable, take a moment to revel and rest in the presence of this God—the One who is making His home with you, with us all, in a renewed and restored world. Is this not good news in a world with intractable problems and political upheaval? Is this not good news for people who are often oblivious to the saving action of God? For people like you and me?

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**Rev. Dr. Tim Dickau** is an associate at the Centre for Missional Leadership, the director of Citygate, and the author of *Forming Christian Communities in a Secular Age*.

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*Father, fill my imagination today with the lavish nature of Your saving love. Restore my hope in the reality that You are coming to make Your home with us.*

# Monday, March 31

## 2 CORINTHIANS 5:16–21

*All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. (2 Corinthians 5:18, 19)*

**In Christian circles**, we often hear about reconciliation. It's a call to engage meaningfully with those around us, but truth be told, it can be tough when we're in relationships with people who have different values, beliefs, and life experiences. When there's tension, it's hard for me to reconcile with someone I don't fully understand. Honestly, it feels easier to try and "fix" them instead of humbly seeing them as someone made in God's image from whom I can learn.

During this Lenten season, God invites us to the ministry of reconciliation. It's a call to be peacemakers, working to heal broken relationships instead of letting division fester. This means actively seeking to resolve differences, forgive wrongs, and restore unity in our families, communities, and churches. Just as God reconciled the world through Christ, we are called to live out that same message.

Reconciliation with God is God's work of healing the rift caused by sin and restoring us to wholeness. Long ago, I remember hearing Scottish theologian James B. Torrance describe reconciliation as a two-way embrace: God reaches out to us unconditionally through Jesus, drawing us close by the Spirit, and we respond by reaching back to God, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit. It's like a hug that goes both ways—first, God embracing us, and then us embracing God. This is how we're reconciled to God and, in turn, how we're called to reconcile with others.

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**Rev. Sumarme Goble** is the Chaplain and Community Life Director at St. Andrew's Hall.

*God, help us to live out this ministry of reconciliation, embracing others with the same love and grace You have shown us, so that we may reflect Your peace in all our relationships. AMEN.*

# Tuesday, April 1

## PSALM 32

*Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the one whose sin the Lord does not count against them and in whose spirit is no deceit. (Psalm 32:1)*

**There is a lot of disagreement** in the world today. Have you ever had someone who you just don't get along with? Someone who consistently rubs you the wrong way. Maybe your antipathy is justified—they are grating, obnoxious, rude or otherwise difficult to get along with. They disagree with you, disparage you, or unfairly (in your view) judge you. I have someone like that in my life. I want to be nicer to them, but I can't. Or I won't.

I tell myself that it's not my fault we don't get along. I can't be expected to get along with everyone, right? People come from different backgrounds or contexts, or have different expectations. People carry baggage. Sometimes the burdens that hold us down are political, financial, theological, or ethnic. Some people are actually racist. This person that I struggle with is kind of, sort of, a little bit, well, racist. I can never quite put my finger on it, but it's there. I feel the judgment from them. A subtle condescension—that silent "I'm better than you" vibe.

And so, I use that as my excuse to not like them. To avoid them. That part is understandable—I was bullied and endured racist attacks as a kid growing up in Canada. But there are times I use this as a reason to not see them as a child of God, to withhold respect or—dare I say—even love. Not just as an excuse to not like them, but as an excuse to actively dislike them. And that's just wrong. I don't have to like their actions. But I can't reduce myself to fear and hate. They remain a child of God.

Looking down on a child of God, no matter our differences, is a mistake. Corrie Ten Boom, a young Dutch woman arrested by Nazis in WWII and sent to Ravensbrück Concentration Camp, tells the story of how she forgave one of her guards when he came to her after the war. "I have become a Christian. Fräulein, will you forgive me?" Corrie tells the story of how this was the hardest moment in her life, but when she prayed to Jesus for the strength to forgive, to just raise her hand to shake his "this healing warmth seemed to flood my whole being, bringing tears to my eyes."

So how do I face this person that I struggle with? Psalm 32 tells me to confess my transgressions to the Lord. By doing so, I will be forgiven. I can seek His instruction, and He will counsel me with His loving eye on me. Even more, He will be my hiding place, and He will surround me with songs of deliverance.

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**Neil Singh** is the Assistant (to the) Regional Manager of UrbanPromise International, and an independent consulting engineer currently building a Christian university in Malawi. He serves on the Board of Saint Andrew's Hall, and is an elder at City Centre Church in Surrey, BC.

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*So, I pray that the Lord will forgive my sins, and that He will help me deal with this person, and that He will teach me in the way that I should go. AMEN.*



# Wednesday, April 2

## JOSHUA 5:9–12

*The day after the Passover, that very day, they ate some of the produce of the land: unleavened bread and roasted grain. (Joshua 5:11)*

**As clergy, my family and I** have moved several times over the years serving congregations from Nova Scotia in the East, all the way across Canada to here in British Columbia. With each move came the usual chaos of packing and unpacking. I recall one of our moves coincided with friends visiting our new home city from out of country. We wanted to see these friends, but also realized that between settling the kids into new schools and beginning new work, our lives were more than a little full. “Come on over for pizza,” I said to our friends, as we had been eating all our meals out for two days since arriving and we were too tired to meet them at a restaurant. Thus began the important search for a new favourite pizza place in this “new land.”

