



2019 Lenten Devotional

BRYN MAWR PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH



Introduction

Dear Friends,

If we describe the Season of Advent as one of anticipation, the Season of Lent is one of *preparation*. If Advent is a time when wait for Jesus to come again, Lent is a time for us to figure out what it means for us to *come and present ourselves* at the foot of the cross.

Historically, Lent was a time when new believers studied the faith of the Christian Church and prepared themselves for baptism on Easter morning and entrance into the Christian community. Our traditional liturgy from Ash Wednesday invites the whole church – new believers and old – *to observe a holy Lent by self-examination and penitence, by prayer and fasting, by works of love, and by meditating on God’s word.*

This season of Lent and our 2019 Lenten Devotional focus on this question – What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus Christ? Through scriptural texts taken from throughout the New Testament, we consider the pieces of our faith that come together to shape our journey to the cross – devotion, temptation, transformation, blessings, reconciliation, service and sacrifice.

Added to the voices of church and community members and staff in this year’s devotional are selected writings from theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer, whose Christian witness and personal discipleship in the face of the National Socialist Party during World War II in Germany make him a venerable example for what it means to consider the full cost of discipleship.

Each week you will also encounter a remarkable piece of art by award-winning painter and collagist Cody Miller. Here is his statement on his work: With most of my paintings, I am conveying some degree of hope. *I convey it not necessarily in a bright way, but rather in a way which shows the quiet fingerprint of God saying, “I was here all along.”*

We do not walk this journey to the Cross alone, but in conversation with one another and in the presence of God. May this devotional allow us to hear one another’s stories of faith and compel us to continue to lift one another up in prayer and community.

Peace,

The Rev. Rebecca Kirkpatrick, Associate Pastor for Adult Education and Mission



Wednesday, March 6

Matthew 6:1-6; 16-21 – Orientation to God

“Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven. ²“So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. ³But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

⁵“And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. ⁶But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

¹⁶“And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. ¹⁷But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, ¹⁸so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

¹⁹“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; ²⁰but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.



Thursday, March 7

Goods are given to us to be used, but not to be stored away. Just as Israel in the desert received manna daily from God and did not have to worry about food or drink, and just as the manna which was stored from one day for another rotted, so should Jesus' disciples receive their share daily from God. But if they store up a lasting treasure, they will spoil both the gift and themselves. The heart clings to collected treasure. Stored-up possessions get between me and God. Where my treasure is, there is my trust, my security, my comfort, my God. Treasure means idolatry.

But where is the boundary between the goods I am supposed to use and the treasure I am not supposed to have? If we turn the statement around and say, what your heart clings to is your treasure, then we have the answer. It can be a very modest treasure; it is not a question of size. Everything depends on the heart, on you. If I continue to ask how can I recognize what my heart clings to, again, there is a clear and simple answer: everything which keeps you from loving God above all things, everything which gets between you and your obedience to Jesus is the treasure to which your heart clings.

– Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, 1937

The majority of selections from Bonhoeffer's writings in this devotional are taken from his defining work *Discipleship* (or what traditionally in its English translation has been called *The Cost of Discipleship*.) Bonhoeffer scholar Geoffrey B. Kelly describes the book in this way: "While Bonhoeffer was disturbed by many of the issues arising under Nazism and their consequences for Christians and their church, *Discipleship* was written primarily as a text for the spiritual formation of seminarians within the unusual context of dictatorship. Bonhoeffer's questions were shocking in their directness: What does Jesus want to say to us? What does he expect from us? How does he expect us to be faithful Christians today?"



Friday, March 8

Remember the old joke about the method actor struggling with his part? In frustration, he yells, “What’s my motivation?” His director responds dryly, “Your paycheck.”

Not that funny? Perhaps, but doesn’t the joke reflect the passage? Motivations and paychecks? What drives our choices? What treasures we seek? Jesus’ admonitions are a response to behaviors he saw in those around him and maybe his own internal struggles. Here and now, I hear him asking me to reflect on questions like:

- Do I give to be praised for my generosity?
- Do I sing in choir to be noticed or further the Spirit’s movement in worship?
- Are my chemistry lessons aimed at getting students approval or helping them grasp the subject’s depth?
- When I meet with directees, am I trying to impart my idea of wisdom or helping them see God’s presence in their lives?
- When I rail about the latest political brouhaha, am I just venting? Or do I contemplate how my words and action might contribute to Kingdom-building?

These feel like good questions. But I struggle with their either/or binary-ness. Does there have to be a choice? I don’t have pure intentions. Do you? Maybe it’s for teaching purposes, but Jesus doesn’t seem to recognize my all-too-human mixed bag of motivations. In my spiritual life, altruism seems inextricably linked with pride, caring with exasperation.

If so, what do I pray for? Perhaps for awareness of my humanity. In his poem, *A Ritual to Read to Each Other*, William Stafford wrote “It is important that awake people be awake.” We Christians claim to be more awake than others, more clearly seeing the world from God’s perspective. What then is it to “be awake”? Maybe it is asking myself and others, “What are my motivations? Where do I seek treasure?” Then I can consider if my choices are Kingdom-worthy and act accordingly.

– Paul Burgmayer



Saturday, March 9

After my mother died, I had the strange task of going through the boxes that collect over someone's lifetime. Because I wasn't sure where to begin, I started with my mother's jewelry box. Similar to my own, there was a collection of orphan earrings waiting with the eternal hope that their match would one day be found. Among well-worn necklaces and familiar broaches, there was a necklace of small clay animals fashioned by a third grader, a set of Boy Scout pins, my grandmother's cross necklace, family rings and forgotten trinkets. How on earth do you assign value to any of it? What were the things she had stored up, and what were the things we now treasured? As the days progressed, we eventually found a box from her time as a high school teacher. There were faded playbills from each of the productions she had directed with her students' signatures scrawled across every surface. There was a laminated "teacher's prayer" that had been given to her when she graduated and copies of the poem *Desiderata* by Max Ehrmann which she gave to students when they graduated. There was a well-worn copy of a book about teaching adult literacy, and pages were marked with people's names. I could imagine my mother preparing for class and thinking, "That's the tool for him."

I value the sentiment that Jesus shares in the Gospel and the simple declaration that Bonhoeffer offers decrying the things that keep us from devotion to God, but I wonder if a traveling preacher and a young theology teacher forget that sometimes our devotion takes on physical form. Our prayers come in the form of a well-planned lesson. Our acts of piety reflected in the names written and remembered. Sometimes, when we look closely, the treasures we store up in heaven have an earthly life as well.

– *The Rev. Rachel Pedersen*
Associate Pastor for Children and Family Ministry



Sunday, March 10

Luke 4:1-13 – The Temptation of Jesus in the Wilderness

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, ²where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished.

³The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread.” ⁴Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘One does not live by bread alone.’” ⁵Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. ⁶And the devil said to him, “To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. ⁷If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.” ⁸Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.’”

