



2023
Lenten
Devotional
BRYN MAWR PRESBYTERIAN

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INTRODUCTION

As Presbyterians we don't have too many pieces of liturgy that we repeat week after week in our worship life together. Each Sunday brings a new confession, a new prayer of intercession, even a new affirmation of faith. But the Lord's Prayer is essential and enduring in our common worship. Because of that it is also a constant in our personal and private prayer lives as well. For many Christians it is the language that they turn to in times of crisis and grief. I have prayed at many a sickbed or even deathbed asking for comfort and healing and ending my petitions with the Lord's Prayer. It is in that moment that loved ones who haven't darkened the door of a church for years join their voices with mine in reciting this shared prayer as a way to express their trust in God. New Testament scholar N.T. Wright has written that to take the Lord's Prayer on your lips is to stand on hallowed ground.

This 2023 Lenten Season, we will walk together through the Lord's Prayer, both in this devotional and our Sunday worship. Each week staff and church members have offered their reflections on one line of prayer as well as an accompanying Psalm that also speaks to the essence of that week's petition. In these reflections you will be offered a glimpse into the prayer lives of members of our community as well as some of the most timeless questions and hopes that we offer before God each time we pray.

May this devotional renew within each of us a greater appreciation and meaning of this ancient prayer. But may it also deepen our commitment to bringing our concerns, our petitions, our thanksgivings before God in prayer beyond this season of study and devotion.

In the Peace of Christ,



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

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 trespasses,
as we forgive those who
trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power,
and the glory, forever.
Amen.

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

- ⁶ Beware of practising 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.
- ³ But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,
- ⁴ so 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.
- ⁶ But 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.
- ¹⁷ But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face,
- ¹⁸ so 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.

MATTHEW 6:1-6, 16-18

Thursday, February 23

Rarely would I consider myself a fanfaron since boasting is not in my personal repertoire. I don't actively tout my good deeds to impress others, but regrettably I am sometimes guilty of silently inviting individuals to observe my virtuous acts, which are noted in this passage as giving alms, praying, and fasting.

My own personal psychological makeup includes a need to gain acceptance from others and wanting to be viewed as a good and almost-perfect human being. At times it is difficult to not take the look-at-what-I've-done approach because it allows me to justify myself as a God-loving person, and to believe that I am moral and worthy.

However, it is impossible to simultaneously solicit admiration from other humans for virtuous actions while hoping for reward from God. Do I really want to seek out human acclaim and commendation, which is at best, temporary and wrought with self-serving motivation? Still, the temptation is there, and I must remind myself to please God alone and set aside the need for human approval.

My relationship with God is unique and personal, and there is a secret quality to that relationship. Pleasing only Him is very liberating. I can do good without "adding up the points received from other individuals." I can release my concerns of what others think about me and concentrate on my relationship with God. I can experience joy in serving Christ and act with humility, and can trust in God's rewards, which are eternal and everlasting.

~ *Marian Chitester*

MATTHEW 6:1-6, 16-18

Friday, February 24

We learn very early, as children, to expect rewards for our accomplishments. From good grades on report cards to winning scores on sports teams and competitions, our expectations are always on the accolades. These expectations, like traditions, stay with us as adults in our careers, and as parents and grandparents. It's not wrong to give merit or have expectations to receive rewards for our accomplishments. However, if we are only focused on receiving rewards or a pat on the back for doing our best and boasting to others about what we give or what we do, whether monetary support or helping someone in need, then the mission becomes more about ourselves and our egos.

In Matthew 6:1-6; 16-18, it says: "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." From Eugene H. Peterson's book, *The Message//Remix*, he says it this way: "Be especially careful when you are trying to be good so that you don't make a performance out of it. It might be good theater, but the God who made you won't be applauding. When you do something for someone else, don't call attention to yourself."

When I was growing up, our church was a non-denominational church called The Met in Philadelphia, which is still there, but now an entertainment facility. During each service, the offering was like an auction with people waving dollars as the minister asked for more. In addition, there were members who organized groups for fasting and praying, then boasted about their mission and made others uncomfortable for not following in their footsteps. For me, this practice was uncomfortable, not spiritual, or embracing. As we begin this Lenten season looking away from ourselves may allow us to obtain an everlasting reward.

~ *Lawana Scales*

MATTHEW 6:1-6, 16-18

Saturday, February 25

Contemplating these passages in Matthew 6:1-4, 5-6, and 16-18, first I ask, “Do I regularly give, pray and fast?” Jesus assumes we will. I answer “mostly yes” although I wonder about a more deliberate and regular fasting from my cellphone and online news. Next is the question, “Why do I give, pray, and fast?” Jesus asks if we do these practices “in order to be seen by others,” as means to another end like getting ahead or looking good. In my retirement vocation as a spiritual director, I hear lots about spiritual practices. Struggling to avoid performing for others rarely is mentioned.

Rather, the most common misconception is that they are a performance for God. Some feel obligated to turn up the volume of praise, reverence and gratitude to God (a worthy goal!) but, in doing so, silencing other inner voices deeply desiring to share with God their sometimes-difficult experiences of and reaction to the world.

In his wonderful book, *Prayer – Our Deepest Longing*, Father Ronald Rolheiser argues, “If we take seriously that prayer is ‘lifting mind and heart to God,’ then every feeling and every thought we have is a valid and apt entry into prayer, no matter how irreverent, unholy, selfish, sexual, or angry that thought or feeling might seem.”

In my own spiritual life, I wonder if a misinterpretation of these passages has had the perverse effect of shutting down my free “lifting” to God by proscribing a “why” and “how” to these practices. In the past, I’ve read them as “do them this way but not that way,” which inadvertently has evolved to a kind of spiritual straitjacket.

So perhaps my prayer this Lenten season is to simply ask God (again) how to give, pray, and fast in ways that don’t bind but set me free.

~ *Paul Burgmayer*

1ST SUNDAY IN LENT - FEBRUARY 26

Psalm 95

- ¹ O come, let us sing to the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!
- ² Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving;
let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!
- ³ For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods.
- ⁴ In his hand are the depths of the earth; the heights of the mountains are his also.
- ⁵ The sea is his, for he made it, and the dry land, which his hands have formed.
- ⁶ O come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!
- ⁷ For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.
O that today you would listen to his voice!

*Our Father who art in
heaven hallowed
be thy name*

OUR FATHER WHO ART IN HEAVEN HALLOWED BE THY NAME

Monday, February 27

As I reflect on the first line of the Lord's Prayer, I'm taken back to my childhood bedroom where I'm saying my nightly prayers. I'm tucked in, the room is darkened, and my mother is kneeling by the side of my bed. I say my "God blesses" and end with the Lord's Prayer. I can't remember when I first learned the words in Sunday School, "Our Father, who art in heaven. hallowed be thy name..."

In my child's mind, what do those words mean? What feelings do they bring to my innocent heart? God, our Father, feels huge, comforting, loving. He brings me warmth and security. I know for sure that God loves me very much. Our Father will always protect my family and me. He's up there in heaven somewhere, seemingly far away and looking down on me. There is much to capture the imagination of a child! Hallowed is a big word I don't quite understand, but I know God is very, very good to everyone.

My faith and understanding grew as I got older, and God became much more complicated than the Father of my childhood. He became Abba, Father, the Almighty, creator, giver of grace and mercy, constant companion, protector, comforter, and, above all, the Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He will never forsake me, despite my mistakes and shortcomings. His love never fails. Our Father loves me, and all people everywhere, beyond our comprehension.

Psalm 95 reminds us that the Lord deserves our thanks and praise. For our Father is everywhere, all the time, in heaven and on earth. "In his hand are the depths of the earth; the heights of the mountains are his also" (Ps. 95:4). "Oh come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!" (Ps. 95:6). Hallowed be thy sacred name!

~ *Susan Thorkelson*

PSALM 95

Tuesday, February 28

The natural world of Creation in which we live has been a source of wonder, joy, and gratitude since I was a small child. Walks and hikes in mountains above ponds and lakes have brought me closer to God. The smell of the air in pine and balsam forests, sweet grass in meadows and creeping thyme on hills in July is a joy to be appreciated each year. Another gift is Wonder. Natural changes are easy to notice. Polliwogs mysteriously turn into frogs. Spring peepers arrive in ponds and wetlands and sing at dusk, always becoming silent when approached.

In a place surrounded by the natural world, science becomes real. We could find examples of processes. After we had studied animal camouflage, we found lizards color camouflaged in bushes, rocks, and flowers near a pond in an undisturbed wetland.