Today’s passage from Joshua is a transitional time for the people of Israel. They said goodbye to Moses on Mount Nebo and crossed into the Promised Land under Joshua. Jericho lies ahead, and they are adjusting to this new way of life. Manna has stopped falling and the land promised to flow with milk and honey is already feeding them. Like all transitions, there is a mix of grief, nostalgia, anticipation, and hopefulness mixed into one. Can you think of significant transitions times in your own life? Perhaps you are experiencing one right now?

Moses had experienced his fair share of the “back to Egypt” crowd during the Exodus, but now God’s people had crossed the Jordan and there was no going back. Old habits and familiar ways of being were ending, including the provision of manna. New places, sights, smells, and sounds of their surroundings were everywhere. But they had each other. And they had their faithful God.

The doorbell rang at our new home, and standing on the doorstep were our friends with housewarming gifts. Behind them, awkwardly waiting, was the pizza delivery guy. We welcomed all inside, tipped the driver, and sat in our future dining room surrounded by moving boxes. With a makeshift dining room table and chairs made out of moving boxes, we feasted on new food in a new place. It was a gift to have our friends with us, even in the chaos. It reminded us that no matter where we go, the presence of loved ones—and our loving God—are near at hand.

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*Lord of all, we praise You for the seasons of our lives. We thank You for Your faithful presence in times of transition. As we walk this Lenten Road, help us to see You at work in those around us, and to treasure the gift of new beginnings.*  
**AMEN.**

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Rev. Dr. Ross Lockhart is Dean of  
St. Andrew’s Hall.

# Thursday, April 3

## PSALM 119:1-9

*How can young people keep their way pure?*

*By guarding it according to your word.*

*(Psalm 119:9)*

**Not so long ago in our church's history**, the Sunday school children would spend much of their year memorizing the books of the Bible. Several former students have shared with me their fond memories of the kindly church elder who would gift them with a hard candy if they could recite all 66 books of the Bible in order.

As a person who grew up outside the church, who never attended Sunday school, and has still never gotten around to memorizing all 66 books in order, I am always a bit intimidated by what these people were able to accomplish as children.

These days, as I visit with our current Sunday school students after church, or go to the Sunday evening youth group gathering, I don't see or hear much memorization. And yet, that does not stop these young people from understanding and internalizing the story of Jesus. To them, the story of Jesus is not a list of books or a list of names or a list of places, it is a real, living Person.

When I invite my "young Christian friends" forward each Sunday for our weekly children's time, I am always surprised and delighted by the creative (and true) answers I receive. To see these children working out, in their own way, who Jesus is and what His lessons mean is a gift. To hear them wrestle with what Jesus would have us do in those tricky situations where we are called to forgive and practice mercy is to see these same young people forming a real, living relationship with their Lord and friend, Jesus Christ. Not someone who intimidates them from His perch on the stained glass window above, but one who knows them, one who loves them where they, for who they are.

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**Rev. Roberto DeSandoli** is a graduate of VST, a former resident of St. Andrew's Hall, a 2023 Guder Scholar at SAH and minister of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Saskatoon.

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*Lord Jesus, this Lent may each one of us seek to approach You like "one of these" children. Each of us hopes and prays to see You Lord for as new and as wonderful as You are to our young Christian friends. Lord Jesus, may the Spirit give us the fresh eyes we need to be successful in our task. AMEN.*

# Friday, April 4

## JOHN 12:21-30

*They came to Philip who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. "Sir," they said, "we would like to see Jesus." Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus. (John 12:21, 22)*

**John 12:21-30 unveils a profound mystery.** In verses 21 and 22, Philip and Andrew embody different responses to a significant opportunity. First, we encounter Greeks seeking to worship the living God as they arrive in Jerusalem—a city steeped in Jewish tradition. We catch a glimpse here of God's redemptive plan that transcends human expectations, and the presence of the Greeks hints at the universal reality that was beginning to disrupt the expected order. These Greeks approach Philip and explain that they wanted to see Jesus. This underscores how God is actively drawing all people unto Himself, regardless of their origin or background, demonstrating that the Kingdom of God transcends all cultural and religious limitations.

The request seems to pose something of a dilemma for Philip, and these verses serve as a poignant reminder that even those with cultural advantages may sometimes experience hesitancy in sharing Christ. Faced with these Greeks seeking Jesus, Philip hesitates. He seeks counsel from Andrew, highlighting a potential lack of confidence or perhaps a desire for validation. Andrew, however, readily embraces the opportunity and demonstrates a proactive and servant-hearted spirit.

In fact, Andrew had no difficulty at all; for we read that at once he and Philip go and tell Jesus. We are left with the impression that Andrew must have had some idea of the overflowing grace that was in Christ Jesus. Why else would Andrew reach outside and beyond the bounds of the Jewish nation and take in the Greeks?