⁹Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, ¹⁰for it is written, ‘He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you,’ ¹¹and ‘On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.’” ¹²Jesus answered him, “It is said, ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”

¹³When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.



Monday, March 11

Who is pure in heart? Only those who have completely given their hearts to Jesus, so that he alone rules in them. Only those who do not stain their hearts with their own evil, but also not with their own good. A pure heart is the simple heart of a child, who does not know about good and evil, the heart of Adam before the fall, the heart in which the will of Jesus rules instead of one's own conscience...a pure heart is pure of good and evil; it belongs entirely and undivided to Christ; it looks only to him, who goes on ahead. Those alone will see God who in this life have looked only to Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Their hearts are free of defiling images; they are not pulled back and forth by the various wished and intentions of their own. Their hearts are fully absorbed in seeing God. They will see those whose hearts mirror the image of Christ.

– Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, 1937

I'm sure I never realized as clearly as I do here what the Bible and Luther mean by "temptation." Quite suddenly, and for no apparent or psychological reason, the peace and composure that were supporting one were jarred...it feels like an invasion from the outside, as if by evil powers trying to rob one of what it most vital.

– Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letter to his parents from Tegel prison*, May 15, 1943



Tuesday, March 12

It's more than a bit ironic that in the Lord's Prayer we ask God to "lead us not into temptation," while the first thing God does after Jesus' baptism is to lead him out into temptation.

At an earlier stage in my religious life, I was pretty much obsessed with sin and temptation. I examined my conscience each night. I kept a little journal of my sins and shortcomings. Yet, no matter how hard I tried, I ended up doing the very thing I did not want to do, while not doing the very thing I wanted to do, to paraphrase another frustrated Christian.

So what does this Gospel passage tell us about how Jesus deals with sin and temptation? In a sense, he doesn't. He never really focuses on The Tempter. Instead, he keeps his focus on the word of God. He doesn't so much wrestle with temptation as he does proclaim the word of God in the face of temptation. Doesn't Bonhoeffer do the same thing at his time of testing? Confronted by Satanic forces, he looks only to Jesus. I recall seeing an amazing documentary a few years ago called "Man on Wire." It was about Philippe Petit's harrowing tightrope walk between the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in 1974. We watch this frail figure inch across a thin cable thirteen hundred feet above the fatal concrete below. We focus on this frightening chasm, but Petit, of course, never looks down. He keeps his focus on the ultimate goal, rather, I think, like Jesus in that howling desert and like Bonhoeffer in that demonic prison.

– *Bill McKee*



Wednesday, March 13



Cody Miller, Elijah being fed by the Ravens II, codymiller.com

The story of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness would have reminded first-century readers of the stories of the prophets sojourning in the wilderness, especially the story of Elijah being sent into the wilderness as he fled the violence of King Ahab and his wife Jezebel. Just as in Matthew's version of Jesus' time in the wilderness, where he is waited on by angels after he resists the temptations of the devil, so too is Elijah fed by God through the ravens that surrounded him.

Thursday, March 14

This scripture passage certainly causes me to reflect on my own faith. The passage says that Jesus was tempted and tested by the devil, but Jesus always countered him. There are many things I could compare that to in my own life. There are many times when I am tempted by the metaphorical devil, such as being given the opportunity to hang out with my friends instead of doing work, or having the opportunity to do something that would hurt someone else. Although I hope that I could be as resilient as Jesus, I know I am not, and I know that I am not alone in this.

The majority of people are not perfect and do not have the level of resiliency and faith that Jesus had. This is why people look up to Jesus and put their trust in him. This is why people give their hearts to Jesus and allow him to guide them with his teachings and wisdom. He is the figure we need to lead us down the right path in our faith journeys. He can lead us into good and help us to counter the advances made by the devil, and when we fall short, he forgives us when we ask for forgiveness. I strive in my own life to surrender my whole heart to Jesus so that he can guide me, but that can be difficult at times.

As shown in the quotes from Bonhoeffer, he also believes this. He believes that no one can be pure from the devil until they give their whole heart to Jesus. Bonhoeffer realizes the temptation surrounding him and sees how difficult it is to resist. Temptation rids one of peace and composure, and the only way to avoid this is to surrender one's full heart to Jesus, but it can be difficult to do this at times. The message I take away from Bonhoeffer is that anyone who does not put their full faith in Jesus will never be truly pure of heart, and I will continue to strive toward that goal.

– Molly Cordray, Youth Elder

Friday, March 15

Clocks. I love old clocks. If I were wealthy, I would have a home filled with old clocks. My wife would tell you that I already do have a home filled with old clocks.

Clocks. They fascinate me. I want more of them in my home. There is a clock made in 1825 by Chauncey Jerome. Its movement is simple, its face is beautiful, its gears are wooden; it was made in the year that Sam Adams and Thomas Jefferson died. Its maker saw the War of 1812. I want it.

My wife reminds me that Chauncey Jerome fits badly into our budget, that there are more necessary things in our lives than another old clock. Aren't there?
Tempting.

The dynamic of temptation is about who is in charge of our life. One might ask whether I own my clocks, or they own me. I could take my wife on a trip for the price of a clock. I could feed hungry people for the price of a clock. The temptation is serious. I want that Chauncey Jerome. What to do?

If this seems silly, or trivial, it is not. The things that tempt us will always challenge us to choose who is in charge. Who owns my life? Who owns yours? Do our things own us? Do our possessions possess us? Does alcohol? Or drugs? The zip code that we overreach to afford? Getting back at the other person? When we are tempted and want more of that of which we already have plenty, that which we crave destructively, or to do that which is unseemly or just plain evil, who is in charge? Are our better angels able to rule the day or will we yield ourselves to a more base or selfish or even venal tempter?

So, it has been ever since the Serpent slithered down the tree to confront Adam and Eve. What is the offer we have never been able to refuse? Will we eat of the fruit?

This Lent, perhaps it is time to find out. Perhaps this year it is time to reassert control over our lives and to choose the One who did not yield to the Tempter on our behalf and for our salvation.

Is it not now time to reclaim our life from that which has wrested control of it from us?

Tempting, is it not?

– The Rev. Dr. Andrew H. Mann Jr.
Interim Associate Pastor for Pastoral Care and Senior Adults



Saturday, March 16

Are you hungry?

For what do you hunger? Sadly, for me, it's difficult to narrow down the list. A perfectly made latte, first tracks on newly fallen snow, a big win in sports, a warm buttery croissant, a kids-free vacation abroad, the elusive runner's high, a completed deal at work, a meaningful conversation, a slim toned body, a heavy bodied cabernet? Yes, please. Satisfying those hungers may sustain us in the moment, but will be insufficient after a few days, let alone a lifetime.