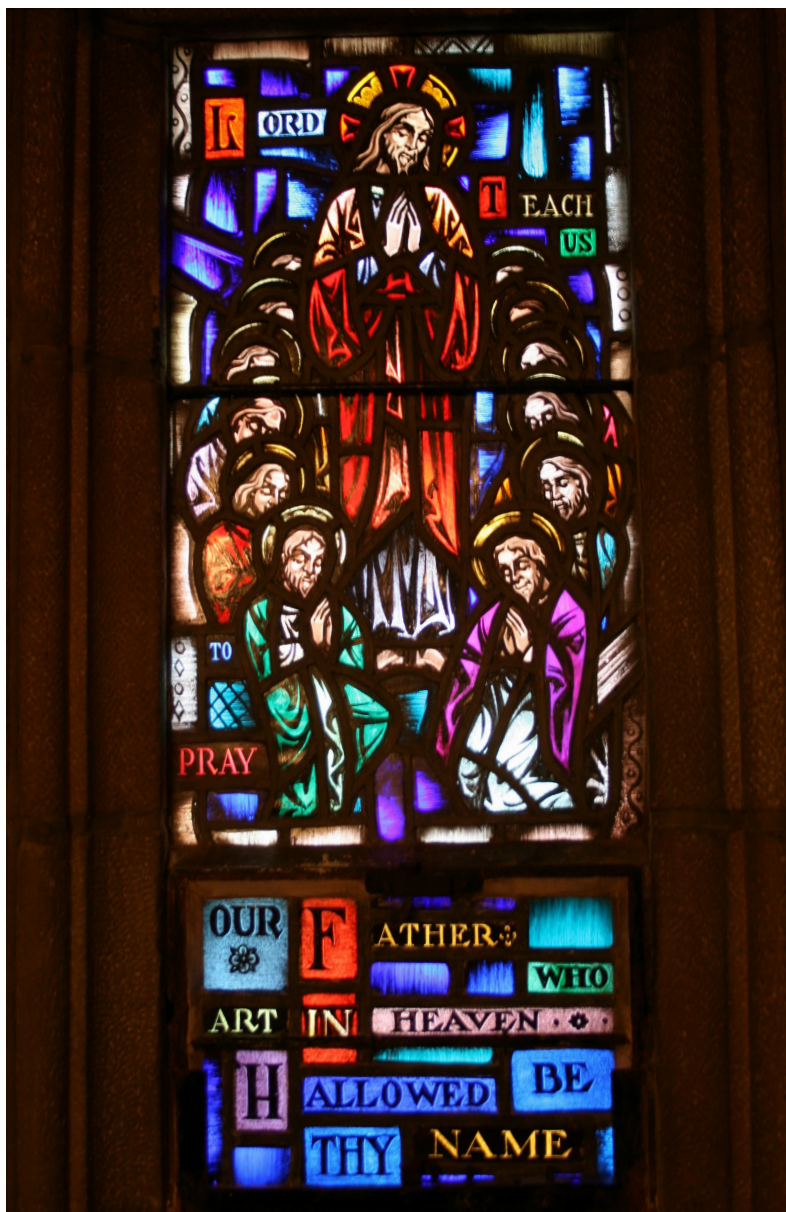
Several years ago, invited by friends, my husband and I visited Rocky Mountain National Park to see the result of a two-year experiment. The Park Service had expected grass would regrow on land damaged by visitors following the elk as the herd was grazing. This area was fenced in and untouched for two years. The expected grazing grass did not regrow. A native prairie took its place. Birds, bees, and butterflies flew within the enclosure. An ecosystem had spontaneously appeared on the barren ground. We were in awe.

We humans are only an element in the web of Creation. We are sustained by plant and animal processes in the present day that were determined by our Creator in ages past. I was given life. I am thankful.

~ Colby Madden

OUR FATHER WHO ART IN HEAVEN HALLOWED BE THY NAME

Wednesday, March 1



PSALM 95

Thursday, March 2

As a musician, it is comforting that the psalmist begins Psalm 95 by joining in song and joyful noise to express praise and gratitude for the Lord, our Creator. This opening musical expression morphs into listing the ways in which God surrounds us, constantly, in so many ways, and we are reminded of this by the world around us – the earth, mountains, the sea, dry land – these, and more, are all around us.

It is easy to miss the changing of the leaves as they begin to decorate the ground. It is easy to miss the beauty of a fresh layer of snow and the silence it creates. It is easy to miss the rhythm of rain as it falls from the sky. It also is far too easy to ignore all of this because of the many commitments or challenges we may have in our lives – family, friendships, work, illness, concern, or anxiety. But in recent years, I have learned to take time and look around at the world and all its beauty.

Taking that time to really look outside and admire what God has created can instantly take away stress I might feel about something in my life. Sometimes it is just a temporary fix, and other times it can completely soothe whatever the issue or challenge might have been.

So, take the time to look, take the time to hear the song of praise in your head, and enjoy the world around you. It's worth it.

~ Edward Landin Senn, Assistant Director, Music

OUR FATHER WHO ART IN HEAVEN HALLOWED BE THY NAME

Friday, March 3

From a young age, I have been surrounded by faith. Attending Church each Sunday has always been part of my family's Sunday. Somewhere in my elementary school years, consistently attending religious education classes and Sunday School lessons began to feel like an obligation to please my parents. Though my journey at BMPC commenced while attending Pre-Kindergarten at the Weekday School, it was not until I became involved with the Youth Ministry program that I began viewing my faith not as an obligation, but rather a privilege. Through mission trips, Sunday morning Youth Gatherings, and the Confirmation program, I formed relationships with students and mentors and quickly fell in love with BMPC. I attended Vacation Bible Camp and then the wonderful summer church camp, through which I have formed lifelong friendships as I matured from a scared, shy sixth grader, to the confident, outgoing senior I am now, leading younger friends in songs, dances, and worship. This community has given me a sense of belonging and provided me with a second home as I hope to become a mentor for younger kids, as my older friends once were to me.

I have grown up with my mother and father involved in the Church, as they both volunteered at VBC. My father served as an Elder and my mother served on the boards of the Weekday School and Y-Group. I have always wanted to follow in my parents footsteps and being nominated as a Youth Deacon was something that I had dreamt of as I watched my older friends serve this position. Serving Communion at Church, greeting community members as they arrive on Sunday mornings, and delivering flowers to the elderly are a few of the opportunities that have brought so much joy, purpose, and passion into my life.

The first line of the Lord's Prayer, "Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name" stands out to me. God is referred to as "our" father since he is the father to all people, no matter their background. He will love each one of us unconditionally, similar to the unconditional love of a father. The phrase "hallowed be thy name" reminds us that the Lord's name is sacred. God's love is precious and holy, and should therefore be treated as such. Psalm 95 also portrays a similar message that God's love is of the highest regard. All is possible when we turn to God, and He is the path to salvation. It reminds us that though our hearts may go astray, it is important to always find our way back and follow the Word of the Lord. My faith journey has been guided by these principles as I have learned that God loves each of us unconditionally as His own, and even if we may lose track of our path, He will always be there to guide us.

~ *Kathryn Chang, Youth Deacon*

PSALM 95

Saturday, March 4

One of my favorite scenes in the Netflix series “The Crown” is early in the first season at the coronation ceremony for Queen Elizabeth II. Clothed in a simple white dress, the young monarch sits diminutively in St. Edward’s Chair as the Archbishop of Canterbury blesses her with chrism and says these words:

Be thy Hands anointed with holy oil. Be thy Breast anointed with holy oil.

Be thy Head anointed with holy oil:

as kings, priests, and prophets were anointed:

And as Solomon was anointed king

by Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet,

so be thou anointed, blessed, and consecrated Queen

over the Peoples, whom the Lord thy God

hath given thee to rule and govern,

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

This element of the service is referred to as “the hallowing.” It’s the moment at this crowning ceremony where an ordinary person is seemingly touched with divinity and made holy.

Jesus tells the crowd that God, who rules from the heavens, possesses a name that is hallowed; a name worthy of great reverence. The Psalmist declares that because God is a great king, we are called to kneel in worship and thankfulness. But why? According to the biblical witness it is because the Maker of heaven and earth is also our source of immeasurable strength, the one in whose hands the depths of the oceans and the heights of mountains were formed and are known. It’s to this name that we can cling when the storms of life threaten to overwhelm us. It’s through this name that rulers past and present have been called to lead with peace and justice. It’s by this name that the church testifies to mercy and love.

What else can we do but want to anchor our lives in this name? When we choose lives of gratitude, we are not only responding to God’s greatness, but hallowing God’s name in the process.

~ The Rev. Franklyn C. Pottorff, Associate Pastor for Congregational Life & Stewardship

2ND SUNDAY IN LENT - MARCH 5

Psalm 72

- ¹ Give the king your justice, O God, and your righteousness to a king's son.
² May he judge your people with righteousness, and your poor with justice.
³ May the mountains yield prosperity for the people, and the hills, in righteousness.
⁴ May he defend the cause of the poor of the people,
give deliverance to the needy, and crush the oppressor.
⁵ May he live while the sun endures, and as long as the moon, throughout all
generations.
⁶ May he be like rain that falls on the mown grass, like showers that water the earth.
⁷ In his days may righteousness flourish and peace abound, until the moon is no more.
¹² For he delivers the needy when they call, the poor and those who have no helper.
¹³ He has pity on the weak and the needy, and saves the lives of the needy.
¹⁴ From oppression and violence he redeems their life; and precious is their blood in his
sight.