These verses remind us that we can't simply rely on the knowledge of forgiveness—we must experience the intimacy of knowing the Blessor. This personal relationship with Jesus revolutionizes our lives, turning service from a duty into a joyful expression of love, not just in this season of Lent but always.

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**Neena Durbha** is a resident of St. Andrew's Hall, a Master of Divinity student at VST and the student representative to the Board of St. Andrew's Hall.

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*Dear God, help us to reflect Yourr grace so that those around us would long to see Jesus in the world and in their lives. AMEN.*

# Saturday, April 5

## HEBREWS 5:5-10

*Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him. (Hebrews 5:8, 9)*

**I know: *Best of the Best***, the incredible martial arts movie from the 1980s, has little to do with Lent or Jesus (although it does show the transforming quality of mercy). However, if I had to title the Scripture passage above it would be that. The author of Hebrews wants us to know that Jesus is the best (or “better”): the best king; the best priest; He is also the Son of God and, of course, He was the best at that, too.

As we look to the cross and resurrection, we’re reminded of what Jesus took on in order that all might be reconciled to God. In prayer He wrestled, submitted to, and accepted the Father’s will. He suffered the pain and shame of the cross, and in obedience He made a way to change the cross into a sign of God’s redeeming love and glory. He lived fully into His calling and identity as the Son, taking no shortcuts in learning what that meant through His obedience. Jesus’s priestly calling brings all of that together: God’s love, power, and grace; our pain, sin, and need.

Who better to present us to God, and God to us, than the Son who fully knows both the heart of the Father and the heart of humanity? Is there anyone better than Jesus to lead us right by resolutely keeping His eye on the Father and His Kingdom? Who best deserves our attention, trust, and praise today? Jesus. Only Jesus. He is the risen one and by the Spirit’s power, leads us today.

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**Rev. Joseph Bae** is the lead pastor of Vaughan Community Church English Ministry and serves on the Board of St. Andrew’s Hall.

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*Living God, may we and all who take on the name of Christ, who seek the best way to walk, especially in these days, bear witness to how Jesus brought eternal salvation.*

# Fifth Sunday of Lent, April 6

## PSALM 126

*When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion,  
we were like those who dreamed.  
Our mouths were filled with laughter,  
our tongues with songs of joy.  
Then it was said among the nations,  
“The Lord has done great things for them.”  
The Lord has done great things for us,  
and we are filled with joy.*

*Restore our fortunes, Lord,  
like streams in the Negev.  
Those who sow with tears  
will reap with songs of joy.  
Those who go out weeping,  
carrying seed to sow,  
will return with songs of joy,  
carrying sheaves with them.  
(Psalm 126:2–6)*

**As a psalm of ascent,** Psalm 126 is built for singing on pilgrimage toward Jerusalem. Over and again, the pilgrims are called to sing of restoration, joy, and laughter. Reaping the harvest of a life lived in good relationship with God, Creator of all that is. In this song of the soul, restored fortunes are recalled, a time when God’s people knew the favor of the Lord. In turn, this renewed relationship between the Maker and those made in the Maker’s image is anticipated. Over and again, Psalm 126 holds the ideas of restoration, reaping, returning. *And dreaming.*

It is as though the pilgrims sing, “remember when we dreamed?” Or “remember when we had such exuberant hope that joy was in our hearts, songs were on our lips, and dreams encouraged us in our sleep?” Now that Christ reigns, we can expect this again. On this fifth Sunday in Lent, as we pilgrims move closer to the holy place of Christ’s mercy seat, knowing that death is ahead, may we also accept the invitation to anticipate. To look ahead to streams of Living Water, seeds of plenty to sow, and dreams filled with joy and laughter for the world that already belongs to Christ.

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**Rev. Rebecca Simpson** is the Director of Denominational Formation for Presbyterian students at St. Andrew’s Hall and Vancouver School of Theology.

*Dear Jesus, thank You for inviting us into Your joy even as we shed tears. May we trust Your promise that we will dream again, laugh again, sing together again. Again and again. In Your precious name O Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit, and in reverence for the Maker, we pray. AMEN.*

# Monday, April 7

## ISAIAH 43:16–21

*Do not remember the former things or consider the things of old. (Isaiah 43:18)*

**God is reminding His people** of who He is and what He has done in the past: “I am the one who performed miracles for you, who made a way through the sea, who delivered you.” But then, He does something unexpected; He tells them *not* to dwell on those past miracles: “Do not remember the former things or consider the things of old” (Isaiah 43:18). Why? Because He is doing something new.

It’s like the transition from winter to spring. Winter had its own beauty: Christmas was wonderful, the snow-covered mountains were breathtaking. But now, spring brings something different: fresh blooms, warmer air, and a new kind of joy and hope. It is as though God is saying, “I know you cherished the past, but don’t get stuck there. Look ahead, I’m giving you a new gift.” The beauty of spring is not meant to be compared to winter—it is meant to be received and enjoyed in its own time.

