

# LENT

DAILY READINGS,  
PRAYERS, & PROMPTS

MARCH 2, 2022  
THROUGH  
APRIL 17, 2022

Your Devotional & Prayer Journal  
**SHELBY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**



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EXERCISES IN LENTEN DEVOTION

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# **Your SPC Lenten Devotional & Journal**

## WHAT IS LENT?

Lent is the 40-day period (*46 with Sundays*) in which we prepare for the mystery of Christ's resurrection, celebrated in Easter. Traditionally it has been a period of renewal, marked by spiritual disciplines, including fasting, prayer, vigils, charity and hospitality, especially to strangers.

In church history, Lent became a more universal practice only after Christianity became legal, as believers who proclaimed the Good News in the fires of persecution suddenly feared that new legal protections and favoritism might make them complacent in their faith.

## LENT IN A PROTESTANT CHURCH?

Yes, Lent is popularly associated with Roman Catholicism, but this period of spiritual discipline has remained important to many Protestants since the time of the Reformation. In recent years, with a rise in interest in spiritual practices in our tradition and others, Lent has been focused on spiritual growth through prayer, scripture, and works of faithfulness.

## WHY DO A LENTEN DEVOTION?

As in any relationship, bonds of love form through shared practices and habits we form in community with one another. Our relationship with Jesus is no different. Just as we would with a spouse or friend, we must make time for Jesus and talk to Him honestly and openly to get to know Him better. Let Lent renew your commitment to Him.

This guide has been created for Shelby Presbyterian Church, to help you grow closer to our God: the Father, Son and Spirit, and connect you to your church family through some shared practices, uniting you with the Church in every age and every tradition across the world. The hope is that by sharing in this spiritual practice we will be challenged and grow in our faith through our devotion to Christ and His church.

## Exercise One—What is Repentance?

ASH WEDNESDAY (March 2, 2022)

*After the arrest of John, Jesus came into Galilee proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, "The appointed time has been fulfilled and the Reign of God has drawn near. Repent and believe in the good news." (Mark 1:14-15)*

According to Mark, the message of Jesus right out of the gate was to “repent and believe in the good news” because the Reign, or Kingdom, of God had drawn near. The “good news” or gospel, in its most simple explanation is the presence of God with us. Mark tells us that God acted first in Jesus, the anointed King, bringing the reign of God.

As it was in this historical moment, so it is in our present day lives—God acts first, coming to us in the revelation of Jesus and the presence of the Spirit in and among us. John the Baptizer called on the people to turn away from their sin, but Jesus as the Son of God makes it about turning toward Him.

How have you sensed God drawing near to you in your life? In this season, we want to turn to the Lord. This is not merely turning away from our sinful behaviors, but fixing our eyes on Jesus, which necessarily means turning away from our sin. How might you be different if you truly lived as though you sensed God was at your side all day long?

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## Exercise One—What is Repentance? From the Hebrew Scriptures

Thursday, March 3:

*Therefore, say to the house of Israel, this is what the Lord GOD says, "**Repent and turn away** from your idols, and turn your faces away from all your wickedness. For any Israelite or foreigner who separates themselves from me, sets up idols in their hearts, and puts stumbling blocks of their iniquity before their face, but then comes to a prophet to inquire of me, I the Lord will answer him myself. (Ezekiel 14:6-7)*

The primary word for repentance in Hebrew is “Teshuvah,” which comes from the root word “shuv” meaning to turn around. When we place our trust in things other than the Lord, we turn toward idols and our own wickedness, in our times of need. The second word, “Nacham,” is a word for feeling sorry or regret that is often translated as ‘repent.’

What do you find yourself turning to instead of God, especially in our times of need? How does it make you feel? Do you have regrets about sins? How does it feel to know God is with you and desires that you turn back?

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## Exercise One—What is Repentance? From the New Testament

Friday, March 4:

*And Jesus said to them, "Thus it has been written: The Messiah (Anointed King) was to suffer and rise from out of death on the third day, and in His name **repentance** and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed to all the nations, beginning in Jerusalem." (Luke 24:46-47)*

The primary word for repentance in Greek is “*Metanoia*” meaning to think differently. The word carries the meaning of an encounter that will change the way a person thinks after this encounter. Paul expands on the concept saying that we are to “put on the mind of Christ.”