*Thy kingdom come, thy
will be done, on earth as it
is in heaven.*

PSALM 72

Monday, March 6

We pray for the Kingdom of God and God's will to be made manifest on Earth. So, what's our responsibility as God's sons and daughters in making that happen? We can see and feel God's presence everywhere, and in everyone. We can choose to see God in every blade of grass, snowflake, and person, even if it's contrary to the rhythm of modern life to do that.

We can choose how busy and distracted our lives are. I now see why monastics rise early to pray and contemplate the wonder of God.

We can manifest God's Kingdom on earth through our individual and collective role in social justice: the health of the planet, the poor, disenfranchised, and our neighbors. That might include voting, volunteering, donating money, and making our voices heard when there is injustice. We choose how we do this.

In pondering "Thy Will be done," I'm reminded of Gus, our bus driver on BMPC's Choir Tour to Israel. When you said, "good morning" to Gus, his response was a joyful "In Shallah," Arabic for God's will. His sincere exuberance and consistency affected me. Gus meant it.

It's a challenge to work hard toward a desired result, knowing that despite best efforts, we are not in control of the outcome. Disappointment and frustration can result when things don't go as planned. I try to remember that God is in charge, and there's a reason why things went the way they did.

As the Rolling Stones song goes: "You Can't Always Get What You Want... You Get What You Need." God knows what we need.

In Psalm 82 we pray that our leaders govern in alignment with God's Kingdom, transcending ego and power needs. Let's imagine that our leaders recognize the true kingdom is God's kingdom and work toward bringing peace, justice, and mercy to earth.

~ Terry Charlton

Tuesday, March 7

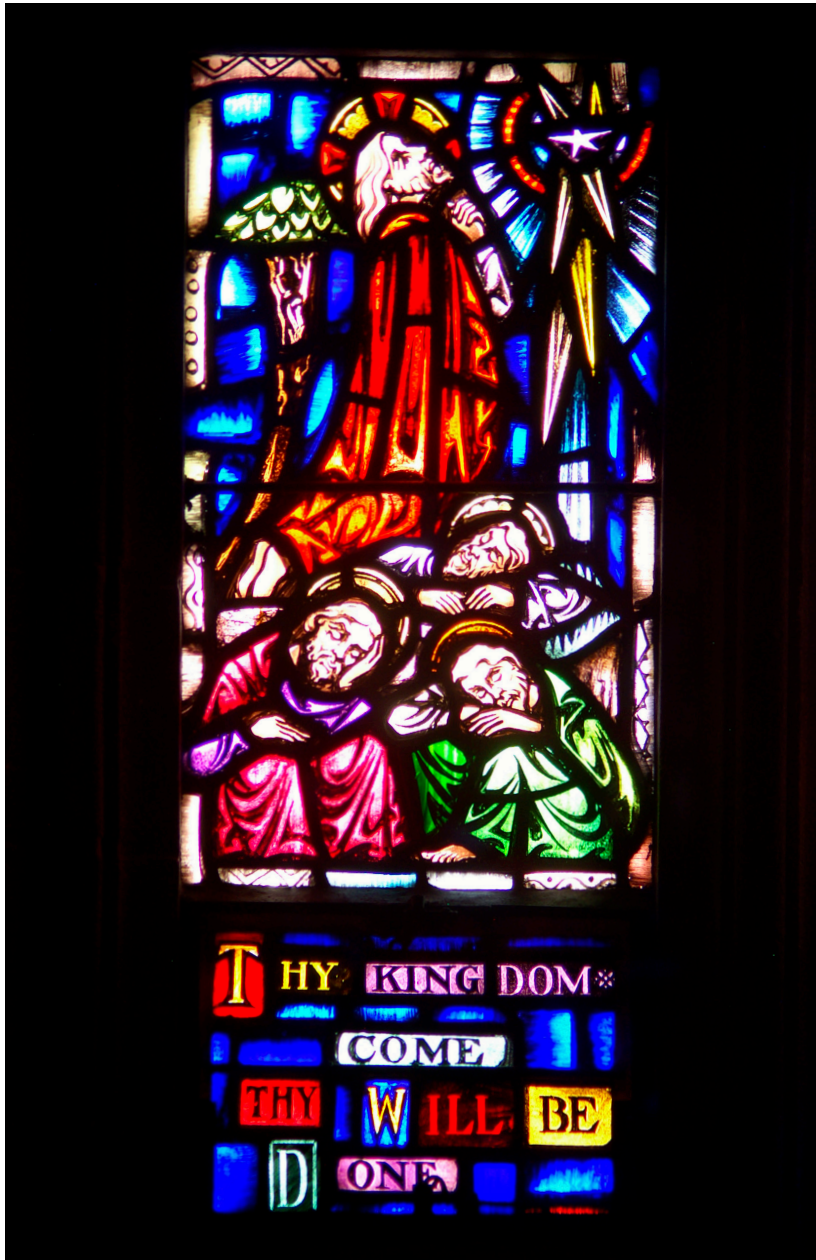
I have known the Lord's Prayer for as long as I can remember. As a child, I would recite the prayer with one of my parents before going to sleep. It almost always has been a part of worship services. This prayer has become a part of me, so much so that I admit that I can say it without paying full attention to the words. However, one Sunday while reciting it during worship, a thought interrupted the familiar words, "thy will be done, on earth, as it is in heaven," with "thy will be done at the border as it is in heaven." At the border. The specific reference changed my thinking about the prayer. It is not a prayer of hoping but a radical call to action. What do we need to do to bring God's Kingdom to the border? The psalmist speaks to what God's will would look like. God would "defend the cause of the poor" and "give deliverance to the needy." Somewhat alarmingly, God would "crush the oppressor." In God's kingdom there would be no national boundaries. Well-being would be a gift for all people, regardless of place of birth. Wow! How different our approach to border issues could be if we truly strive to bring God's sense of justice and mercy to all those living, working and trying to cross.

Since that moment in church, I sometimes choose to replace the general "on earth" with specific places. Ukraine or Philadelphia can be focus of my prayer. Any place where injustice thrives is a place needing, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done." The practice has enriched the Lord's Prayer for me and challenged me to think of concrete ways to promote God's will, so that "righteousness may flourish, and peace abound."

~ *Karen Dunkman*

PSALM 72

Wednesday, March 8



THY KINGDOM COME, THY WILL BE DONE, ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN.

Thursday, March 9

For many years, I was drawn more to the Lord's Prayer phrases such as "give us this day our daily bread" or "forgive us our debts" or "lead us not into temptation." But recently the phrase "...on earth as it is in heaven..." has taken on a very powerful meaning and implied exhortation for me, seizing my attention and urging action.

What are we praying for when we pray for God's Kingdom to come "on earth as it is in heaven?"

God's Kingdom also happens in our space-time physical world, not just in some ethereal realm. If the kingdom is to come "on earth as it is in heaven," it is up to us - with God's help. If we pray for God's Kingdom to come "on earth as it is in heaven," we must be prepared to live and act accordingly. In the words of N.T. Wright, be "kingdom bearers," "a community of healed healers."

Do we ask, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison and did not take care of you?" Let Jesus' answer be, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." (Matthew 25)

Prayer of St. Teresa of Avila

Christ has no body now but yours.

No hands, no feet on earth but yours.

Yours are the eyes through which he looks compassion on this world.

Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good.

Yours are the hands through which he blesses all the world.

Yours are the hands, yours are the feet, yours are the eyes, you are his body.

Christ has no body now on earth but yours.

~ Judy Ehrman

PSALM 72

Friday, March 10

Criticism is lazy. It takes little effort to point out all that is wrong with the world. From the comfort of one's couch, one can ponderously pontificate on the ills of society, proclaiming the various ways our culture does not live up to expectation.

Action is challenging. It also is faithful. Every time I recite this week's words from the Lord's Prayer – thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven – I feel compelled to pray with my body, to become an answer to my prayer through my actions. The Psalmist affirms this posture, listing the various actions that make a king just and righteous: judging people with fairness, defending the cause of the poor, protecting the vulnerable from violence. In short, the king is just when the king acts justly.

Jesus and the psalmist call us to act in the world. This means taking faithful risks with the hope of furthering justice and righteousness around us. Years ago I heard a preacher exclaim, "Don't ask God to move mountains if you aren't willing to pick up a shovel!" While such a quip is compelling, I must confess it scares me a bit. Taking action invariably will cost us something. At a minimum it will cost us time and energy. Even more, it may cost us our security, certainty, and comfort. We may look foolish or make mistakes. We may be the object of other people's criticism and contempt.

While we cannot control the response of others, I have come to believe that in order to faithfully follow Christ we must act. Through prayer and deed, we must work to make this world a bit more like God's kingdom. May we all grab our shovels and seek to become the answers to our prayers.

~ The Rev. Brian K. Ballard, Associate Pastor for Pastoral Care and Senior Adults

THY KINGDOM COME, THY WILL BE DONE, ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN.

Saturday, March 11

After reading “...thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven,” with the Psalm 72 verses, I was moved by their similarities. The psalm’s illustration of the prayer’s words offered an invitation that I initially didn’t understand. After looking at the two writings together over some weeks, I found that “thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven” began to automatically infuse my early morning Bible readings and prayers.