In Isaiah, the contrast is striking, God once parted the sea, and now He is making rivers in the wilderness. The sea and the desert are completely different, just as each season of our lives brings its own landscape. Maybe you are in a new job, a different city, or an unfamiliar stage of life. Or perhaps, you are in a season of reimagining your own theology or reshaping your way of thinking about God, faith, and the world. The old ways of understanding were good for that time, but God is inviting you into a deeper, more expansive view of Him and His work in the world. The same God who was with you then is with you now. And He’s not just giving you a sip of water in the wilderness—He’s making rivers. He is not just sustaining you, He is bringing abundance into your dry places. The question is, do we perceive it? Are we open to receiving the new thing He is doing, or are we too busy longing for what was?

This Lent, as we reflect and prepare for Easter, let’s trust that God’s new work is not only good but exactly what we need for this season.

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**Astrid Melatunan** is a Master of Divinity student at VST, youth minister at Coquitlam Presbyterian church and an active member of the St. Andrew’s Hall community. Originally from Indonesia, Astrid is in her final year of theological studies.

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*Lord Jesus, thank You for Your presence in all the seasons of our lives. Help us to treasure Your past faithfulness and look forward to the new works of grace You are preparing today, and into the future. AMEN.*

# Tuesday, April 8

## JOHN 11:1-45

*Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:25)*

**Back in seminary**, one of my colleagues preached a sermon in which he compared the college and its chapel to a tomb!

I remember well the pause that followed this statement. Then he went on to talk about how, in our Christian formation, we are all called to die to ourselves in order to take up the ministry of Jesus. I am remembering this now as I read about Jesus raising Lazarus. I find myself noticing that when Jesus calls Lazarus out of the tomb, He asks God to do this miracle for the sake of the crowd, that they might also believe God had sent Jesus.

In John's gospel, believing is associated with what and how we see.

So imagine being in the crowd that day. What do you see and experience?

- When Jesus cries with his friends?
- When Jesus insists they remove the stone from the mouth of the tomb despite their insistence that it will expose them to the death and stink?
- When Jesus calls and Lazarus emerges alive?
- When Jesus asks you to remove the linens and free the man who is no longer dead? To touch and tend, to help him live again?

Can you ever look at the world in the same way again? How might you live now?

In dying to ways that are not of God and rising again to newness of life, we need Jesus. And in this life we also rely on the people who see and believe in Him, and tend the life that Jesus has called forth.

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**Rev. Dr. Karen Dimock** is the minister at St. Andrew's Church Ottawa. She served as the 2024 Pastor-in-Residence at the Centre for Missional Leadership.

*Thank You God for the newness of life, the opportunity to begin again that Jesus offers, particularly when we might see only death and endings. Thank You for people of faith who see and believe, who tend, encourage, and strengthen others in their Christian journey. AMEN.*

# Wednesday, April 9

## JOHN 12:1-8

*You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me. (John 12:8)*

**This line has from time to time** been used to justify not giving to the poor and instead spending money on worship services, noting the extravagance of Mary's use of perfume to anoint Jesus's feet as an act of true devotion. It is strange that some have used this passage in this way, given that this interpretation runs counter to the overall teaching of Jesus, who proclaimed good news to the poor, called the poor blessed, and spoke highly of almsgiving.

What if we instead heard Jesus's words to Judas (described here as a betrayer and thief) as a reminder that, yes, there will be plenty of opportunity to care for the poor, but this moment is about the life found in Christ. As important as serving the poor is, Judas's objection is off track for this moment, an example of how we can be blind to the giver of life, especially when we might be trying to profit from a situation.

Mary has saved her perfume for the hour of Jesus's death and burial, but it points us beyond the grave to the abundant life of which He is source. The room is filled with the sweet fragrance of the perfume, a stark contrast to the stench from Lazarus's decaying body mentioned only one chapter prior. Yet, Lazarus is hosting this dinner party, and we get explicit mentions of him being raised by Jesus and eating at the table. Even here, not long before Jesus goes to the cross, He is the Lord of life.

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**Rev. Matt Brough** is the minister at Prairie Presbyterian Church in Winnipeg, and is also an author and a podcaster. Matt is the 2025 CML Pastor-in-residence at St. Andrew's Hall.

*Loving God, allow us by Your Spirit to breathe in the abundant life gifted to us in Christ Jesus. AMEN.*



# Thursday, April 10

## PSALM 23

*Even though I walk through the darkest valley,  
I fear no evil,  
for you are with me;  
your rod and your staff,  
they comfort me.  
(Psalm 23:4)*

**I said goodbye to both my parents** when I was a young man. I lost my father in my twenties and my mother in my thirties—both to cancer. As hardworking immigrants, they possessed a deep love of God, yet both carried a childlike faith.

Psalm 23 was a poignant anchor for my parents. They chose it for their wedding meditation and also for their silver anniversary. When my dad passed, my mom insisted that this psalm needed to be the scriptural focus of his funeral.