What does it mean for you to think differently after encountering God in your life? What do we let change or form our minds: social media, our chosen news sources and echo chambers, television and movies? What would it mean to let the Holy Spirit through scripture and prayer be the force we let change and form our minds? How might recognizing the nearness of God’s reign help you to accept grace and change how you think about yourself, God and others?

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## Exercise One—What is Repentance? “Sanctification”

Saturday, March 5:

*And account of your having reinforced the creative capacity of your mind, being vigilant, completely set your hope on grace being brought to you in the revelation of Jesus the Messiah. Be children who listen, not as those who conform to the former in the ignorance of your desires. But as the One having called you is holy, **become holy yourselves** in all your behavior, after all, it has been written that, "You shall be holy because I am holy." (1 Peter 1:13-15)*

What does it mean to become holy? The word we translate as ‘holy’ in Hebrew (*kadosh*) and in Greek (*hagia*) means to be ‘set apart’ or ‘different’ for God’s purposes. When we set our hope on the grace (gift) of Jesus, the ‘loins of our mind’ or our creative mind empowers us to be obedient, to listen to the Lord, and this sets us apart from the world, and from the ignorance of our base desires.

Do you ever pray for the Spirit to help you be holy? What would it mean for you to be different, to be unique, as God calls you to be ‘holy’? How does the holiness of Jesus inspire you to be holy?

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## **Exercise Two—Living Into Scripture**

Sunday, March 6

*For our sake He made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God. As we work together with Him, we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain. (2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:1)*

The fullness of God is seen in Jesus, who makes God known to us as Father, Son and Spirit. Fully God and fully human like us, in Jesus we see that God is not distant and unapproachable, but shared in our human condition, drawing near to us. This is God's grace, or the gift we do not deserve—the Son becoming flesh to live, die and rise again for us.

By this grace, we become the righteousness or justice of God as temples for the Holy Spirit in us. Paul's warning to not accept this gift in vain is an exhortation for us to share in the ministry of reconciliation that God has begun by sending the Son, humbled to be one of us. It is his perfection, not our accomplishments, that allow us to ascend to God.

In addition to this devotion this Lent, consider where you might be active in the ministry of reconciliation. Like the Son, where might you be able to humble yourself to lift others to know God is with them too?

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## Exercise Two—Living Into Scripture

### DAILY REFLECTIONS (March 7-12)

Meditate on these Scripture verses in the morning, asking the Holy Spirit to open your eyes to these words in your life. Then, at the end of the day write down how God revealed a meaning for these words in the events of your daily life.

#### Monday, March 7

*Is not this the fast that I choose: To loose the bonds of injustice...to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? (Isaiah 58:6)*

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#### Tuesday, March 8

*He straightened up and said to them, "Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." (John 8:7b)*

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## Exercise Two—Living Into Scripture

DAILY REFLECTIONS (March 7 to March 12)

Wednesday, March 9

*In whatever you do, work from out of your whole being as to the Lord, and not to people, and know that you will receive the reward of the inheritance from the Lord. You serve the Lord Christ. (Colossians 3:23-24)*

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Thursday, March 10

*One whose whole being is generous will be made great. The one who waters will also be watered. (Proverbs 11:25) Love bears all things, is faithful in all things, hopes in all things, endures all things. (1 Corinthians 13:7)*

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## Exercise Three—Seeing Others in Scripture

Friday, March 11

*Do nothing according to self-interest or according to empty glory, but in humility, consider others as better than yourself. Do not regard first your own interests, but the interests of others. (Philippians 2:3-4)*

What does it mean to be Christ-like? In the verses to follow, the Apostle Paul describes how Jesus, being one with God the Father, did not regard this equality as something to be exploited. Instead he listened, or was obedient, to the point of being crucified, a death reserved for the enslaved and the rebellious in Rome. That is divine humility.

This is the importance of the Trinity. The Son is not just created being made to suffer and die. Nor is the Son a subservient part of God, or form of God, but equal to God. This means that the Son came down to share in our humanity in Jesus, and so Jesus shares in the very name of God, both before his entry in our world, during, and forever.