Following a period of quietly welcoming this effect, I started wondering how I can routinely link the prayer’s words to my actions. In the peaceful pre-dawn hours, I can fully commit to the hope that God’s work will be done. Once the stresses of daily life have reinserted themselves, though, my resolve is easily diminished. I am tempted to respond hurtfully to perceived slights and to ignore the oppression and violence in our world.

In my initial readings of Psalm 72, my focus was quickly drawn to the nature references. These evoke encouraging images of the sun’s brightness, the moon’s mysterious beauty, and of rain showers gently watering the garden. I habitually avoided the references to need, oppression, and violence. A recent lecture helped me to be more receptive to these reminders of the world’s pain, and my responsibility to act. The speaker, a public health expert, talked of her years of working to reduce harm from firearm violence. Her unassuming, relational approach to empowering key groups to challenge the harsh reality of gun-related trauma resonated with my responses to Psalm 72. Her example has provided an invitation to compassionate action in an area of need. I hope to remain open to this invitation, in Lent and beyond.

~ Anita Iyengar

3RD SUNDAY IN LENT - MARCH 12

Psalm 65

- ⁵ By awesome deeds you answer us with deliverance, O God of our salvation;
you are the hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas.
- ⁶ By your strength you established the mountains; you are girded with might.
- ⁷ You silence the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves, the tumult of the peoples.
- ⁸ Those who live at earth's farthest bounds are awed by your signs;
you make the gateways of the morning and the evening shout for joy.
- ⁹ You visit the earth and water it, you greatly enrich it; the river of God is full of water;
you provide the people with grain, for so you have prepared it.
- ¹⁰ You water its furrows abundantly, settling its ridges, softening it with showers,
and blessing its growth.
- ¹¹ You crown the year with your bounty; your wagon tracks overflow with richness.
- ¹² The pastures of the wilderness overflow, the hills gird themselves with joy,
- ¹³ the meadows clothe themselves with flocks, the valleys deck themselves with grain,
they shout and sing together for joy.

*Give us this day
our daily bread*

GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD

Monday, March 13

I first learned to bake bread in college. My teacher was my friend Ann who, having grown up Mennonite, was a much more experienced baker. We used *The Tassajara Bread Book*, written by a Buddhist monk, as a primer. My new skills stood me in good stead as a budgeting graduate student wife. I still love the feel of the living yeast, kneaded into the dough and “gassing” it up to a simple, finished food.

Obery Hendricks, in *The Politics of Jesus*, offers a historical context for the request in the Lord’s Prayer, “Give us this day our daily bread.” He writes that in the famine times of Roman rule over Jerusalem, the Emperor’s soldiers would ride through the streets, distributing bread portions from carts. This was “the daily bread.” But the Hebrews of Jesus’ time longed for freedom from Caesar, and the exhortation of the prayer meant to them a revolutionary vision of the era when only God’s rule would supply their needs. Thus, our prayer for daily bread is also a prayer for God’s reign of justice.

If the Lord’s Prayer used coded language to remind Christians to expect and practice justice, Psalm 65’s language is an exuberant, poetic call to praise and thank God for his blessings. In this psalm, the beautiful, repeated images of water presage Amos 5:24: “But let justice roll down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.” Just as water softens the furrows for growth, the gift of Christ gives us softened hearts, that his love will mill and refine for his command. Foremost is the psalmist’s declaration of God’s generosity and grace, set forth as an invitation for the whole earth to flourish and be joyful.

~ *Anne Chamberlin*

PSALM 65

Tuesday, March 14

One way I see God answering this prayer is at Philly House, a large shelter at 13th and Vine Streets in Philadelphia. Every other Thursday evening some BMPC members go there to serve dinner to the residents and guests. The meal always looks delicious and is served in large portions by the cook and the servers for the night. The residents and guests, just having walked in off the street, receive the meal freely, not having prepared or paid for it. Clearly this meal is a gift from God and the Philly House. Residents get their daily bread just by being there to receive it.

Many of the residents say “thanks” to us with a smile on their faces. This joy and gratitude is the best response and starts to fill the whole occasion. Perhaps here at Philly House more than in our own homes, where we put so much of ourselves into a meal, it is easier to notice that it is a gift freely given.

When we ask God, as we should, to give us our daily bread we should moreover focus on receiving it with joy and gratitude. Most of us do this most of the time, but there are times when we take God’s gifts for granted or think we deserve or have earned them. Rather, let us receive God’s gifts with a deep joy and abundant thanksgiving. Growing a grateful heart is what it is all about.

Writing this devotion has led me to discover Psalm 65. Here the psalmist says simply but profoundly, “You visit the earth and water it; you greatly enrich it.” He knows the bounty of the Lord fills the earth. I like to think that happens at Philly House.

~ David Heaton

GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD

Wednesday, March 15



PSALM 65

Thursday, March 16

I have always wondered if the reason we call money bread is because of this psalm? It is so easy in our modern world to think of monetary things when we say this part of our prayer. Please give me enough cash to pay the mortgage, to pay for college tuitions, to get the new Tesla my friend is driving, or for this season's latest fashions.

But what if instead of monetary sustenance Jesus was speaking of other life-giving manna? What about family, friends, a sunny day, or a refreshing rain? What kind of manna do we need vs. want? When I was a kid and asked for something ridiculous my parents would often say rather flippantly, "It's good to want things." While I know it was a sarcastic comment, it also was true. Because in wanting and not getting we have to decide if it is really that important to us. Do I really need a new bike or the coolest jacket? Will these things actually bring me happiness? Maybe yes, maybe no, but it is in the waiting that we find out what really matters.

So what manna are looking for? In this psalm there are definitely tangible things the writer is asking for: grain, sheep, water. But he also speaks of silencing the roaring seas and the tumult of the people. So what causes tumult in your life that could use a little manna, a little healing, a little quieting? Our daily bread is more than just physical sustenance. I believe it is physical, emotional, and spiritual manna. So what kind of manna are you going to ask for today?

~ *Meggin Capers*

GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD

Friday, March 17

Here in the middle of Lent, a Psalm of Thanksgiving! The Common Lectionary, which suggests scripture readings for a three-year cycle of the church year, appoints Psalm 65 to be read on Thanksgiving Day, not once every three years, but every year. The proclamation of God's creative power and salvation begins global in scope, from the ends of the earth and farthest seas, and moves close to home through the furrows and ridges of the fields where wagon tracks have been to harvest grain. It ends with the creation shouting for joy reminiscent of our Thanksgiving gatherings of family and friends over abundant blessings and a great feast.

However, Thanksgiving Day is not every day. To read this psalm during Lent in consideration of God's provision of daily bread I am reminded of those places and people whose prayers for survival are literally daily. Manna from heaven in the wilderness of the Exodus and hungry crowds on a Galilean hillside who had flocked to hear Jesus teach and were fed with a few fish and loaves of bread.

Back in the late 1980s, the most vocally grateful people I encountered regularly were the guests in the Night Shelter of Central Presbyterian Church in downtown Atlanta where I was the Associate Pastor for Community Ministry. Most of the folks who lived close to the church were homeless, and we opened an old gym to provide shelter from mid-November through March. Guests were invited to offer a blessing over evening meals if they chose, and they eagerly volunteered. Those prayers were specific - thanking God for a cot in a warm place, small encounters with kindness, a day labor job, that night's warm meal. I realize now that early in my ministry I learned better how to pray from my homeless neighbors. Daily bread. There's nothing like it.

~ The Rev. Dr. Agnes W. Norfleet, Pastor & Head of Staff

PSALM 65

Saturday, March 18

It has taken me a long time to appreciate what it means to be Presbyterian. For the greater part of my life, going to church felt like an obligation. However, as I evolve as an individual, so does my faith. Looking back, I can't hone in on the single moment where I realized I actually enjoyed going to services or taking part in Youth Ministry, but I suddenly no longer cared about my friends' opinions when I said I loved going to "church camp" or looked forward to Student Serve on Wednesday nights. I can say though, this change was for the better.

This past fall my family and I traveled to Spain. We visited a multitude of tourist attractions as well as historical sites in both Barcelona and Madrid, but in my opinion the most memorable experience was visiting La Sagrada Familia, an unbelievable basilica that is still being constructed in the heart of Barcelona. As I stepped through its massive doors, I felt a rush of appreciation for my faith, something that wouldn't have occurred just a few years ago. Carved onto massive doors that will soon be the main entrance was the phrase from the Lord's Prayer "give us this day our daily bread," written in 50 languages. I remember searching the vast carving for the English translation and feeling a sense of pride when I finally saw it. I was proud of being a Christian, proud of my ability to recognize the importance of my religion. I believe that Psalm 65 embodies this feeling. It reminds me of the blessings God has given us, and how we, as his disciples, are nothing without his generosity. It is up to us to further our faith and remain thankful for the things that have been gifted to us.