At its heart, the words of this famous psalm express an absolute dependence on God, and a protective care only He can provide. As the sheep follows the shepherd, those who trust in God will never lack anything. Green pastures and quiet waters God faithfully provides for His flock.

Having spent my entire life in the Canadian context, I have a hard time understanding the meaning of enemies—I have only known freedom and peace. Walking alongside our loved ones in turmoil can be the darkest valleys we experience. Yet God, our host, promises us communion at the table during our times of pain and suffering. God anoints us and protects us and offers an abundance of grace.

Minutes after my mom passed peacefully, our family was gathered around her body in the hospital room. The hospital chaplain asked if she could pray for us and read a Bible passage. It was (you guessed it) Psalm 23.

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**Kevin Pauls** is leader of community ministry of Kildonan Community Church in Winnipeg. Kevin grew up in the Mennonite tradition, and now is an MDiv student and a ministry candidate in the Presbyterian Church in Canada.

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*Great Shepherd of the sheep, I trust You are leading, providing, and restoring my life. With You O God, my cup overflows! AMEN.*

# Friday, April 11

## PHILIPPIANS 3:4A-14

*I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.*  
(Philippians 3:10, 11)

**While we have more access** to information through the Internet than ever before, not all of it is reliable or truthful. When I'm trying to sift through Google results to find something I need, I appreciate being able to verify the source. I want to know that the author of what I am reading is reliable.

As someone who likes to know someone's credentials, I find it fascinating that Paul first announces his qualifications and then declares them meaningless. Paul offers an alternate basis for what he knows; he trusts in the identity, power, and suffering of Jesus. But what does it mean for us to be like Paul and focus on knowing Christ over all else?

My formative teenage years took place in the 1990s. Among other trends was the fashion of wearing WWJD gear of various kinds: bracelets, necklaces, bookmarks, sweatshirts, and more. If you weren't around for that particular craze, WWJD stands for "What would Jesus do?" Keeping the acronym handy helped us remember in difficult situations to consider how Jesus would handle things.

I wonder if this type of question would have been part of what Paul meant by wanting to "know Christ." When we are faced with multiple paths into the future, and we don't know what to do, we can imagine Jesus with us. And the more we know about who Jesus is and what He taught, the easier it will be for us to answer the question "What would Jesus do?"

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**Rev. Meg Patterson** is the minister at St. Stephen's Presbyterian Church in Ottawa. She lives in Ottawa with her husband and three children. Meg was a 2024 Guder Scholar at St. Andrew's Hall.

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*Jesus, You are the source of all knowledge and wisdom and our best path forward. Help us to know You and following in Your ways. AMEN.*

# Saturday, April 12

## EZEKIEL 37:1-14

*He asked me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" (Ezekiel 37:3)*

**The prophet Ezekiel prophesied** to God's ancient people, when they were in exile in the sixth century BCE. The neo-Babylonian armies had conquered God's people, forcibly taking thousands of people out of the land. Ancient Judah was utterly desolate. Ezekiel likened the people to a valley of dry bones—parched and utterly lifeless. Yet within this hopeless situation, Ezekiel had a wonderful vision. He prophesied:

Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: "I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the LORD." (Eze 37:5, 6)

In Ezekiel's vision, ancient Israel would come to life in two stages. First, Ezekiel called God's people to listen carefully to God's word. As they heeded God's word, sinews and flesh would form on the dry bones. Second, Ezekiel called upon the wind—which is the same Hebrew word as Spirit—to breathe upon the bones.

In Ezekiel's vision, as it turned out, God's people did listen, and God's Spirit did blow. As a result, the dead bones filling the valley rose to life and became a great army. This army stood for a revived and renewed people of God—the end of exile. In the course of time, God indeed returned ancient Israel from exile, some half a century after Judah's destruction.

In our own day, our lives and the lives of our nations can sometimes feel like dry bones. We can feel parched and lifeless, desperate for the breath of God. Following Ezekiel's lead, we can call out to the Spirit of Pentecost to fill us and to breathe life into us.

As I reflect on Ezekiel's vision of dry bones coming to life, the words of a song we sang in church when I was a child comes to mind: "Come Holy Spirit, fall afresh on me!" This song was written by Malcom Fletcher. We can also sing these words on behalf of our church communities and our neighbourhoods: *Come Holy Spirit, fall afresh on us!*

As you sing these words, you can also pray in this way:

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**Rev. Dr. Mark Glanville** works as Director of the Centre for Missional Leadership at St. Andrews Hall. He is author of five books including *Preaching in a New Key: Crafting Expository Sermons in Post-Christian Neighbourhoods*.

*Jesus, come to Your world in power and do the mending work that only You can do. In many ways we feel parched like dry bones—as individuals, as a church, and as a society. So send Your Spirit upon us in power, Jesus, and make these dry bones live! Come to us, as the Spirit of love, of power, and of a sound mind (cf. 2 Tim 1:7).*

# Palm Sunday, April 13

**LUKE 19:28–40**

*“Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!  
Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!” (Luke 19:38)*

**Imagine the scene depicted** in today’s Scripture. Many people are praising Jesus. They have heard of His countless miracles. The news of His entry into Jerusalem brought them amazing joy and excitement. The crowd praises Him with loud voices for the miracles and power they have seen. It appears that His power can transform their world into a place filled with peace and glory.