God has been in flesh like yours, suffered, and died for you, not just any death, but one of humiliation. God regarded our needs first, because the Trinity as a community in one loving being does not need us, yet chooses to love us. To emulate Christ is to know that God put you first, and in response, put others first. What does this mean to you? How might you view others differently in light of this?

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## Exercise Three—Seeing Others in Scripture

### DAILY REFLECTIONS (March 12 to March 13)

Consider these Scriptures from your bulletin's daily reading plan and imagine that someone you know is in the story. How do these Scripture speak to how you might show God's love to others?

#### Saturday, March 12

*And behold, a woman hemorrhaging blood for 12 years, came up from behind, and touched the fringe of his garment. (Matthew 9:20)*

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#### Sunday, March 13

*Then standing up, Jesus said to her, "Woman, where are they who accuse you? Has no one condemned you?...Jesus answered them: 'Truly, I tell you, everyone who commits sin is enslaved to sin. The enslaved person does not have a permanent place in the household: the son has a place there forever. So, if the Son sets you free, you are free indeed.' (John 8:10, 34)*

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## Exercise Four—Putting Prayer into Practice

### DAILY REFLECTIONS (March 14 to March 18)

Francis of Assisi was a reformer in the 13th Century who looked at the wealth and excess in a church that served its own interests, and sought to realign the people's hearts with Jesus' teachings of humility and service, over an inclination toward self-serving interests.

Paraphrasing the Sermon on the Mount, this prayer encapsulates a desire to serve God first for the good of God and others, rather than for our own benefit, trusting that God will provide what we need.

Read this prayer for the next nine days, and on each day, meditate on one part of it and how you might serve the Kingdom of God.

#### The Prayer of Francis of Assisi (13th Century Reformer)

*Lord, make me an instrument of your peace: where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy.*

*O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console, to be understood as to understand, to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned, and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.*

#### Monday, March 14

*Lord, make me an instrument of your peace: Where there is hatred, let me so love.—Where do you encounter hatred? How can you answer it with love?*

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## Exercise Four—Putting Prayer into Practice

### DAILY REFLECTION

Read the Prayer of St. Francis (p. 13) again and focus on the parts below, considering how you might serve the Kingdom of God.

Tuesday, March 15

*Where there is injury let me sow pardon—Where do you see people hurt?  
How can you sow forgiveness?*

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*Where there is doubt let me sow faith—Where do you see distrust around  
you? How can you sow faith?*

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*Where there is despair let me sow hope—Where do you see despair around  
you? How can you sow hope?*

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## Exercise Four—Putting Prayer into Practice

### DAILY REFLECTION

Read the Prayer of St. Francis (p. 13) again and focus on the parts below, considering how you might serve the Kingdom of God.

Wednesday, March 16

*Lord, make me an instrument of your peace: Where there is darkness let me sow light—Where are people overcome by shadows? How can you sow light?*

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*Lord, make me an instrument of your peace: Where there is sadness let me sow joy—Where do you see sadness around you? How can you sow joy?*

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*Grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console, to be understood as to understand, to be loved as to love—What would happen if in our need for consolation, understanding and love, we gave these first?*

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## Exercise Four—Putting Prayer into Practice

### DAILY REFLECTIONS (March 17 to March 18)

Read the Prayer of St. Francis (p. 13) again and focus on the parts below, considering how you might serve the Kingdom of God.

#### Thursday, March 17

*For it is in giving that we receive, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned, and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life—Jesus said it is better to give than to receive. He said we should pray for our forgiveness to be based on how we forgive others. He said that by losing our life, we gain it. What is the hardest thing for you about living a Kingdom life?*

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#### Friday, March 18

*Think of people you know who have endured hatred, been hurt by others, lack an ability to trust, have lost hope, are mired in darkness and sadness. How will you find love, pardon, faith, hope and joy for them? Is there something that you can do to console them, understand what they are going through, give them something they need, forgive them, and put them first? Pray for them and see where God is leading you.*

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## **Exercise Five—Grounded in Your Faith**

### DAILY REFLECTIONS (March 19 to March 24)

The Christian faith has been handed down to you by a great cloud of witnesses before you. Part of this legacy is the Nicene Creed, which was written before there was even a consensus on what books would be in the Christian bible. Leaders from across the Roman Empire wrote a confession to summarize a common faith in the meaning of Scripture.