Luke retells Jesus' wilderness temptation in a familiar way, easily glossed over as we skip lightly through Lent on the way to our Easter egg hunts. A closer look, however, renders one almost speechless. And hungry. 40 days. No food. Famished and tempted by the devil. Where I may have grabbed the first stale cracker offered, Jesus holds firm to who he is, turning the devil's question from bodily hunger to hunger for God's word. Offered literally all of the world, Jesus holds firm, worshipping only God. The devil's final test was of Jesus' ego, using the words of the Bible to tempt Jesus – if you are who you say you are, throw yourself down, angels will protect you. Instead of showing his heavenly strength and might, Jesus was steadfast, identifying himself to the devil as the Lord, and sending the devil away.

Jesus was relentless in the face of temptation – he held fast to who he was and to what he was called. Who does God call us to be? Can we be relentless in the pursuit of that call? Can we say no to anything that gets in the way of God's call? May our desires, hearts, bodies and minds be fully absorbed, fully sated, in pursuing God, and God's will for our lives.

– Jeannie Bickhart

Sunday, March 17

Philippians 3:17-4:1 – Pressing Toward the Goal

¹⁷Brothers and sisters, join in imitating me, and observe those who live according to the example you have in us. ¹⁸For many live as enemies of the cross of Christ; I have often told you of them, and now I tell you even with tears. ¹⁹Their end is destruction; their god is the belly; and their glory is in their shame; their minds are set on earthly things.

²⁰But our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. ²¹He will transform the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, by the power that also enables him to make all things subject to himself. Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, my beloved.



Monday, March 18

Jesus' followers are called to peace. When Jesus called them, they found their peace. Jesus is their peace. Now they are not only to have peace, but they are to make peace. To do this they renounce violence and strife. Those things never help the cause of Christ. Christ's kingdom is a realm of peace, and those in Christ's community greet each other with a greeting of peace. Jesus disciples maintain peace by choosing to suffer instead of causing others to suffer. They preserve community when others destroy it. They renounce self-assertion and are silent in the face of hatred and injustice. That is how they overcome evil with good. That is how they are makers of divine peace in a world of hatred and war.

– Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, 1937

Although we are not Christ, if we want to be Christians we must participate in Christ's own magnanimous heart by engaging in responsible action that seizes the hour in complete freedom, facing the danger.

– Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *After Ten Years*, 1942



Tuesday, March 19

For someone who has always struggled with her weight, reading Paul's assessment of those whose "god is the belly" strikes a little too close to home! Paul equates the glory of such individuals with shame and destruction. Alternatively, one of the meanings of "glory" in Hebrew is "weight or heaviness," signifying a core, essential state. As humans, we all share in shame and, through Jesus, we share in the chance to transform by His grace and to conform more fully to what is essential in His love.

Bonhoeffer's first passage says that one of the essential tasks for us as Christ's disciples is the pursuit of peace through passive resistance to evil. There is indeed transformative power in this calling, but the second passage reflects his changed conviction that sometimes action in the face of evil is also required of us as Christ's followers. Bonhoeffer's experience of truly destructive human forces seems to have caused a transformation of thought and deed in him.

In my Christian journey, transformation for me has also meant moving from passivity to action. I began my relationship with our church timidly standing back, a member of the choir but not of BMPC itself. My first Christian transformation was to join and baptize my children. Since then, with many steps, I've tried to enter more purposefully into fellowship within the church. I have pursued peace by serving as a deacon, choir member and after-school program aide, reaching out to other congregations and initiatives in our community, and even speaking before the whole church. I pray that I am "gaining weight" in glory and might even shed a few pounds marching for peace!

– Anne Chamberlin



Wednesday, March 20



Cody Miller, The Kingdom of God, codymiller.com

Thursday, March 21

Robert Frost wrote about good fences and good neighbors, but my assumptions about a fence nearly cost me harmony with a neighbor. There was a scraggly, unkempt 15-foot stretch of hedge between our driveway and the neighbor's see-through fence. Both the neighbor and I knew the hedge belonged to him. But since the hedge was quite distant from the neighbor's house and not conveniently accessible to him (because of the fence), he never did anything with it. Instead of nagging him about the hedge, I trimmed it periodically to keep our yard looking tidy.

The neighbor seemed to have no interest in the hedge, and frankly, I grew tired of doing his trimming. Without asking permission, I ripped out the hedge one Saturday afternoon. To my considerable surprise, my neighbor was quite angry, and let me know it in no uncertain terms. It was tempting to comment on his long-standing and total disregard of the hedge. Nevertheless, my action was clearly the direct cause of "disturbing the peace." Accordingly, rather than arguing about the matter – and no doubt increasing the friction between my neighbor and me, I replaced the hedge the next day. (Fortunately, my wonderful neighbor on the other side also had the same hedge, and he kindly let me take some of his to do the replacement.)

As I reflect on this, I notice a few different ways that the confrontation with my neighbor could have been avoided. In the moment, though, I remembered Christ's teaching about not letting the sun set when there was a lack of harmony between me and my "brother." My quick, uncomplaining resolution of the issue did give me a wonderful feeling of peace.

– *Steve Mygatt*



Friday, March 22

Bonhoeffer writes that Jesus' followers are "not only to have peace, but they are to make peace." St. Paul notes, "our citizenship is in heaven." I say it's hard to have it both ways.

For me, home is the space where I recharge, spend time with my family, find rest from the day, read the newspaper and good novels, sip on bourbon, and try to make sense of my work and life. If the apostle is right, and our real citizenship is in heaven, then my house is not quite "home" in the real sense of the word. So how do we have peace and make for peace when we are far from home?

It's a troubling world these days. But I suppose it always has been. Our citizenship being not of this world, we keep our eyes, ears, and hearts set toward a home to which we've never been, but one we've seen in our dreams: where swords are beat into plowshares, wolf and lamb lie down beside each other, children live without fear of violence or danger.

Maybe it's easier for me to imagine the tension of striving for peace far from home because I live in a manse, a home that by very definition is not my own.

But that surely doesn't make it any simpler. Bonhoeffer notes, "if we want to be Christians we must participate in Christ's own magnanimous heart by engaging...facing the danger." Our call to follow Jesus can, at times, lead us into danger in order to make for peace and justice and reconciliation.

We are indeed far from home. Which means we journey home together, and as we do, we are called to seek peace for ourselves and for all those we journey alongside, come what may.

– The Rev. Franklyn C. Pottorff
Associate Pastor for Congregational Life and Stewardship

Saturday, March 23

In 2006, during the height of extreme handgun violence in our area, I put down the newspaper and knew that I had to DO something. Escalating, senseless shootings were becoming a shockingly regular occurrence. I tried to think of what I could do to help raise awareness of the problem and decided to plan an entire day of events that would engage all ages in working on ways to prevent handgun violence and make peace.

Here's the thing of it: I was convinced that I had to get out there and do something, but I also was afraid. I was afraid of the National Rifle Association . I was afraid of someone coming after me with a gun. I was afraid no one would want to come to such an event. And I was afraid that I would be persona non grata with members of my own congregation for sticking my neck out on such a controversial issue.