But where will they be when Jesus is taken to Pilate and suffers?

Today, Palm Sunday, Jesus is still on His way to Jerusalem. He comes in the name of the Lord and uses His power to help the sick, marginalized, and poor. He is now entering Jerusalem, embarking on the most painful journey of His life. People are unaware of His future sufferings. He understands that those who overtly praise Him will turn their backs on Him at the end of His life, filled with rage and hatred. Nevertheless, He loves the people so much He is willing to sacrifice and forgive them. He lets their joy flow—nobody can stop it.

What did Jesus feel at this praise-filled moment?

Have we ever, like the crowd in Jerusalem, turned our own adoration of and passion for Jesus into rage and hatred toward Him? Have we not like them lost our joy in the Lord, the Prince of Peace, to the agony and disappointment of reality? We need to remember that the Lord accepted everything. His unending joy has been with us.

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**Chorong Shin** is currently pursuing a Master of Divinity degree at the VST. She is living in Red Deer, Alberta with her spouse and two lovely kids. She is learning new things from the people, the prairie, and the sky in these new surroundings.

*Lord Jesus, on this Sunday as we stand and shout Hosanna with the crowd to greet You, we praise You that You are not as fickle as our sinful human hearts. While we may turn on You like the crowds of old, You are always turning to us with love and forgiveness. AMEN.*

# Monday, April 14

## PSALM 118:1, 2, 19–29

*Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter through them and give thanks to the Lord. (Psalm 118:19)*

**Lent is a season of opening**—our hearts, minds, and lives to the work of God. Psalm 118 celebrates the steadfast love of the Lord and invites us to approach the “gates of righteousness,” symbolic of entering into God’s presence. It is not by our works but through His mercy that we are welcomed into this sacred space.

As we walk through Lent, we are reminded of Jesus, the ultimate fulfillment of this psalm. In verse 22, the psalmist declares, “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.” This prophecy points us to Christ, who, though rejected by men, became the cornerstone of our salvation. In Lent, we reflect on His journey, marked by the rejection and suffering of the cross, but also by the triumph of the resurrection.

Imagine standing before those gates—an invitation to step into God’s presence, forgiven and free. The psalmist’s words prompt us to ask: *What is keeping me from entering fully?* Are there fears, sins, or doubts that block our path? Lent offers a time for us to repent, surrender, and approach the gate anew with faith and thanksgiving.

This week, take time to reflect on what may be hindering your relationship with God. Write down one thing you want to surrender to Him during Lent. Then, physically walk through a door or gate as a symbolic act of entering into God’s presence, praying for His grace to lead you deeper into His love.

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**Rev. Daniel A. Surya** serves as the Minister of Word and Sacraments at St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church in Lethbridge, Alberta. Daniel and his family lived at St. Andrew’s Hall during his theological studies, and they remain a special part of the community.

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*Lord, thank You for Your steadfast love that never fails. Open my heart to Your work in this season of Lent and help me to walk through the gates of righteousness with faith and gratitude. Teach me to rely on Your mercy and to live in the joy of Your presence each day. In Jesus’s name, AMEN.*

# Tuesday, April 15

## 1 CORINTHIANS 1:18–31

*Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. (1 Corinthians 1:26)*

**Paul's letter to the church at Corinth** is a good reminder to each of us to think of what we were. These days, I am wrestling with the thought of “how can we be authentic?”

In fact, my big contention is that we are not born with righteousness—if left to our own vices, we will make wrong choices. What exhortation does Paul, as pastor, offer? He reminds his congregation that they were chosen by God though they were not wise, not of noble birth, not of influence. (Notice how many not's he uses!) Thanks be to God that even still, they—and we—are chosen by God to follow Him. Not only this, we were also commissioned to share and demonstrate through our lives what it means to follow Christ.

Verse 30 says, “It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.” *Because of him, because of who*—these are phrases to reflect on. What wondrous things our God has done! His deeds are not dependent upon our goodness, nor on our righteousness, but because of God's goodness, we can rejoice, celebrate, and even boast. (Whoever thought boasting is bad, think again.) Indeed, we can boast—not about our own goodness, but rather about God's world and for the sake of His people.

You heard me right, what good news we have to share—we are commissioned to be the wisdom of the world. I am glad I have this joy to pass on to you today as we follow the path of righteousness through Holy Week.

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**Krishna Rao Durbha** is a resident of St. Andrew's Hall and is studying in the Master of Divinity program at VST. He is an elder at Kerrisdale Presbyterian Church and came to know Christ during his college years in India. Krishna feels blessed to be able to follow Jesus and prepare for a Ministry of Word and Sacraments within the Presbyterian Church in Canada.