Over the next six days, meditate on its contents. Write down what thoughts come to mind with each part. Read it below. On the following pages, the parts will be broken out for you to comment on individually.

*We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.*

*We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made.*

*For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven. He was born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became truly human. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures.*

*He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.*

*We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.*

*We believe in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.*

## Exercise Five—Grounded in Your Faith

DAILY REFLECTIONS (March 19 to March 21)

Saturday, March 19

*We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.—Who is God the Father to you?*

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Sunday, March 20

*We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made.—Who is God the Son to you?*

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Monday, March 21

*For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven, was born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became truly human.—What does the story of Christmas, the ‘incarnation,’ mean to you?*

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## **Exercise Five—Grounded in Your Faith**

DAILY REFLECTIONS (March 22 to March 24)

Tuesday, March 22

*For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.—How does this history and the future here affect you?*

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Wednesday, March 23

*We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.—Who is God the Spirit to you?*

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Thursday, March 24

*We believe in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.—What is the church to you?*

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## Exercise Six—Seeing the Creed in Scripture

### DAILY REFLECTIONS (March 25 to March 27)

You've studied the Nicene Creed, now meditate on these verses. What do they mean to you, reading them in light of the Creed?

#### Friday, March 25

*No one has ever seen God, yet the only begotten God, being in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known. (John 1:18)*—Outside of created time, the Father has always been a father, and the Son, always a son.

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#### Saturday, March 26

*The grace (unmerited gift) of Jesus Christ, the love of God (the Father) and the fellowship (common life) of the Holy Spirit be with you all. (2 Corinthians 13:14)*—The good news of “God with us” is the gift of Jesus, the love of God, and the common life we share by the Spirit in us and among us.

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#### Sunday, March 27

*The One who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life also to your mortal bodies on account of his Spirit dwelling in you. (Romans 8:11b)*—The whole church and each of us are God's temple, where heaven and earth meet.

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## Exercise Seven—You Reflect God’s Glory

### DAILY REFLECTIONS (March 28 to March 30)

Jesus shows us God, but also shows us what it means to be truly human. Meditate on these scripture verses and ponder what it means to reflect God?

#### Monday, March 28

*Your royal scepter is a scepter of equity. (Psalm 45:6b)*—Equity is at the heart of God’s rule. The Hebrew word is for a level place. God’s scepter raises the lowly and brings down the mighty. How can you reflect that?

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#### Tuesday, March 29

*I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. (John 10:10b)*—The word translated abundant, means ‘in full.’ This is the Kingdom life, filled with the love of God. How can you reflect God’s life and love for you?

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#### Wednesday, March 30

*I have seen their ways, but I will heal them. (Isaiah 57:18a)*—God heals us to give us time to turn to him. How can we reflect God’s patience?

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## Exercise Eight—Following Your Shepherd

### DAILY REFLECTIONS (March 31 to April 1)

Shepherds were sometimes as outsiders in a necessary but lowly line of work. It was not safe work either. David was brave enough to fight Goliath because he had experience killing large predators. Both Moses and David were shepherds, but in Hebrew Scripture, they only reflect God's dominant role as the true shepherd—the good shepherd.

Reflect on these passages and consider what it means to listen for God to be your shepherd and to be a sheep in God's flock.

#### Thursday, March 31

*I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away. (John 10:11-12a)*—Political rulers and idols of wealth, sex and power, are hired hands, yet they drown out the voice of Jesus. How do you focus on the true voice?

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#### Friday, April 1

*The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil. My cup overflows. (Psalm 23:1,5)*—Our shepherd provides everything. Are we ready to trust the Lord to fill our cup with love and let it overflow to others, even enemies?

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## Exercise Nine—Praying for Your Church

### DAILY REFLECTIONS (April 3 to April 5)

You are the church. The church is not a building, but people God calls out to reveal the good news of the Kingdom. We need to pray for this community. This week, please focus on praying for your church in very specific ways to seek God's guidance and providence.