What I discovered was that by taking a stand and caring more about the issue than about my own fears, I was freed up to work openly with our BMPC Peacemaking Task Force and volunteers from many other faiths who shared my concerns as well as my hope that we could make a difference. Working together, we created a spiritual, educational day, with attendees learning how to be proactive against handgun violence and sending hundreds of letters of protest to legislators. Adults and children left the event with a real sense of empowerment.

In speaking out and showing others how they could make an impact with thoughtful, responsible action, we brought a negatively charged discussion into the open. We discovered that most people, armed with peaceful solutions, will dependably “persist in the face of opposition.”

The next year, a vigil was held every Sunday, a candle lit for every handgun victim killed locally. With our carillon ringing in memory of those lost to gun violence, the church lawn became increasingly brighter with hundreds of luminarias over the year. Our work continues today under the leadership of Heeding God's Call as we continue to try to make “divine peace in a world of hatred and war.”

– Clare Mackie



Sunday, March 24

Matthew 5:2-12 – The Beatitudes

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. 2Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

³“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

⁴“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

⁵“Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

⁶“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

⁷“Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

⁸“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

⁹“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

¹⁰“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹¹“Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

¹²Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.



Monday, March 25

Every additional beatitude deepens the breach between the disciples and the people. The disciples' call becomes more and more visible. Those who mourn are those who are prepared to renounce and live without everything the world calls happiness and peace. They are those who cannot be brought into accord with the world, who cannot conform to the world. They mourn over the world, its guilt, its fate, and its happiness...No one understands better than the Jesus community. No one loves people more than Jesus' disciples – that is why they stand apart, why they mourn; it is meaningful and lovely that Luther translates the Greek word for what is blessed with "to bear suffering." The important part is the bearing.

The community of disciples does not shake off suffering, as if they had nothing to do with it. Instead they bear it. In doing so, they give witness to their connections with the people around them. At the same time this indicates that they do not arbitrarily seek suffering, that they do not withdraw into willful contempt for the world. Instead, they bear what is laid upon them and what happens to them in discipleship for the sake of Jesus Christ. Finally, disciples will not be weakened by suffering, worn down, and embittered until they are broken. Instead they bear suffering, by the power of him who supports them. The disciples bear the suffering laid on them only by the power of him who bears all suffering on the cross. As bearers of suffering, they stand in communion with the Crucified. They stand as strangers in the power of him who was so alien to the world that it crucified him.

– Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, 1937



Tuesday, March 26

When one thinks of their blessings, one thinks of the good things in their life; family, friends, a job they love, or the car they always wanted and finally could afford. But one does not think of suffering or pain as a blessing. But in Matthew 5:1-12 that is exactly what Jesus is talking about. Jesus was known for saying some provocative things, but this must have come as much of a shock to his disciples as it does to us. How could someone who is hungry be blessed; how could someone in mourning be blessed; and how could someone at very bottom of society (or feels they are) feel blessed by their circumstances?

As always, God is asking us to let go of what society tells us and listen to him. Hear him when he says that we appreciate the good because we know about the bad. We understand what it means to be fulfilled by our faith and love in Him, because we know what it means to hunger for love and acceptance. We are blessed by loss because it helps us appreciate what we have when we have it, and see when others go without.

We could have lived in Eden where all was perfect and no pain was ever felt, but God gave us free will. The will to choose good, the will to choose to take care of one another, the gift of choice to accept His Grace and live in his light. Without the blessing of choice, and bad that often comes with it, we would not truly know and appreciate the love of God, the joy of kindness, and the glory of achieving community with one another. So, like the Disciples Bonhoeffer speaks of, we are blessed when our hearts mourn for those we see in pain. We do not run from the suffering, but embrace it, for it is through our choice to serve those in need that we become closer to God.

– Meggin R. Capers

Wednesday, March 27



Cody Miller, A New Heart, codyfmiller.com

Thursday, March 28

Admittedly, the Beatitudes is a challenging text. Yet I have experienced its wisdom and truth, through both positive and negative practice. The first two virtues – being “poor in spirit” and “mourning” – seem simplest. My experience has been that it is the difficult life events, those that lead to suffering and mourning, that also lead to transformation and lasting blessing. It seems that it takes times of suffering and loss of control for me to be open to accepting a new opportunity or new way of seeing what God may be offering. Even though the difficult circumstance may remain, changing our view of it can be transformative and freeing. One fruit of such acceptance of suffering is greater compassion toward myself and others, which feels like a glimpse of the kingdom of heaven, as Jesus promised.

The remaining six virtues require more intentional action on our part, rather than simply choosing how we bear the suffering that happens to us. Being meek, hungering after righteousness, being merciful, being pure in heart and a peacemaker – these all ask us to constrain our instinctive pursuit of selfish self-interest and that we treat others as ourselves. I must admit that here my experience often includes the effects of NOT practicing rather than practicing these virtues. Specifically, I know that being arrogant (rather than meek), being unmerciful, acting without pureness of heart, being aggressive rather than peacemaking — all of these behaviors may seem to promise personal success but in fact they rarely lead to lasting happiness. By contrast, practicing the more selfless virtues that Jesus describes leads to inner peace.

Ironically, although this experience confirms for me the wisdom and blessing of these virtues, yet I still find myself reluctant to practice them consistently. Reflecting on this has at least brought this irony clearly into focus.

– Patricia Danzon

Friday, March 29

I fell in love with the Beatitudes during a 1975 college performance of “Godspell.” In one of the most poignant moments in the musical, a member of the cast starts a “complete-the-sentence game” game, saying, “Master! Master! Blessed are the poor in spirit...” The cast member portraying Jesus, responds, “For theirs is the kingdom of heaven!” The other cast members like this game so much that they challenge Jesus to complete their sentences in a tempo that escalates. The entire scene abounds with joy. It’s a similar joy that Mary sings of in her Magnificat: “for he hath regarded the lowliness of his handmaiden: for behold, from henceforth, all generations shall call me blessed.”

A beatitude is quite literally a *blessing*, a word Bonhoeffer reminds us that, in Greek means “to bear suffering.” How could such a concept be joy-filled? Christ’s Sermon on the Mount – these Beatitudes – summons us to swim *against* the tide. In eight sentences, we are urged to detach ourselves from the world and *attach* ourselves to Christ. This is nothing short of radical living. Yet, finding the courage to detach ourselves from the world and attaching ourselves to Christ does not mean withdrawing from the world. Quite the contrary. Living a beatitude-filled life ultimately means living a fuller life, an impactful life. Adopting this kind of life, according to Bonhoeffer, assures us that we will grow stronger and less embittered (i.e. “joyful!”).

For any of us who doubt these things, take comfort in Christ’s offer to help: “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.” (Matthew 7:7-8)

– Jeffrey L. Brillhart
Director, Music and Fine Arts



Saturday, March 30

The Beatitudes clearly convey what it means to be a true disciple in Christ. If we follow Christ's teachings to the fullest, we should depend on nothing but divine grace for salvation. However, we are frail human beings who often seek our own way, meet our own needs, hesitate to be grateful and neglect to share our abundance. As a result, we invest ourselves in the things of this world and compromise our very existence, rather than believe and trust in the Kingdom of Heaven.