*God of glory, whose power is made plain in the cross, may we find our journey with Christ exciting and adventurous in the midst of the ordinary today. AMEN.*

# Wednesday, April 16

## LUKE 21:1-3

*He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. (Luke 21:2)*

**It's interesting that in the Gospel of Luke**, the story of the widow's mite is one of the last stories before we begin the descent into Jesus' betrayal, arrest, and execution. Like the calm before the storm, Jesus shares the simple, self-sacrificing offering of the widow as a lesson for all who follow Him.

Luke's gospel is known for its "preferential option for the poor" (Fr. Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Theology of Liberation*, 1971), and this story is no exception. Jesus notes the rich members of the community going forward to make their donations in a grand and public gesture, depositing their gifts in large containers that opened at the top like a trumpet. Pride of place certainly remains for those who are wealthy in our world, naming buildings and other places after those who give generously. But Jesus's attention is drawn to one who would not otherwise be noticed or remembered. A poor widow, with little leverage or societal standing, makes her way to worship God and gives a small amount in the world's eyes, but for her it was everything.

It seems fitting that Jesus would pause to recognize this woman's actions, which came from a selfless love of God, as He was preparing for His own sacrificial offering that would turn the world upside down and create a place at God's table for all. As we journey through Holy Week, we recognize that God's lavish grace continues to unsettle and undo the ways of the world that privilege the wealthy and the powerful. For those of us who have encountered the living God in Jesus Christ, we must be careful not to cling too closely to the ways of this world. For as Jesus warned us, "for where [our] treasure is, there [our] heart will be also" (Matthew 6:21).

I recall visiting a congregation in downtown Toronto while studying for the ministry. They had a commitment to caring for the homeless in the downtown core, many of whom spent time on the front steps of the church. One Sunday morning when the offering plates went around, I searched my wallet for something to give. All I had in my wallet was a fifty-dollar bill, earned as a teaching assistant that week. Believing we needed that cash, I held on and let the plate pass by. As the ushers neared the back of the chapel, one of the homeless men from the front steps had joined us for worship. He lifted his hat (that we saw on the street with a sign) and the coins fell out, making a loud crashing sound on the silver plate. He said to the usher in a hushed voice that echoed in the small chapel, "I'm sorry, but it's all I've got." I felt instantly guilty. I stopped the usher on the way back up the aisle and slid my fifty-dollar bill in under the other envelopes and bills. God showed up in a way that I could not deny, and as is often case, I was converted again and again.

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*God who loves all, and whose care for the meek and the lowly is assured. Help us to see You at work in this world and help us to conform to Your pattern of humility and servanthood. AMEN.*

# Maundy Thursday, April 17

**JOHN 13:1-17, 31B-35**

*Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. (John 13:16)*

**While contemplating the passage** of John 13, I recalled an article about the last words people say at death. Many dying people struggle to say, at their last moment, how much they love their families and friends. However simple it may sound, “I love you” should always be a powerful message to everyone.

Like many others, I have imagined innumerable times the scene at the night before the Passover. Jesus knew He didn’t have much time to get this important message to the disciples: “You love one another” (John 13: 34). He showed the effective way for the lesson by lowering Himself, washing the feet of His disciples, rather than by words only. At first, Peter refused His master’s washing feet as the action must be the ultimate expression of humility.

What a desperate moment for Jesus, since His final hours in the flesh were coming to an end. After showing the act of love, Jesus declared the new commandment: “Just as I have loved you, you should love one another.” Eventually Jesus completed the ultimate love by lowering Himself further to His sacrifice on the cross.

One Christmas, I was invited to First United Church, which has been a centre of the mission for the less fortunate in downtown Vancouver. Entering the church, I was overwhelmed by the strong smell coming from every corner of the old building and had difficulty breathing, although I respected everyone serving others in the kitchen, cafeteria, offices and the sanctuary as a shelter. While I was introduced to the friendly folks around, a student volunteer came to my attention, who was washing the feet of a man sitting on a bench in front of the sanctuary door with warm water in a basin. I watched what she was doing. After she dried the feet with a towel, she applied foot cream and put new socks on them. I was frozen for a few seconds and felt ashamed of myself carrying a small gift only at Christmas.

Pope Francis’s message in May 2013 has captivated me for a while: “There are no part-time Christians, at certain moments, in certain circumstances, in certain choices.” Can I call myself a full time Christian? Do I truly know the depth of His love?

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**Mihye Park** is the Housing Manager at St. Andrew’s Hall and a member of Kerrisdale Presbyterian Church.

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*“Be blessed today in knowing there are no limits to God’s love for you.”*  
—From my daily “Prayers and Blessings” booklet



# Good Friday, April 18

**JOHN 18:1–19:42**

*Then he said to the disciple, “Here is your mother.” And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home. (John 19:27)*

**Today we remember** a very heavy and dark moment of history. Good Friday reminds us how we as human beings are able to reject and condemn someone who did not commit any mistake. It reminds us that we rejected God when He came to offer us life and transform the world with a message of reconciliation. And Jesus did that until the very end of His mission on the cross.