~ Finley Hoffman, Youth Elder

4TH SUNDAY IN LENT - MARCH 19

Psalm 32

- ¹ Happy are those whose transgression is forgiven,
whose sin is covered.
- ² Happy are those to whom the Lord imputes no iniquity,
and in whose spirit there is no deceit.
- ³ While I kept silence, my body wasted away
through my groaning all day long.
- ⁴ For day and night your hand was heavy upon me;
my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer.
- ⁵ Then I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not hide my iniquity;
I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,'
and you forgave the guilt of my sin.
- ⁶ Therefore let all who are faithful offer prayer to you; at a time of distress,
the rush of mighty waters shall not reach them.
- ⁷ You are a hiding-place for me; you preserve me from trouble;
you surround me with glad cries of deliverance.

*Forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who
trespass against us*

PSALM 32

Monday, March 20

For a Christian, forgiveness is not an option; it's a commandment. We may, however, harbor an exclusion for some actions too heinous to be subjected to the call for forgiveness – the Holocaust, the slaughter of innocent children in an Amish schoolhouse, decades of suppression of blacks by whites in South Africa. For these acts we need revenge.

The American justice system has been built on this craving for revenge. It's a retributive process that excludes the victim from the opportunity to play a role in the resolution of a crime. The prosecutor takes over, and it becomes the state against the accused. But there is another way, a way to restore the trespasser to the human community because asking the law to practice forgiveness is akin to trying to outsource love.

There is a growing movement toward restorative justice where all the parties harmed come together to rebuild a relationship just as we seek each week to rebuild our relationship to God in reciting the words of the Lord's Prayer. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission showed the way for South Africans to come together, not by forgetting, but by speaking the truth to one another. Similar work in Rwanda has helped heal the genocidal horror that overwhelmed the Hutu and Tutsi peoples.

By extending the circle of forgiveness in our own lives, we are participating in the call to show God's grace to all. We cast off the ball and chain of resentment and refuse to become the evil we are trying to punish. "In the act of forgiveness, we are declaring our faith in the future of a relationship and in the capacity of the wrongdoer to make a new beginning on a course that will be different from the one that caused the wrong" (Desmond Tutu).

~ *Phoebe Sheftel*

Tuesday, March 21

In a sermon series on the Lord's Prayer in 1989 the Rev. Gene Bay said, "Among Presbyterians, we at Bryn Mawr are peculiar in speaking of 'trespasses,' instead of 'debts.' The reason for this idiosyncrasy constitutes a mystery which, despite recent detective work, I am unable to solve."

I learned to recite the Lord's Prayer by the King James Version (1611), which uses the language of debts and debtors. Most English translations continue to do so. And this is indeed an accurate translation of the Greek. But before the King James, William Tyndale's English translation of 1534 read, "And forgeve [sic] us oure [sic] treaspases [sic] even as we forgeve [sic] oure [sic] trespassers [sic]." This perhaps is where the "trespass" language originated.

Why "trespasses" instead of just "debts"? I suspect this language is for clarification that the language of debts and debtors is being used metaphorically here to address our need to be forgiven of our sins against God and our need to forgive others their sins against us. Indeed, the version of the Lord's Prayer found in the Gospel of Luke reads, "Forgive us our sins, for we ourselves also forgive everyone who is a debtor to us" (11:4). The use of "trespasses" for sins could have been inspired by the follow-up to the prayer in Matthew: "For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you" (6:14).

So "trespasses" is quite a legitimate way of saying the prayer, despite not being the most direct translation of the Greek. But I think something is lost when we don't say "debts." After all, Jesus elsewhere says, "Lend, expecting nothing in return" (Luke 6:35). Does forgiving our debtors include forgiving those who have wronged us by not paying us what we feel we are owed?

~ *Joshua Yoder*

PSALM 32

Wednesday, March 22



Thursday, March 23

A lot of folks here at BMPC know how much I love the church's stained glass windows and how frequently I use them in the classes I teach or how often I draw attention to them when I am preaching. That's why I was so delighted that we have been able to use the Lord's Prayer windows from the Sanctuary in the Lenten Devotional this year. The window designed for this week's portion of the prayer is especially my favorite of the six – it is a depiction of the story found in the Gospel of John that is often entitled: The Woman Caught in Adultery.

You know how the story goes – the scribes and Pharisees are looking to catch Jesus in a heretical teaching and so they drag a woman before him who they have accused of being a sinner. They want to know if Jesus is faithful enough to the law that he would allow them to punish her in an incredibly horrific way. Plenty of ink has been spent on the laws concerning adultery at the time, questions of where the man is who also had sinned, and even what in the world Jesus is writing in the dirt at his feet, much to the confusion of everyone gathered.

Jesus' essential teaching in that passage is a companion to the Lord's Prayer. Just as we ask God to help us be as forgiving as God is when it comes to the sins committed against us, Jesus also cautions us against judging the sins of others when what we really need to focus on is the sins that are in our own hearts, our words and our acts. That moment of Jesus bending over to write, essentially letting the men who have been quick to find sin in others consider their own sinfulness, always reminds me of the "pause for silent confession" that we hold every week in our common worship together. When I am leading the prayer, I am never sure how long I should wait. I promise you, when I am just a "prayer" able to spend that time in honest personal confession, the pause is never long enough.

We are beloved and forgiven sinful people. And that is okay. We are called to acknowledge our need for forgiveness, to strive to be forgiving to those who have hurt us, and to let God manage everyone else's sins.

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

PSALM 32

Friday, March 24

Psalm 32 focuses on God's forgiveness and describes the joy of a forgiven person - me! How freeing it is to go through life trying to do my best while knowing that when I acknowledge to God that I have fallen short, I can count on his grace and forgiveness. This psalm centers on God's act of forgiveness as a gift to me.

Recorded 1,000 years later, The Lord's Prayer is one I embrace because it encourages community by using plural pronouns. Saying our Father and forgive us our trespasses makes me feel that I am praying both with and for others and they for me. Given to us by Jesus in Matthew 6:9-13, this prayer calls for mutual action: God forgives me, and I am expected to do the same for others. At the end of his life, hanging on a cross, Jesus showed us the centrality of forgiveness in Christianity when he asked God to forgive those who were literally killing him. This prayer embodies love and compassion, qualities central to the act of forgiveness.

The more challenging acts of forgiveness are covered in the news, because they are so unexpected. After a shooting at an Amish school in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, families who lost children that day reached out with grace and compassion toward the shooter's family. Similarly, in local Philadelphia shootings, I have heard bereaved parents voicing this same message of forgiveness.

I remember reading an article by Desmond Tutu about forgiveness. He noted that while a forgiven person may be grateful for my gesture, it is really I who benefit most. This act of releasing anger and pain frees me to receive healing. Otherwise, I would be retaining energy-consuming angst. Tutu writes, "Retaliation gives, at best, only momentary respite from our emotional pain. The only way to experience healing and peace is to forgive." When I choose to forgive others (and myself), then I prepare myself to receive all the goodness each day has to offer.

~ *Anna May Charrington*

Saturday, March 25

Growing up, my parents used to tell me that refusing to forgive someone only hurts yourself. They called it “keeping score.” Keeping score meant that you never let go of the hurt that someone caused you. I struggled with this in elementary school, and I still struggle with this, especially when the person is not sorry for what they did. I may no longer be angry or upset on the outside, but the pain is still with the memory, and recalling those memories still hurts and often brings the anger back to the surface. I think sometimes you say you forgive someone, but the hurt is still there. Is that really forgiveness? To me, truly forgiving someone means acknowledging that what they did was wrong but then letting go of the hurt, so it doesn’t take up space in your head and heart anymore. That’s not easy, but I think that’s where God can help.

God’s ability to offer complete and utter forgiveness is one of the things that makes Him so special to me. The line in Psalm 32 which states, “I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,’ and you forgave the guilt of my sin” speaks to me. The forgiveness of the Lord is something that everyone can have if only they ask. How incredible is that? God can wipe your slate clean if the asking is sincere and from your heart. We ask God for forgiveness for ourselves and those “who trespass against us” every time we say the Lord’s Prayer. The next time I say those words, I’m going to think more about what those words mean and how asking God to forgive others can help me forgive them as well.

~ *Katie McGuirl, Youth Deacon*

5TH SUNDAY IN LENT - MARCH 26

Psalm 121

- ¹ I lift up my eyes to the hills — from where will my help come?
- ² My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.
- ³ He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber.
- ⁴ He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.
- ⁵ The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade at your right hand.
- ⁶ The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night.
- ⁷ The Lord will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life.
- ⁸ The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time on and forevermore.

*Lead us not into
temptation, but deliver us
from evil.*

LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION, BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL.

Monday, March 27

Of all my many weaknesses, perhaps the biggest is my tendency to succumb to the cares of the world, focusing on my worries and afflictions, wondering how my concerns will ever be resolved, from where will my help come. How easily I am consumed by the weight of worry, the poison of regret, the disquiet of selfishness. This weakness distracts my attention from God. Thankfully, the Psalms provide beautiful reminders of the constant need to look to God to face my trials with hope and trust, because my help will come from the Lord.