We need to take stock of ourselves and understand who we are, what we need and what we believe in. With our own house in order, we can more effectively help others. While we all face challenges, we all can share some level of resources – time, talent, financial support.

We also need to strike a better balance between the teachings from the Beatitudes and the abundance we enjoy. Our challenge is that we cling to our worldly possessions that are difficult to let go of, provide for us comfort and give us pleasure. How can we be better filled with righteousness and not our material possessions? Maybe we need to start with a better life balance. That means we need to rethink and re-prioritize how we allocate time for our career, recreation, family, community and following Christ.

In this crazy and challenging world, we live on borrowed time – *no one knows when the loan will finally come due*. Now is the time to make a commitment to 1) read and appreciate the Beatitudes, 2) assess your current life balance and 3) adjust your mix of life's priorities to be a better disciple of Jesus. Since no one mix is right for everyone, it may take some soul-searching and real commitment to alter your mix.

Are we willing to change? I suggest we can ... *one small step at a time*.

5:3 – “Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” While some may believe they can be self-sufficient, we are poor in spirit compared to the wealth of God's spirit.

5:4 – “Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.” Too often, the world categorizes those who mourn as weak,

You only go around once in life, so grab all the gusto you can

Take advantage of this opportunity to repair strained relationships, feelings that are not aligned and past friends who have gone away

As Bonhoeffer suggests, we need “to bear it (suffering)”. We need to give witness to our connection with people around the world.

– Steve Ryan

Sunday, March 31

Luke 15:1-3; 11b-32 – The Parable of the Two Brothers

Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. ²And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, “This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.” ³So he told them this parable:

¹¹Then Jesus said, “There was a man who had two sons. ¹²The younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.’ So he divided his property between them. ¹³A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. ¹⁴When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. ¹⁶He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. ¹⁷But when he came to himself he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! ¹⁸I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; ¹⁹I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.”’ ²⁰So he set off and went to his father.

But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. ²¹Then the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ ²²But the father said to his slaves, ‘Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; ²⁴for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!’ And they began to celebrate.

²⁵“Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. ²⁷He replied, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound.’ ²⁸Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. ²⁹But he answered his father, ‘Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. ³⁰But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!’ ³¹Then the father said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. ³²But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.’”



Monday, April 1

Thus there remains only one path for those who in following Jesus want to truly serve God in worship, and that is the path of reconciliation with their sisters and brothers. Anyone who comes to the word and sacrament with an unreconciled heart stands judged by doing so...That is why you must “first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift.” It is a difficult path Jesus imposes on his disciples. It includes much humiliation and dishonor for the disciples themselves. But it is the path to him, our crucified brother, and thus, it is a path full of grace. In Jesus, service to the least brother and sister and service to God became one. He went and was reconciled to his human kindred, and then he came and offered himself, the one true sacrifice, to his Father.

– Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, 1937

Christian life means being human by virtue of the incarnation, it means being judged and pardoned by virtue of the cross, and means to live a new life in the power of the resurrection. None of these becomes real without the others.

– Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 1949



Tuesday, April 2

There will always be grumblers, even to the most beautiful and memorable events and stories. In this Luke text, while I love the story of the returning prodigal, I am caught by the very first verses of the story. We hear about Jesus being Jesus, doing what Jesus does best, welcoming and eating with the least, the last, and the lost. Jesus shows us what we must do. As Christ's disciples and as Christ's church, we are called to love our neighbor by looking for ways to shelter the homeless, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit those in prison, heal the sick, pray for our enemies, preach peace in a world bent toward violence, welcome the stranger, seek the lost, and proclaim love more estimable than money. The Pharisees and scribes judge sinners; Jesus welcomes them. How do we mirror that welcome?

A conversation with a retired Episcopal priest who was in seminary during the Civil Rights movement and marches was a pivotal moment for me. When he was in school, he said all they thought or talked about was the social gospel. This priest was in the same school at the same time as Jonathan Daniels, an Episcopal seminarian who was martyred in Alabama while protecting fellow civil rights activist, Ruby Sales. Daniels stood up for the marginalized, advocated for equal rights for all people, and challenged power and status quo in the Dixified South. People in power in the South in the 1960's judged those who looked different than they did; the civil rights activists sought equality. How do we mirror that social justice?

Each of us has the ability to love neighbor as we also challenge a status quo that does not seek the equality of all people. Jesus was a radical and risked his reputation, relationships, and even his life. As we hear stories about Jesus during this time of Lent, during our walk to the foot of the cross and then to the empty tomb, let us consider how we mirror loving God and loving neighbor in our world today.

– M. Courtenay Willcox



Wednesday, April 3



Cody Miller, Prodigal Son IV, codyfmiller.com

Thursday, April 4

“And what does the Lord require of you, but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with Your God” (Micah 6:8). Is God pleased with our thoughts, words, actions or deeds? What have we done for the lost and lonely – lately? Are we consumed with our own self-righteousness or righteous indignation? Do we demand and ensure equal opportunity for all? Or, are we too busy making a list and checking it twice for the deficiencies and offenses of others?

We must do justice! We must raise our voices against social injustice and inequalities – anywhere and everywhere. There are social injustices that occurred to Trayvon Martin, Philando Castile, Alton Sterling, Sandra Bland, Freddie Gray, Michael Brown, Eric Garner, Tamir Rice, Amadou Diallo, Nia Wilson, Mother Emmanuel AME Church 9, and most recently, members of the Tree of Life Synagogue. We must raise our voices against unfairness, racism, sexism, and discrimination. We must raise our voices for educational reform. Our voices can restore those who have been incarcerated or criminalized through our justice systems. Our voices can ensure meaningful change for the homeless.

We must love kindness! Therefore, we are not easily offended by the actions of others. We forgive; we agree to disagree. We are not pointing fingers of judgment. We are not using our gifts and talents for self-righteousness, but to increase His Kingdom and to lift others. We are pressing **toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus** (Philippians 3:14).

We must walk humbly! Our humble walk is part of our authentic spiritual journey, not a religious sprint. When was the last time that you humbly walked and invited others to worship with you at church or to know more about Jesus?

To do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly, our minds must be stayed on Jesus!

– *Evangelist LaGreta B. Brown*
St. Matthew AME Church, Philadelphia



Friday, April 5

On May 31, 1934, one hundred and thirty-nine pastors, parishioners and professors of Lutheran, Reformed and Prussian Union churches met at Gernerke Church in Wuppertal-Barmen. Their goal was to craft a response to the rise of the German Christian Movement. The result of their lengthy gathering was the *Theological Declaration of Barmen*, which asserted Christ's lordship over all areas of life and opposed Nazi influence on the church. While Bonhoeffer was not present at this pivotal moment, he shared many of the concerns expressed in the document.