#### Saturday, April 2

*Think of a friend who does not believe in the Lord. Pray that they come to know God's love for them, and ask for guidance on how you might reveal it. Send them a card or a note that only tells them that you care for them.*

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#### Sunday, April 3

*Think of a senior with mobility issues. Ask God to strengthen them and show them they are a vital part of the church. Consider how you might help them.*

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#### Monday, April 4

*Think of an elder or deacon you do not know well. Ask for God's wisdom and mercy in their life and name them in your prayers before every meal.*

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## Exercise Nine—Praying for Your Church

DAILY REFLECTIONS (April 5 to April 8)

Tuesday, April 5

*Think of a young person in the church and pray for them and the anxieties they may feel coming out of the COVID shutdown. Send them a card.*

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Wednesday, April 6

*Think of a close friend in the church. Pray for their greatest needs and that God's presence would be made known to them. Give them a phone call.*

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Thursday, April 7

*Think of a person who openly sinned against you or in front of you. Ask God to forgive them and spare them the consequences of their sin. Consider how you might forgive them and how you might make amends for what they did.*

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Friday, April 8

*Think about the future of SPC. Pray for those who do not yet attend this church and ask God how you might play a role in reaching your community.*

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## Exercise Ten—Transformation

### DAILY REFLECTIONS (Saturday, April 9)

*Therefore, I call on you siblings, on account of the compassions of God to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy to God, fully agreeable, which is your rational worship. Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind to test for yourself what is the will of God, what is good, fully agreeable and complete. (Romans 12:1-2)*

This passage has one of the hardest words to translate, 'logiken.' It literally means rational, yet it metaphorically means metaphorical. It is what is 'logical to God.' So, many translate it as 'reasonable' and others 'spiritual.' However, in either case, our worship is not the sacrifice of bulls, but the presentation of our whole selves to God the Father through Christ. This is what God wants: **YOU**.

What God wants is relationship, and that's because God's identity is God's relationship—a Father and Son loving each other in and through the Holy Spirit. And so, by the Spirit, you are called to have a relationship with the Father through the Son. The Triune God that created all things knows you personally and loves you, your whole you.

Nothing in our world or culture loves us like God does. The best we can do is reflect this love for others. So our calling is not to conform our bodies to the world's ways, but transform our minds. Will you pray for the Spirit to transform your mind and your church today? How might you then act in ways God finds reasonable, logical, and truly spiritual?

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## Exercise Eleven—Being Set Apart

### DAILY REFLECTIONS (April 10 to April 11)

Remember what 'holy' meant (p. 6)? This week is known as 'Holy Week.' It is a week set apart by Jesus's life, death and resurrection. This is the week when the incarnate Word of God entered into Jerusalem on a donkey and was cast outside of its walls to be hanged on a cross.

Jesus enters triumphantly on a peaceful colt to be a lamb sacrificed on Rome's 'peacemaker'—the cross—a tool of intimidation to suppress rebellion and maintain Caesar's 'Pax Romana' or 'Roman Peace.'

Read these verses of Scriptures and prayerfully consider the way in which Jesus conquers sin and death—by his self-giving love. Reflect on how the defeat on the cross is truly the glory of God.

#### Sunday, April 10

*No one has gone up into heaven except the one who came down from out of heaven, the Son of Man. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so it is necessary for the Son of Man be lifted up so that everyone believing in Him may have eternal life. (John 3:15)*

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#### Monday, April 11

*He was wounded for our rebellion, bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement for our peace was upon him, and by his wounds, we are healed. (Isaiah 53:5)*

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## Exercise Eleven—Being Set Apart

### DAILY REFLECTIONS (April 12 to April 13)

The Glory of God is the love of the Father for the Son and the Son for the Father in and through the Holy Spirit, from which creation flows and we are able to know and share in this love. God's glory is not God bragging about God's self, but all of creation recognizing the love of God that creates, redeems, sustains, rules and transforms all things and all people. God's glory is the love that anoints us, fills our cup, and overflows from us toward others, friend and foe alike.