What reassurance it is to be reminded through the Psalms that God is with me always, day and night, to remember that God watches all my comings and goings. God's established loyalty – this is where I need to look in times of doubt, for this is from where my help will come. God is with me, that knowledge eases the burden.

My frailty makes me aware of the necessity of being kept. The Lord is my keeper - kept in the shadow of the God's wings to protect and care in times of need; to face the consequences be what they may, no matter what God chooses. Fortified by God's promises, I can face my challenges and carry on with reassurance and confidence, with a sense of peace and calm. While I do not know how things will work out, I trust that God is in control.

In times of worry and affliction may I look right to almighty God, who rules all things, and is always with me. God is where my help comes from.

~ *Steve McConnell*

PSALM 121

Tuesday, March 28

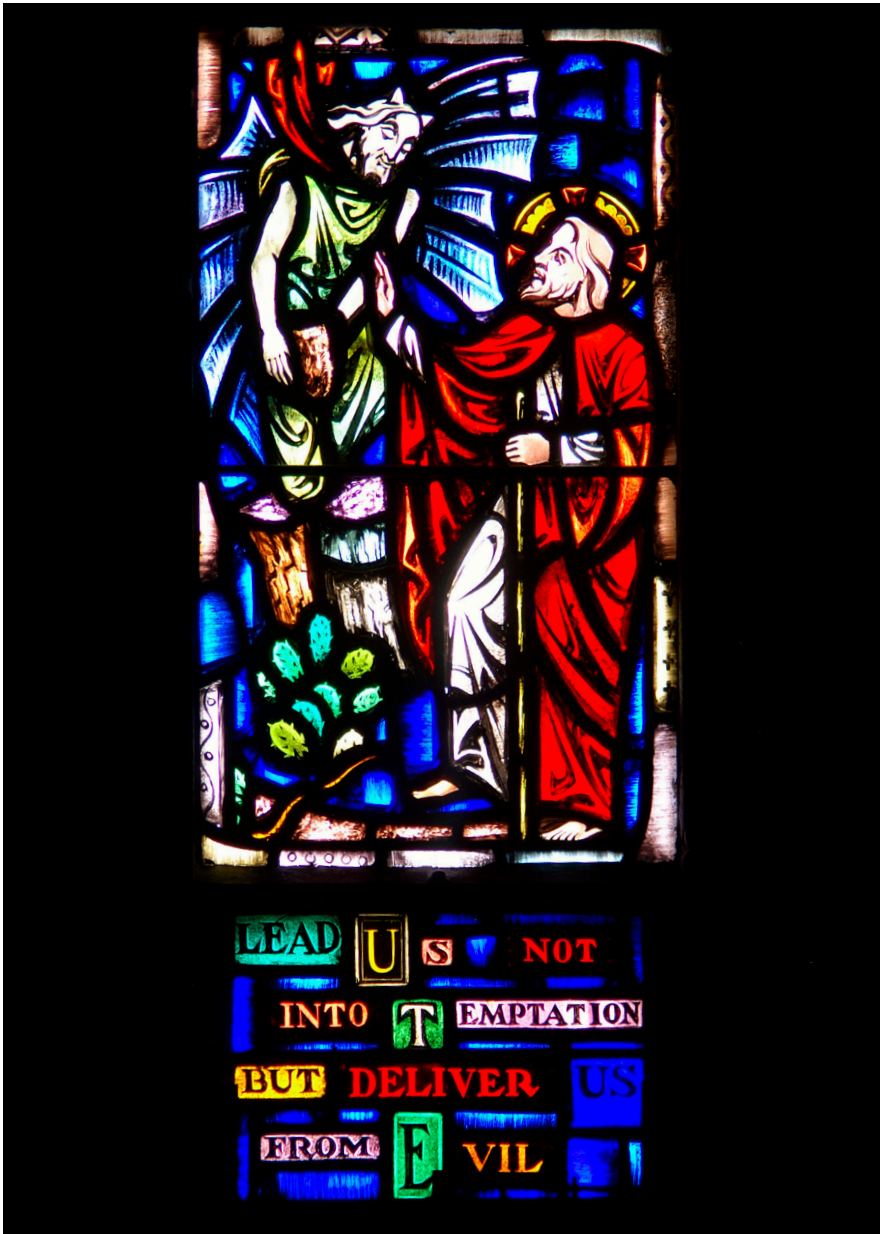
Psalm 121 is a beloved psalm both because of its message of hope and its powerful imagery. The opening line suggests a lonely traveler or laborer in the fields. Exhausted, he looks up in desperate search for help: “I lift up my eyes to the hills – from where will my help come?” But through that glance up and away from his personal predicament and toward the hills, he realizes that his help comes, not from other humans but from the Lord. Whereas human help is unreliable – humans doze off and sleep – God’s protection never fails. It shelters us from the natural elements, from all evil and even in the minutiae of our daily lives.

In my experience of times of hopelessness and despair, the “lifting my eyes to the hills” is an essential step to becoming open to the grace and comfort God offers, as promised in this psalm. My go-to response to most problems is to double down, trying through my own efforts to analyze and/or work my way out of the problem. But for the big issues, I have learned the value of stepping back, “lifting my eyes to the hills” and turning in prayer to be open to God’s grace and protection, while continuing to focus on my own efforts. That shift in perspective, from desperately trying to keep control, to being open to trusting in God, helps me to let go of expectations and try new things. And even if “bad” things sometimes happen, “good” things also eventually emerge that could not have happened without the “bad.” So, my experience confirms what the Psalmist promises, that we can trust in God’s presence with us, to offer both protection and comfort. My small but vital role is to be open, trusting, and willing to let go of my own attempt at control long enough to “lift my eyes to the hills.”

~ Patricia Danzon

LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION, BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL.

Wednesday, March 29



PSALM 121

Thursday, March 30

Growing up, whenever my family would embark on long car trips, we would recite this psalm together. I remember bundling up on early mornings, with sleepy eyes and comfy clothes, the five of us settling into the maroon '90 Dodge Caravan. We would say the psalm together as the sun peeked over the horizon, beginning 13-hour trips to Waco, Texas, to see my grandparents. We kids would always stumble over the “slumbers,” getting lost in the repetition. It’s a beautiful, comforting psalm that I will always love.

Jesus knew this psalm. He taught his disciples the Lord’s Prayer, saying it was the way to pray. Yet, within the year, he was crucified because of the evils of the power-hungry and those obsessed with maintaining the status quo.

These prayers and psalms do not protect us from suffering nor guarantee a life free from struggle, a life free from navigating the world’s evil. Some cry out to God and do not feel they hear a response. Where is God in those moments? Does that make the psalmist false, the hope disappointed?

The psalmist speaks in confident expectation, proclaiming who they know and long for God to be – the one who protects, who guards, and never leaves us. And that’s the thing, isn’t it? Even when it feels like evil has won, God remains with you. That there is no place we can go where God is not. We are never alone. That Jesus, the Emmanuel, God-with-us, never leaves us alone in our suffering. Through the Holy Spirit, God understands and experiences all suffering with us out of love.

In the moments when despair over the evils of the world fills me, I return to that promise. That we are never, ever alone. Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

Creator, lead us not into the temptation of believing that you protect those you love from all suffering. Help us to see evil plainly, to work for justice and healing rather than living in ignorant expectation that a life of love for you equates to a life free from hardship. Amen.

~ *The Rev. Leigh DeVries, Associate Pastor for Youth and Their Families*

LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION, BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL.

Friday, March 31

When I reflect on the the line, “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil,” I often think of temptation as a temptation to do something. Temptation can be much more hidden than that. Temptation can be to take more for oneself than one needs or to push others down while lifting ourselves up. We traditionally think of temptation as temptation toward immoral actions, but in my life I find that I am more often tempted toward inaction. It’s a lot easier to not do something than it is to do something. For instance, I even put off writing this devotional submission for a while even when I knew exactly what I was going to write, just because I knew that I could do it later and wanted to spend time doing less thinking in the moment.

However, temptation toward inaction goes further than small acts of laziness throughout our day-to-day lives. It also pertains to inaction in the face of social injustice. It’s always much easier, when faced with widespread social injustice, to feel very strongly and simply move along without actually doing anything. It’s also very easy to rationalize and say things to yourself like, “There are probably lots of people already working for this cause” or “What kind of difference can I make?” Think about how many people say that to themselves every day, and think about how much change could be made if just 10 or 20 percent of them decided to take action. It’s not easy in any way to take action, and it’s especially hard if, like me, you have a personality predisposed to inaction, but even just being helpful in some small tangible way is infinitely better than doing nothing. So when I pray, “lead me not into temptation,” it is always to ask God to help me be more intentional, more active and more willing to speak and do on behalf of others.

~ Owen Yoder, Youth Elder

PSALM 121

Saturday, April 1

I once got seriously lost on a mountain in Northern Italy. It all happened on a beautiful summer day when my sister and I joined a friend's family vacation. Seven of us headed out for a hike. As we were climbing, the party split up between the faster and the slower group. Out of politeness, I initially stayed back. Soon the faster group was out of sight. I wanted to be with the more athletic group and prove my ability, so I took off by myself to catch up with the faster hikers.