A small sculpture now stands in a square in front of the church. It features a mass of people arising out of a common foundation. From afar, one can see that many in the crowd have their arms outstretched in a Nazi salute. Only by standing close to the piece is it possible to discern that some members of the crowd have their arms folded in apparent defiance of the populist spirit. Some dissidents appear to be frozen in mid-turn as they attempt to counter the spirit of the age. A few still face the street along with the saluting cohort. Still others have their backs to the crowd and their faces toward the church.

Each character, whether they are saluting or not, arises out of the same foundation. One is caught off-guard by how difficult it is to tell the individual members of the cohort apart. The message seems to be that no one is entirely without responsibility for the failings of their community; the lives and destinies of all are intertwined. Those who opposed the Third Reich's influence on the church at Barmen were not holy crusaders. They were followers of Jesus who tried to chart a path forward though the intricacies of human life.

Reconciliation is possible only when we stand in humility before the world's complexities. No one, and no group of people, can take the journey toward redemption alone. Remember this truth the next time you watch the news.

– The Rev. David B. Smith
Interim Associate Pastor for Youth Ministry

Saturday, April 6

This story from Jesus is one of three metaphors for the love of the creator for the creation.

In the first story, God as the good shepherd, devoted to the care of all the sheep, actively pursues the lost one of one hundred until it is found in the desert wilderness.

In the second story, God as the diligent householder, actively lights the lamp and sweeps the house until the one lost coin of ten is found.

In this third story, God as the compassionate parent, waits patiently and watches confidently for the one lost child of two to make the free will choice to return home. And, when the child appears in the distance, the parent cast aside all dignity and judgment and runs out joyfully to embrace the lost and now reunited one.

With an animal or a coin, God demonstrates the masculine quality of assertiveness and with “a mighty hand and an outstretched arm” takes decisive action to save the situation.

But with a human being, things are different. God demonstrates the feminine qualities of sensitivity and gentleness. Love cannot be forced. It can only be chosen. “God is Love” and God has chosen to “not fail or forsake” us. God has told us that “I have graven you on the palms of my hands.” God will wait as long as it takes for each and every one of us to come back home. God is always ready, willing, and able to welcome us home.

We need to decide how long we choose to be alone and unhappy.

And, God also waits for the “unlost” child to give up judging others and join the celebration of divine/human reconciliation.

– Paul C. MacMurray



Sunday, April 7

John 12:1-8 – The Anointing at Bethany

Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. ²There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him.

³Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. ⁴But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, ⁵"Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?" ⁶(He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.)

⁷Jesus said, "Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. ⁸You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me."



Monday, April 8

The other service one should perform for another person in Christian community is active helpfulness. To begin with, we have in mind simple assistance in minor, external matters. There are many such things wherever people live together. Nobody is too good for the lowest service. Those who worry about the loss of time entailed by such small, external acts of helpfulness are usually taking their own work too seriously. We must be ready to allow ourselves to be interrupted by God, who will thwart our plans and frustrate our ways time and again, even daily, by sending people across our path with their demands and requests.

– Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 1939



Tuesday, April 9

I think about this story from the Gospel of John quite frequently, because Judas' complaint is my constant refrain – if only we had sacrificed “this,” we could have helped more people. If only we had sold “that,” the church could be more generous. If only we had been more frugal “here” we could have given away more money “there.”

But Jesus' words, as hard as they are to hear, ring in my head each time in response. Poverty, inequality, injustice, struggle – they are not so easily fixed by just one more fundraiser, or just one more donation, just one more grant or just one more service day. These things that we are constantly working against are signs of the brokenness of our world. A brokenness that we are called to tend, but not a brokenness that we have the ultimate power to repair.

As Christians, we are reminded that our acts of service in this world will never save it and neither will they ever save us. That is God's work through Christ. So, what do they do?

Our acts of service *bind* us – they *bind* us to the world, willing to look the brokenness in the eye rather than turn aside and pretend that it is not a real part of so many people's lives. Our acts of service bind us to each other, as we serve side by side building relationships, reflecting together on the ways that our community can be more deeply engaged, remembering that we are never alone in this world. Finally, our acts of service bind us to God, experiencing God's compassion, allowing our hearts to break in the same ways that God's does at the brokenness of the world.

Yes, as Jesus says, the poor may always be with us, but our acts of service remind us that we as the church, as a community and individuals are called to be with the poor and to be a tangible reminder that God is with them as well.

– The Rev. Rebecca Kirkpatrick
Associate Pastor for Adult Education and Mission

Wednesday, April 10



Cody Miller, Offering, codyfmiller.com

Thursday, April 11

Being a senior in high school, I have grown used to countless college essays and discussions. In recent years, colleges and universities have begun to emphasize a new focus on what they desire in students: the impact students make in their communities. In my application process, I was surprised to see how similar many of the essay prompts were. One asked me to define “civic engagement.” One asked me to show “the relationship between individuals and their community.” Of course, applicants understandably want to do whatever it takes to get into their dream school, which has led kids to do some great service projects and activities. But among high schoolers, in my opinion, all of this has diluted the meaning of service. The motivation for service no longer comes from God, but rather from personal desire.

Especially in a time where social media participation is higher than ever, many people are only doing activities that are “big” and worth sharing. That, in combination with the college process, has strongly lessened the amount of small service that occurs among young adults. Regarding the “active helpfulness” that Bonhoeffer spoke of, it is largely important to remember the random acts of kindness that many people promote. Service does not need to be large; it can be as simple as holding a door for a stranger or keeping a perfume to anoint the feet of a beloved friend. It can be investing in the knowledge of a child or rushing to help someone during an emergency. Above all, service is knowing that some act, no matter how small, has made someone else’s life better.

– Benjamin Schmid – Youth Deacon



Friday, April 12

One of the themes in this text relates to service. Although active helpfulness can sometimes seem so simple when assisting those in need, the essence of “why” is of utmost relevance. The motivation behind the act of service is what defines true Christian charity.

When I was growing up, my parents often presented opportunities for me to help those less fortunate – volunteering at a housing project across the river, reading textbooks to a carpenter who was going blind and needed assistance in changing his vocation, and feeding the hungry. When I search the depths of my heart, I see the child that I was, ever wanting to be a good person. But I also recognize the need to please my parents, which wasn’t the appropriate rationale for getting involved in mission. Although I was acting benevolently, I wasn’t behaving as a model disciple of Christ, in which one performs solely out of absolute love for Jesus, and not in an effort to please others. According to Jesus, only those who truly love God are able to love the poor and needy.

Making that deep human connection can sometimes be difficult. Like the misguided father in Neel Mukherjee’s *State of Freedom*, who hoped his young son could look away from India’s bleak poverty, and instead see its beauty and history, one can find oneself turning away from painful reminders of people’s suffering.

One of our pastors once said that when engaging in mission the hope is “to look at and experience the world with the heart of a servant and in a spirit of service.” As I grow in faith, I continue to take those lessons learned, turn my heart to loving Jesus, and strive to develop meaningful connections with those less fortunate.