On the cross, Jesus creates a new family. He sees Mary losing her son on the cross, and He reveals to her that she now has a new son, the beloved disciple. Jesus looks at His disciple and gives Him a new mother.

On the cross, Jesus receives the burden of our sins, and on the cross Jesus is reconciling the world with God. But on the cross, Jesus is also creating a new community. Jesus is creating a new family. This family is not made by cultural similarity. It is intergenerational, one that transcends differences, and is created by the word of Jesus.

When we live abroad, or when we move out of our houses to come to live on campus, or when our parents pass away, or when we lose someone that we love, we need to remember that in Jesus we have eternal life, and this life is abundant and connects us to the family of God that was created on the cross and through the resurrection.

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***Our Father in heaven, thanks for adopting us in Christ. Thanks for giving us new brothers and sisters, and mothers, and fathers, and children. In Jesus name we pray, AMEN.***

# Holy Saturday, April 19

## **MATTHEW 27:57–66**

*Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away. (Matthew 27:59, 60)*

**For me, Holy Saturday is the most unsettling,** mysterious day of the year. Good Friday: the Messiah is crucified, we are forgiven. Easter Sunday: the Messiah is raised from the dead, all creation is made new. But Holy Saturday? Where does it fit? It's an in-between day. Nothing happens, right?

Of course that's wrong. Holy Saturday is also part of the story of the redemption of creation. It is the last "seventh day" of creation. Genesis 1-2 recalls how, on the seventh day, God rested. On Holy Saturday, the last "seventh day" of creation, the One through whom and for whom all things have been made, the One who is the image of the invisible God, this One "rests" in creation. Only this time, the crucified One rests in the earth.

Here we must linger, not rushing forward, not skipping quickly over *this* sabbath rest. The Word-made-flesh does not just dwell among humans, He goes the way of all flesh and dwells in the earth. He is laid in a tomb carved in rock. We may, with reverence and caution, imagine that this solid earth—which He made in the beginning—welcomed Him and gave Him rest.

And as He rests in the earth, He gathers up all the suffering, all the groaning of earth. So just as we anticipate His rising from the earth with new life, we may anticipate that the pangs of earth will one day give rise to new creation. But for now, we wait.

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*Creator God, You who love Your human creatures and all creation, who suffered and died, who rested in the earth, now rest in us and carry our suffering and groaning in the midst of creation and may we wait faithfully during this in-between time. AMEN.*

# Easter Sunday, April 20

**LUKE 24:1–49**

*You are witnesses of these things. (Luke 24:48)*

**Happy Easter! Christ is Risen!** He is Risen Indeed! What a wonderful journey we've been on together throughout Lent. I pray this devotional book from St. Andrew's Hall has been a blessing to you, your family, and your church family. I wonder: where has God shown up for you during Lent this year? Where have you been surprised by God's presence and by new insight or practices, as we have continued to grow in the knowledge and love of our Lord Jesus Christ?

At Easter in Luke's gospel, we meet a variety of characters who struggle to come to terms with the incredible grace that God shows in response to human sin. Our dead/alive Saviour Jesus has gone before us, bearing the sin of the world, descending to the dead and liberating the captives, before rising in glory on this Easter morning. Luke's characters are both perplexed and passionate about what happens at Easter. Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James—the first witnesses to the resurrection—are amazed at the words of the angels, "He has risen!" They tell the disciples who run to see for themselves that the tomb is empty. Then Luke leads us away from Jerusalem, with Cleopas and his unnamed friend. A stranger joins them, and they try to explain all that has happened in the city as they engage in theological discussion walking towards Emmaus. Once there, the stranger accepts their hospitality and (unusually!) takes the place of the host at the table, blessing and breaking the bread. By doing so, they recognize their travel companion as the risen Lord Jesus, and their hearts burn within them as they race to tell others. Finally, Luke closes the chapter with Jesus appearing to his disciples and sharing a meal, so that all could witness His risen glory.

What a day, what a story, what a miracle—what a Saviour!

In light of the resurrection, Jesus makes clear that our job description as disciples includes the key role of witness. We are witnesses of these things! CML Senior Fellow Darrell Guder once wrote in *Be My Witnesses* that the vocation of the Christian Church (both individually and corporately) is to live out witness in three distinct ways: *being*, *doing*, and *saying*. First, our common life together, our character, and moral standing all serve as our witness. So too our actions in the world speak a clear message about what we value and who we worship. Third, our words matter. What we say and how we speak can bless or curse, and the discernment to speak in a way that is worthy witness to the gospel is our calling as Christians. On this Easter Sunday, may we as individuals and as a church family—through our being, doing, and saying—be witnesses who give glory to the risen King. Amen.

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*Almighty God, through raising Your Son Jesus from the grave, You broke the power of sin and death. As we celebrate Your great triumph today, may we also make it the model for our living. Help us to turn from death to life and meet You with joy in Your Easter glory, grace, and goodness. Amen.*

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Rev. Dr. Ross Lockhart is Dean of  
St. Andrew's Hall.



*Thanks for participating in the 2025 SAH Lenten Devotion Guide.*

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