Reflect on these Scriptures and consider how you might be set apart from the world in a way that gives God glory.

#### Tuesday, April 12

*You prepare a table in front of me and in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil and my cup, it overflows. (Psalm 23:5)*

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#### Wednesday, April 13

*But our hope does not make us ashamed, because the love of God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, having been given to us. For although we were without strength, Christ still died for the ungodly according to the appointed time. (Romans 5:5-6)*

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## Exercise Twelve—Are You There?

### DAILY REFLECTIONS (Maundy Thursday, Good Friday & Holy Saturday)

Over the last 43 days, you have engaged in spiritual Exercises aimed at turning you toward and transforming you by the love of God. By seeing Scripture in your life, by seeing yourself in the Scriptures, and by seeing others in Scripture, you may feel more empowered to make prayer more than words, but actions.

These Exercises were intended to show you that you are part of a long line of Christians, who are grounded in the early Church's claim of God as Father, God as brother in Christ, and God as our advocate in the Holy Spirit. **These are beliefs drawn from Scripture—Beliefs by which you are called to reflect God to the world, following your shepherd, praying for your church, and being Holy.**

We know God fully through Christ, who was crucified, an idea the Greeks called foolishness because it meant God suffered for us. It was an idea the Jews called a stumbling block, because it meant God shared in our human form. Yet this is what we believe, even when it can be hard to wrap our minds around.

#### Thursday, April 14

So the question now is simple: Where are you? Are you there in the upper room, letting Christ wash your feet and accepting the call to wash others? Will you go to the foot of the cross, into the unknown?

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## Exercise Twelve—Are You There?

### DAILY REFLECTIONS

Read the following Scriptures and prayerfully consider what God is saying to you in them, how the good news is found in them, and what you are being led to do because of them.

Friday, April 15

*One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding Him and saying, "Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!" But the other rebuked him, saying..."We indeed have been condemned justly...Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom." (Luke 23:39-42)—*On one hand we do doubt Jesus and challenge Him, but on the other, we admit our sins and ask to be part of the Kingdom. How do you see yourself in this story?

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Saturday, April 16

*And through Him (Jesus) God was pleased to **reconcile** to Himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of His cross. (Colossians 1:20)—*Now that you have given your relationship with Christ some much needed time and devotion, do you feel closer? Are you there with Him, your Savior?

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## **Sunday is Here—Your Jesus Loves You**

Resurrection Sunday, April 17

Imagine for a moment that you are one of the twelve, waiting and afraid. Your leader, the one you called Rabbi and Lord, and the one you called your friend is gone. He had been arrested and beaten, scourged and mocked, and led up that Calvary hill to be yet another example of the Roman Peace of Caesar—crucified as a rebel.

In some ways, you know that this was a punishment meant as much for you as it was for Him. It is a warning. All who threaten the peace of the empire are hanged for all to see. But what does Caesar in Rome care about you? But what did Caesar care about Jesus, if it wasn't for the Judean religious elites seeing him as a threat to their own power. They turned Him in. Why not think they will come for you too!

But then you hear the knocking, the frantic breath and the news! The tomb is empty. What does that mean? You saw Him pierced with that spear. You saw the water and blood flow from His side like the water and blood that flow from the side of the temple during Passover sacrifices. He was so bloodied, it was like you could number all of his bones.

Yet, the women say He's alive. Before you can do anything, Peter and John have already run out to race to the tomb. Maybe Thomas still doubts. Maybe Cleopas thinks the body was stolen. But, you believe the women. Caesar and the Judean authorities might not accept their word, but you know them. You know Jesus loved you and He loved them, so you start to believe. You know that it's true! It's true!

He is risen. Christ is risen from the dead. Trampling down death by death. He has called you by name. You have persevered in these 46 days, spending time with your Lord, the Word made flesh, to grow in your own personal relationship with Him. Take what you have learned and live as you are loved, proclaiming His Word by your words and deeds.

## Final Reflections

Write your thoughts on your Lenten journey.

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*If this devotional was helpful to you and you have perceived a greater sense of your calling from God through it, please reach out to Drew or Carol Ann. Please tell us what is God putting on your heart for you and your church.*

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