– *Marian Chitester*



Saturday, April 13

The Gospels offer condensed accounts of Jesus' life. The individual stories are short, and there is not room for a lot of detail. So when details are included in a gospel story I tend to take notice. One of the things that strikes me about this week's story from John is the detail that "the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume." It is a seemingly extraneous detail, unnecessary to the flow of the plot. Yet its inclusion makes the story so much more vivid. The extravagance of the narration mirrors the extravagance of the act — three hundred denarii is comparable to what a common laborer might earn in a year. Thus, the pairing with the Bonhoeffer quote is interesting, because he is talking about small acts, not grandiose gestures. Yet I would say that even small acts of kindness radiate outward like the smell of the perfume in the story — if we have eyes to see and ears to hear (and noses to smell).

For many of us, our small acts of service are mostly performed for our families. Here is where we have the most opportunities day by day to offer "simple assistance in minor, external matters," whether it is helping a child, caring for the house or apartment, or fixing a meal. I do most of the cooking for our family, and most nights it feels like a chore. But I find that when I am attentive to the details, when I am truly present to what I am doing, there is a holy glow about preparing food. The Gospel of John asks us to smell the perfume in the story. Life asks us to open our eyes, our ears, and our other senses to what we are doing in the moment.

– Joshua Yoder



Sunday, April 14

Luke 23:1-49 – The Crucifixion

²⁶As they led Jesus away, they seized a man, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming from the country, and they laid the cross on him, and made him carry it behind Jesus.

²⁷A great number of the people followed him, and among them were women who were beating their breasts and wailing for him. ²⁸But Jesus turned to them and said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. ²⁹For the days are surely coming when they will say, ‘Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed.’ ³⁰Then they will begin to say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us’; and to the hills, ‘Cover us.’ ³¹For if they do this when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?”

³²Two others also, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him.

³³When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. ³⁴Then Jesus said, “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.” And they cast lots to divide his clothing. ³⁵And the people stood by, watching; but the leaders scoffed at him, saying, “He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!”

³⁶The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine, ³⁷and saying, “If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!” ³⁸There was also an inscription over him, “This is the King of the Jews.” ³⁹One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, “Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!” ⁴⁰But the other rebuked him, saying, “Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? ⁴¹And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong.” ⁴²Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” ⁴³He replied, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.”

⁴⁴It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, ⁴⁵while the sun’s light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two.

⁴⁶Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.” Having said this, he breathed his last. ⁴⁷When the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God and said, “Certainly this man was innocent.” ⁴⁸And when all the crowds who had gathered there for this spectacle saw what had taken place, they returned home, beating their breasts. ⁴⁹But all his acquaintances, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.



Monday, April 15

Costly grace is the hidden treasure in the field, for the sake of which people go and sell with joy, everything they have. It is the costly pearl for whose price the merchant sells all that he has; it is Christ's sovereignty, for the sake of which you tear out an eye if it causes you to stumble. It is the call of Jesus Christ which causes a disciple to leave his nets and follow him.

Costly grace is the gospel which must be sought again and again, the gift which has to be asked for, the door at which one has to knock.

It is costly, because it calls to discipleship; it is grace, because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ. It is costly, because it costs people their lives; it is grace, because it thereby makes them live. It is costly because it condemns sin; it is grace, because it justifies the sinner. Above all, grace is costly because it was costly to God, because it cost God the life of God's son, and because nothing can be cheap to us which is costly to God. Above all, it is grace because the life of God's son was not too costly for God to give in order to make us live...

– Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, 1937

For our sake he cried on the cross: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Now we know that there is no longer any suffering on earth in which Christ will not be with us, suffering with us and praying with us – Christ the only helper.

– Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Psalms: The Prayer Book for the Bible*



Tuesday, April 16

The cross for all of its glory, acclaim and even beauty is a disturbing, unnerving object for me. Projected high and stretched wide, pieces of wood on Golgotha's hill serve as the pinnacle event bringing Christ's *earthly* ministry to a perceived in. This was the last stop, last hurrah amid public humiliation, scorn and embarrassment. Surrounded not by his disciples, but his precious mother, the faithful women and the beloved John. What a way to go? Where are the crowds that he fed, clothed, healed, reinvigorated and inspired? We have all been in this place and/or perhaps in that place right now! Alone and forgotten. But the glory is that the *benefits* of the cross outweigh the suffering, inhumane treatment and "death." Love personified was demonstrated!

Many heroes and heroines have endured so much in order that we might live, have access, prosper and succeed. How their lives and stories demonstrate to us just how much our lives are not about us, but so much more about a larger picture – that we may never be able to truly see and understand. Yes, Christ's crucifixion is unnerving, unpleasant, disgusting, depressing, but was necessary to make a LOVE statement of just how far one would offer their lives to bridge gaps, take down walls, uplift all people, show a way and point toward LOVE.

Are we willing as His followers to offer our lives in order to advance and demonstrate TRUE love, service and commitment? Will we go the extra mile – knowing that we may never be given the true credit we deserve, but knowing that in the end that love will always prevail and win? Although disturbing, emotionally agonizing, painful – Christ's love for me beams through the wood – it gives me reason to hope and believe – that He loved me and all of creation so much that He was willing to stretch himself for me? Can I count on you too?

– *The Rev. Carolyn C. Cavaness, Pastor
Bethel AME Church of Ardmore*



Wednesday, April 17



Cody Miller, *Stand*, codymiller.com

From the artist:

We all must stand, first and foremost as servants of the One who came to serve us at our lowest point. The woman holding the child stands firm on who she is as a follower of Christ. Nothing or no one will be able to separate her from this great reality. She may be surrounded by trouble on every side; she may be very weak on top of that, but she will stand, for the Lord is able to make her stand. It is the Lord's power that upholds us and defeats evil, not our power. The battle belongs to the Lord, and many times He simply asks us to stand.

Thursday, April 18

Come, Follow Me.

No longer would voice and vote lack value. Jesus offered a new voice in the world's wilderness.

Where would you be in the story? The cross in our story is carried by a “disciple” who was following Jesus. The narrative changes from belief to practice. Of course, I'd be there but as one of the women!

I claimed Christ as my Lord and Savior in March of 1946. My faith was formed by community through several times of relocation in my life. There was no sacrifice. Churches of choice were similar. I understood the language of the people. I accepted sermons and pondered their message. My own child informed my faith development through questions and participation in a worshipping community. Then, in 1992, I was humbled by the invitation to serve as Ruling Elder in a small country church. God's timing was perfection.

Confrontation with others in the faith community was not on my disciple agenda. In the decade of the 1990s, voice and vote became evermore necessary for change to prevail in the church. One needs to be rooted in their faith to sacrifice. Your voice and vote matter to the voiceless. We share our yoke of concern with Christ and follow. With this new responsibility, prayer and Bible study were required. My agenda was to find the common table for all. To serve required sacrifice, and I received costly grace.

In our lifetime, we are called to practice our faith. We cannot miss the opportunity to empower others with the Gospel message. Jesus said, “Follow Me”. Glory be!