At first, I enjoyed the company of Alpine cowbells and the fresh breeze. I imagined myself at the summit greeting others ascending while huffing and puffing. However, as the hills got steeper, the summit soon disappeared from my view. I couldn't find the marked paths or anyone who could give me directions. I began to worry and regretted having been tempted to show off.

With desperate prayers I lifted my eyes to the hills. A dairy farmer appeared from the hilltop. We did not understand each other's language. Yet, he must have understood my German word for "King's Summit" and gestured in that direction. When I finally arrived at the summit, all hikers, both slow and fast, received me with a gracious welcome, although my self-centered action and disappearance might have taken much of the joy out of their hike. This happened almost 40 years ago. Since then, many more helpers have appeared from the top of the hills in my life, although my praying efforts varied, or my recognition of God's help was often thin. I am again reminded how thoroughly comforting this week's Bible passage is: The Lord neither slumbers nor sleeps to keep me and deliver me from evil. He declares that he is my keeper. Wow!

~ Heewon Chang

PALM SUNDAY - APRIL 2

Psalm 118

- ¹ O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his steadfast love endures forever!
- ² Let Israel say, "His steadfast love endures forever."
- ¹⁹ Open to me the gates of righteousness,
that I may enter through them and give thanks to the Lord.
- ²⁰ This is the gate of the Lord; the righteous shall enter through it.
- ²¹ I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation.
- ²² The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.
- ²³ This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.
- ²⁴ This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.
- ²⁵ Save us, we beseech you, O Lord! O Lord, we beseech you, give us success!
- ²⁶ Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.
We bless you from the house of the Lord.
- ²⁷ The Lord is God, and he has given us light.
Bind the festal procession with branches, up to the horns of the altar.
- ²⁸ You are my God, and I will give thanks to you; you are my God, I will extol you.
- ²⁹ O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever.

*For thine is the Kingdom
and the power and the
glory forever. Amen.*

PSALM 118

Monday, April 3

Much of the time, most of the time, all the time, Jesus' life reflects the opposite of earthly kingdoms, powers, and glories. Jesus flips these images of influence because Christ's work of salvation happens, not from the halls of power, but from a cross. Christ's Kingdom does not land him or us in any familiar realm of earthly rulers. As a result, in our empire of faith, the monarch's jewel-studded crown is replaced by a crown of thorns. It's hard to follow such a Savior, especially today when turning the other cheek, walking the extra mile, and giving over one's cloak are seen as signs of weakness (even though they're not).

For me, dwelling in Jesus' realm is a practice and something I've learned in a lifetime at BMPC from pastors, Lilly residents, lay leaders, sermons, Bible studies, conversations, friends, and the work of the church. I bear witness and experience a paradigm shift that points me to the centrality of Jesus.

Psalm 118 says our God is good, yet I cringe at the call-back that easily rolls off the lips of youth and adults, "God is good, all the time. All the time, God is good." Do I believe this? Absolutely, but most often these words are said in moments of exultation, exuberance, and good fortune. I don't know that I've ever heard them uttered in response to war, gun violence, climate disasters, ideological differences, personal devastation, or even challenging times within our own church.

Yet, God is good all the time because God never lets us go. Our kingdom is Emmanuel, God with us. Our power is God's hand holding us and the world's problems. Our glory forever is God showing up in ongoing and unconventional inbreaking. Our Godhead (that sounds regal!) is right here, right now. Give thanks to the Lord. Amen.

Hearer of our hearts, we are grateful that your love transforms us into the people you want us to be. During this time of Lenten waiting, help us to find places in your kingdom to be Christ for and with one another.

~ *The Rev. M. Courtenay Willcox*

Tuesday, April 4

The kingdom is a dusty stable, the power is a young mother bringing a boy to birth, the glory is reflected in the shining eyes of a few poor shepherds.

And then, the kingdom is the shallows of a cool river, the power holds its breath as it is plunged beneath the surface, the glory is the gleaming sun that greets the Son.

And then again, the kingdom is a desert waste, the power is the testing and the struggle, the glory is the refusal to surrender.

Again, the kingdom is a hillside, the power is in the words, hard to hear, simple and radical, the glory is the authority of truth.

And one dark night, the kingdom is a dimly lit upper room, the power is the breaking of a loaf and the pouring of some wine, the glory is the receiving, the tasting, and the not quite seeing yet believing.

And later, the kingdom is an olive garden, the power is a prayer of desolation, the glory, this time, is a surrender.

And the next day, the kingdom is a rocky rise just outside the gates of a city, the power drains out through nail holes and a back scourged and bloody, the glory is a crudely woven, mocking crown of thorns.

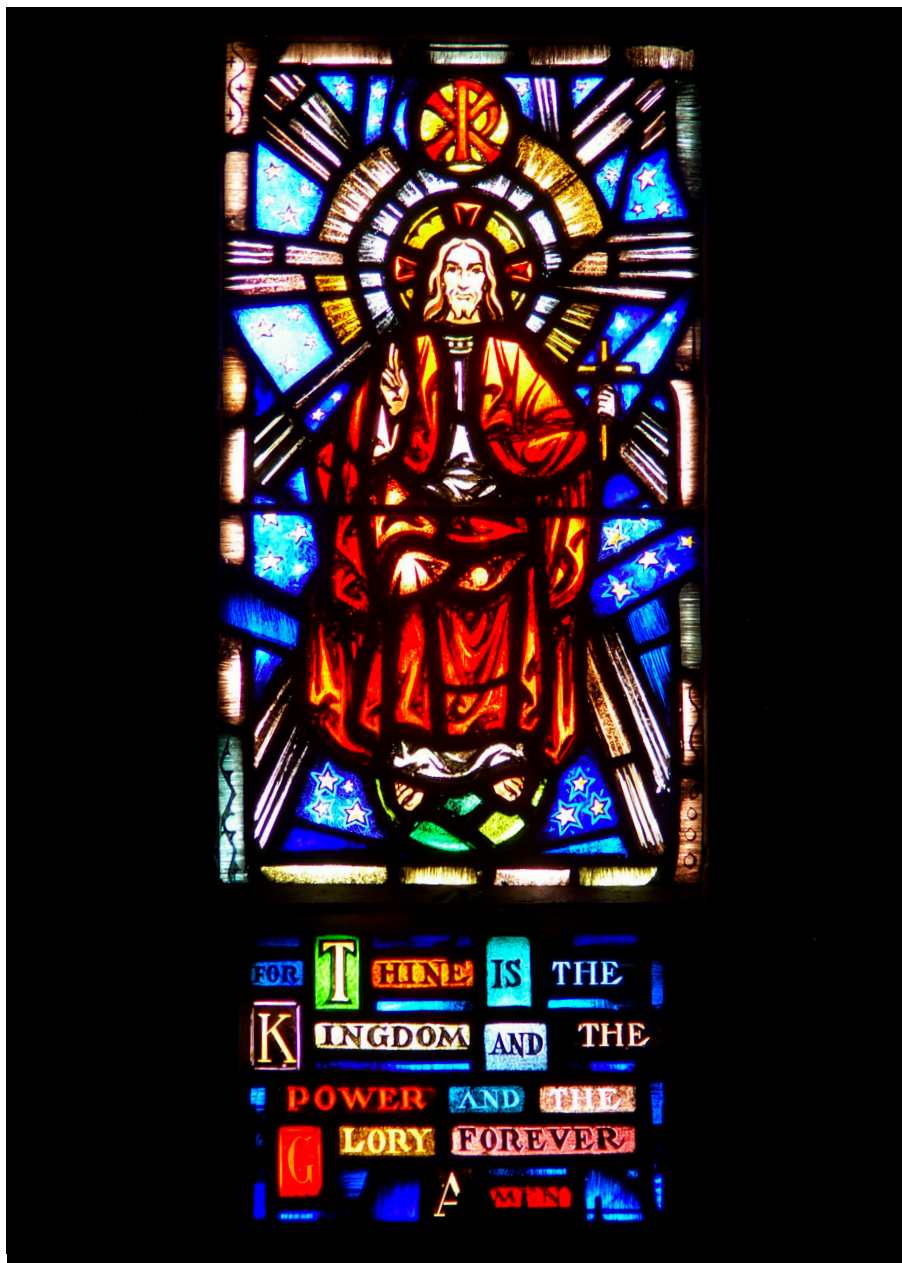
And then one morning, the kingdom is a cold stone tomb, the power, silent, unseen, seems to sleep, but the glory is revealed to a few grieving women who come to perform the last rites for a friend who isn't there.

The Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory are forever, but they are also, and always, so very different from our concepts of kingdom, of power, and of glory.

~ **Bill McKee**

PSALM 118

Wednesday, April 5



Thursday, April 6

Forever and Ever Amen.