– Janet Brown



Friday, April 19

My husband Larry and I were privileged to accompany the BMPC Sanctuary Choir summer tour to Germany in 2014. Clearly one of my personal highlights was a tour of the Bonhoeffer home. I was surprised at how ordinarily suburban it was, surrounded by neatly trimmed hedges and a white picket fence. Built by his parents in 1935, it was easy to imagine the family gathered in the living room celebrating holidays and family birthdays or to rejoice at the news of Dietrich's engagement to Maria.

It was also poignant to know how walls of that home had sheltered hushed conversations about the war, the hovering Gestapo, Nazi atrocities and the call upon Christian people to mount a resistance to Hitler's Third Reich. As a young theology professor Dietrich led campus ministry there to university students when he was in residence in Berlin, and today the living room of the Bonhoeffer Haus still serves as a center for theological inquiry.

I remember being deeply moved when we ascended the staircase to the second floor and entered Dietrich's bedroom and study. In that very room he had written parts of his book, *Ethics*, and his analysis of the resistance movement, *After Ten Years*. Our tour guide showed us how the ceiling tiles were pushed up to hide that manuscript above it until after his hanging in Tegel Prison and the end of the war. It was hard not to imagine Dietrich Bonhoeffer's arrest from that home, his brave sacrifice, and also to wonder what I might have done under such dreadful circumstances.

"Costly grace is the hidden treasure in the field," he wrote, and at the cost of his life he left us his theological reflections of what it means to follow Jesus of Nazareth to the cross.

– The Rev. Dr. Agnes W. Norfleet
Pastor

Saturday, April 20

The dead Jesus Christ of Good Friday and the resurrected Lord of Easter Sunday: This is the creation out of nothingness, creation from the beginning. The fact that Christ was dead did not mean the possibility of his resurrection: it meant the impossibility; it was nothingness itself.

There is absolutely no transition, no continuum between the dead and the resurrected Christ other than the freedom of God, which created his work from nothingness in the beginning... He, who is the beginning, lives, annihilates the nothingness, and creates the new creation in his resurrection. From his resurrection, we know about the creation, for if he were not raised, the Creator would be dead and would not bear witness to himself.

From his creation, however, we know once again about the power of his resurrection, because he remains the Lord of the nothingness.

– *Dietrich Bonhoeffer, lectures on “Creation and Fall,” 1932*





Enrich Your Experience of Lent and Easter

Ash Wednesday

March 6

5:30 p.m. Family Service in the Chapel with Imposition of Ashes. The Rev. Rachel Pedersen preaching.

5:30–7:30 p.m. Wednesday Night Dinner served in Congregational Hall. Cost: \$8/adults, \$5/students and children. All welcome.

7:30 p.m. Service in the Chapel with Imposition of Ashes. The Rev. Rachel Pedersen preaching.

Lenten Evening Prayers

Wednesdays, March 13, 20, 27, April 3 and 10

Gather in the Chapel at 7:00 p.m. for a simple service of music, prayer, scripture and silence led by the pastors.

Labyrinth

Beginning on Ash Wednesday, the small labyrinth will be available in the Chapel weekdays from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sundays after worship.

On Tuesdays, March 5 and April 2 from 10:30 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., the large labyrinth will be offered in Congregational Hall.

During Holy Week, the small labyrinth may be walked in the Children's Chapel on Monday, April 15, Tuesday, April 16 and Wednesday, April 17, from 9:00

a.m. to 5:00 p.m. The large labyrinth will be available in the gymnasium on Maundy Thursday, April 18, from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., and on Good Friday, April 19, from 8:00 a.m. to noon with the option to walk the Stations of the Cross.

Printed prayers and meditations will be available at all times noted.

The Legacy of Dietrich Bonhoeffer in the Season of Lent

Bonhoeffer Documentary. Sunday, March 3, 11:15 a.m., Witherspoon Parlor. We kick off four weeks of focus on German theologian and activist Dietrich Bonhoeffer by viewing this acclaimed documentary.

One Book One Church. Sunday, March 10, 11:15 a.m., Congregational Hall. We welcome Dr. Victoria Barnett to lead us in a conversation on her recently published companion essay to Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *After Ten Years: Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Our Times*. Dr. Barnett is director of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's Programs on Ethics, Religion, and the Holocaust. Copies of *After Ten Years* are available in the Book Center for \$5.00.

The Theological Legacy of Bonhoeffer.

Sunday, March 17, 11:15 a.m., Witherspoon Parlor. Come hear about the remarkable theological legacy of Bonhoeffer with Dr. Katie Day, professor of Church and Society at United Lutheran Seminary.





Bonhoeffer: An Ecumenical Youth

Pastor. Sunday, March 24, 11:15 a.m., Witherspoon Parlor. Bonhoeffer's extensive service as a youth pastor and ability to form ecumenical partnerships were central to his identity and critical to his influence on the church of his day. The Rev. David B. Smith will explore these formative elements of Bonhoeffer's witness and consider their relevance for the church today.

Concert

Thomas Lloyd's *Bonhoeffer*. Sunday, March 17, 4:00 p.m., Sanctuary. The Bryn Mawr Chamber Singers present a groundbreaking theater piece featuring the writings of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Tickets: \$20 for adults; \$5 for students with ID.

Holy Week Services

Palm Sunday, April 14

- **8:00 a.m.** Worship with Communion, Chapel
- **9:45 a.m.** Children ages 2 - Kindergarten meet in classrooms and children grades 1 - 5 meet in Chapel for Palm Sunday Procession
- **10:00 a.m.** Worship with Children's Palm Procession, Sanctuary.
- **11:00 a.m.** All-Church Brunch, Congregational Hall
- **11:00 a.m.** Family Egg Hunt, Gymnasium
- No Wednesday Night Dinner this week (April 17).

Maundy Thursday, April 18

- **8:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.** Labyrinth Walk, Gym
- **5:30 p.m.** Family Service with Communion, Chapel
- **6:00 p.m.** Simple Supper in Congregational Hall. Free-will offering.
- **7:30 p.m.** Worship with Communion, Sanctuary. The Rev. Dr. Agnes W. Norfleet preaching.

Good Friday, April 19

- **8:00 a.m. – noon.** Labyrinth Walk, Gymnasium
- **12:00 noon.** Worship led by BMPC Youth, Sanctuary
- **7:30 p.m.** The Sanctuary Choir, Bryn Mawr Chamber Singers, and The Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia will present Bach's oratorio, "St. Mark Passion," in the Sanctuary.

Easter Sunday, April 21

- **6:30 a.m.** Sunrise Service on the Front Lawn. The Rev. Rachel Pedersen preaching.
- **7:30 a.m.** Continental Breakfast, Ed. Bldg. Lobby
- **8:00, 9:30, and 11:00 a.m.** Worship with Choir and Easter Brass in the Sanctuary. The Rev. Dr. Agnes W. Norfleet preaching.



BRYN MAWR PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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