Here is my Lenten confession: I am an unrepentant Lord's Prayer heretic. While the text says, "forever, Amen," I sneak in an extra "ever." Just a short word that comes out as half whisper and half sigh before the definitive "Amen." I'm not sure when I added it, but it's not going away. It may have started when I was teaching the Lord's Prayer to preschoolers. Two students liked the ending so much they would shout "KINGDOM" "POWER" "GLORY" "FOOOOOR-EVERRRRRR and EVERRRRR!" Despite our best attempts to model quiet and thoughtful prayer, they could not be dissuaded. The Lord's Prayer needed to end with some heft. It may have its genesis when I was a student pastor in South Africa. The church there said, "forever and ever." The extra beat in the cadence felt familiar and right, as though it completed a pattern. I hope that when I am leading that, my minor heresy doesn't distract you. Try as I might, I can't seem to cut that extra "ever."

I have always been stunned by the mystery that the eternal God would choose to exist in finite time; that the One who knows all things and requires nothing, also pays attention to my prayers, cognizant of my "daily bread" and hourly questions. Perhaps that extra "ever" is a reminder, that God's kingdom, power, and glory stretch beyond my understanding, past my comprehension of "forever" into something even greater. Maybe that extra "ever" is a bold declaration that even as Jesus limps toward Golgotha, God's story does not have an ending. Perhaps, it is just an extra breath, another second in conversation with God before the "Amen" calls me back to follow in Christ's footsteps forever, and ever. Amen.

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

PSALM 118

Friday, April 7

My daughter received a number of Easter books last year to begin to build a holiday collection. Most children's literature for this age is about bunnies and chicks and flowers and spring; however, one book was called Holy Week: An Emotions Primer. This colorful board book walks through the many emotions of the week, from the sadness of betrayal, to the loneliness in the garden, to the joy of resurrection. Big ideas for a little baby, but the breadth of feelings has really stuck with me. We endure a lot in just one week as we recount this story!

The entirety of Holy Week is one surrender after another; the events slip through my fingers as we watch betrayal after betrayal and sink into the darkness of death. We give back to God all that we think we know, own, and understand – the kingdom, the power and the glory – and we live in an in-between time, where we trust that something will come of all this suffering.

As painful as that is, I appreciate that it is not something we gloss over. When I first started observing the liturgical year, I attended a Good Friday Tenebrae service. Not knowing what to expect, a pit formed in my stomach as the organ boomed. The Sanctuary went black, a dark cloth was draped over the tables and crosses, and we left in silence. There was no sugarcoating this moment of immense sadness with the promise of Easter morning. Not yet.

The Psalmist calls on God's goodness throughout Psalm 118, and yet the middle of this week is when I find it hardest to see that through the pain. Perhaps this is when the gift of faith is most important, as it carries us through the valley of death to the fullness of joy of Easter. Let yourself experience all the feelings of this week as we remember this story together.

~ *Amy Ballard*

Saturday, April 8

Jesus celebrated the Passover meal with his disciples, concluding with singing Psalm 118 before departing for Gethsemane. Jesus chose to be with his small group. He taught them, and they witnessed his ministry. This night he washed their feet, shared bread and cup, spoke about his coming death, and prayed for them.

Reading Psalm 118 and the last phrase of The Lord's Prayer repeatedly, I was drawn particularly to the passages below. The first and last verses of the psalm are identical, a repeated refrain of confidence in God's love; each day is an opportunity for gladness; and finally, proclaiming God's Kingdom forever.

- O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his steadfast love endures forever! (Ps. 118:1, 29)
- This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. (Ps. 118:24)
- For thine is the Kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen. (The Lord's Prayer)

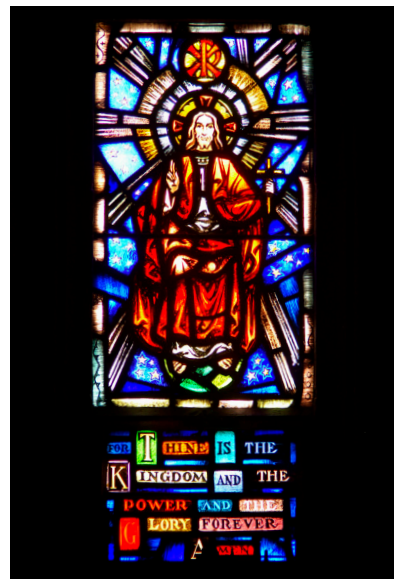
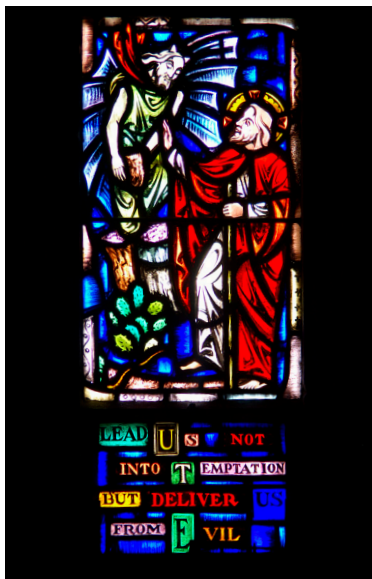
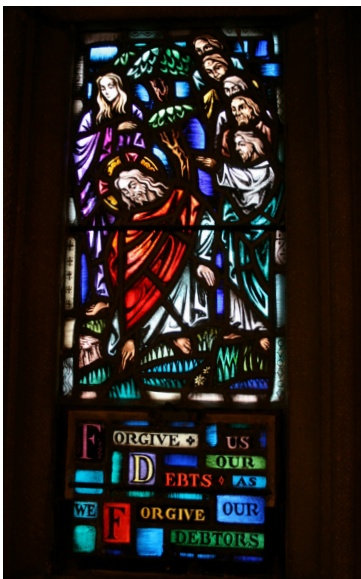
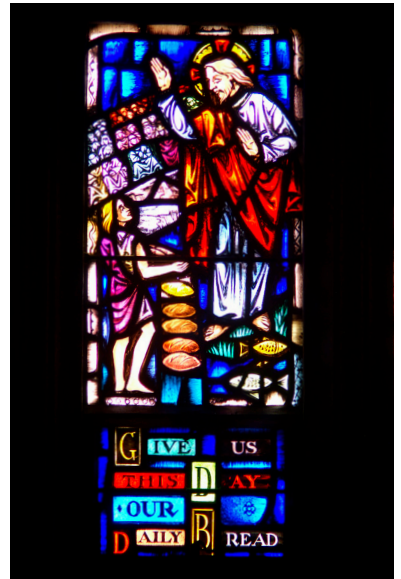
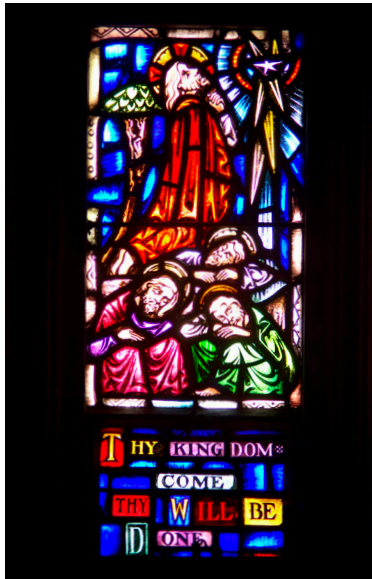
My husband Frank and I continue to grow in faith through the BMPC Connection Group Ministry. Our small group meets weekly to build friendships, pray together and to discern what living as Christians entails. We discuss books and sermons. When together, we share thoughts, questions, and experiences.

Recently, we discussed what it means to us to live in "the in between times," i.e., to believe God's promises, while living with hope in a world with war, poverty, violence, racism, climate disruption and intolerance. The discussion focused on Scripture, a sermon, and our questions and thoughts, ending with a shared understanding that God is present within us in all circumstances, offering strength to persevere and to offer hope to others. We reflected on how we might share love and hope with others.

We prayed to have the eyes to see God acting in the world and to show in our lives that we believe the promises of God. Let it be so, Lord!

~ Dorothy Bowen

LORD'S PRAYER STAINED GLASS



*The Lord's Prayer Windows
Bryn Mawr Presbyterian Church Sanctuary
Willet Stained Glass Studios 1965*

HOLY WEEK WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Palm Sunday, April 2

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.

The Rev. Dr. Agnes W. Norfleet preaching.

5:00 p.m. Evening Worship Service, Sanctuary. The Rev. Rebecca Kirkpatrick preaching.

Maundy Thursday, April 6

8:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m. Labyrinth Walk, Gymnasium.

5:30 p.m. Family Service with Communion, Chapel.

6:00 p.m. Simple Supper in Congregational Hall. Freewill offering.

7:30 p.m. Worship with Communion, Sanctuary. The Rev. Dr. Agnes W. Norfleet preaching.

Good Friday, April 7

8:00 a.m. - noon. Labyrinth Walk, Gymnasium.

12:00 p.m. Worship led by BMPC Youth, Sanctuary.

7:30 p.m. The Sanctuary Choir presents Anthony Mosakowski's setting of the St. John Passion entitled The Passion for Good Friday.

Easter Sunday, April 9

6:30 a.m. Sunrise Service, Front Lawn. The Rev. Rachel Pedersen preaching.

7:30 a.m. Continental Breakfast.

9:30 & 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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