

Lenten Faith Journeys

Devotions and Meditations

BY THE MEMBERS AND FRIENDS OF EMMANUEL

LENT 2010

Introduction

This year our devotional focus for the season of Lent will be the Lectionary as found in the ELW. Most of us authors are not theologians, but simply fellow believers on our own journeys. As you read these verses and our writings you will see a common theme -- our FAITH JOURNEYS. So as you reflect on the readings, approach each day in prayer with us. The Holy Spirit worked with each of us disciples as we wrote and shared with you. Let the Spirit work within you as you read and pray the devotion. Then open your heart and mind to his work within you. These gifts are our gifts to you during the contemplative season of Lent.

As a guide - First read the passage cited for the day. Then read the meditation and offer the prayer for the day. Sit quietly and be in the moment. Let the words and thoughts into your heart. Take a moment of gratitude and pray for each disciple who shared with you on this day.

Blessings for a spiritual Lenten journey.

Date: February 17, 2010 Ash Wednesday

Scripture: Isaiah 58:1-12

Today Christians around the world begin to prepare for celebrating the fulfillment of God's promise at Easter, through penance and discipline. In the Bible, ashes are signs of sorrow, mourning, humility, and repentance. On Ash Wednesday, believers receive ashes on their foreheads as a reminder of our mortality and need for salvation.

Today's reading from the book of Isaiah tells us that God wants more from us, however. The prophet gets our attention through powerful and vivid language. He

wants us to know that this is important! Our prayers and worship are empty unless they are accompanied by acts of justice, mercy and compassionate service!

Millions of people struggle for their most basic needs. When these needs go unmet, the suffering is great, and the misery leads to other problems such as political unrest and compromised international security. This season of Lent gives each of us the opportunity to discover ways in which we can respond to the words of Isaiah, to help alleviate the suffering. Lutherans have a long history of serving those in need throughout the world, and of advocating for policies that promote well-being. We can work through our church and service organizations, and find other opportunities in our cities and neighborhoods. Each one of us can make a difference. "If you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday. The Lord will guide you."

Prayer: By your Spirit give us the grace and power to work for justice, and to practice acts of kindness. Strengthen us to face our mortality with confidence, and to put our trust in You, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

Rhoda MacKenzie

Date: February 18, 2010
Scripture: Deuteronomy 26:1-11

This passage shares the need and duty for us to give back to the Lord, as a "Thank You" for all He has done for us. It is so easy to lose sight of our many blessings as we go through our day-to-day routine. The recent earthquake in Haiti, reminds us that each day itself is a precious gift. How much more blessed are we to live where we live, in the comforts we have and with the love and fellowship God has provided for us.

As we are able, we need to give back. We can do so with time devoted to one of our church's or local community's many service projects. We can do so with our financial resources. We can do so by making sure others see God's presence in us. However we are able to give, let us do so gladly and with thankfulness for all the blessings we have received.

Prayer: Dear Lord, thank you for the gifts we receive each day! Help us honor You, by our acts of generosity, our acts of Christianity and our love and support of each other. Amen.

Mike Dixon

Date: February 19, 2010
Scripture: Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16

The Psalm, *Assurance of God's Protection*, speaks to those who "live in the shelter of the Most High....no evil shall befall you, no scourge come near your tent." But what about a random earthquake?

What has happened in Haiti is a "scourge" that seems unimaginable in its scope of human tragedy impacting three million Haitians in a nation that is 80% Christian. Why has this happened to the poorest country in our hemisphere? Why does a well known TV evangelist glibly explain this event as a "curse" resulting from a Haitian pact with the devil leading to a breakup with France some 200 years ago?

Led by the USA, the multi-nation response to Haitian needs has been extraordinary. Locally, in our neighborhood, a flyer appeared in our mail slot asking what we might be able to give, dried food, clothing, personal items and the like. The flyer came from a neighbor several doors down, Mario S.... who was volunteering in the relief efforts of the Haitian Embassy. We told him we were Lutherans and had contributed on-line to the ELCA Haitian Relief Fund. This is how we get to know our neighbors and find an immediate way to help.

The Psalm offers the assurance of God's protection, but we see the calamitous earthquakes, tsunamis, wild fires, floods and more that seem to so frequently beset innocent peoples around the globe. In this current instance the Haitian people have shown many courageous examples of affirming their faith even after losing everything including their loved ones. The Psalm speaks of God's support, "I will be with them in trouble, I will rescue them and honor them." The Haitian people will receive God's support. They must also have ours.

Prayer: Help us God to continue to provide relief and rebuilding for Haiti over the many months ahead. Amen.

Floyd & Sally Swanson

Date: February 20, 2010

Scripture: Romans 10:8-13

*"For one believes with the heart and so is justified,
and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved."*

Justified, confess and saved - three words that often scare Christians. Confess to the Lord, is to ask forgiveness of our sins. We are justified, made right in the sight of God. Salvation comes through our faith. Justification, salvation given to us through God's

grace, comes from our faith in Jesus, the Christ. I believe our relationship with God is enhanced in our personal time of prayer and meditation.

"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." vr. 13. Calling to God is more than the eloquent words of prayers that the pastor gives each Sunday. We have to take time to commune with God one on one and develop a personal relationship with Him in our prayers life. Open your heart and call on the Lord at all times and in every situation for his guidance and his Grace.

Prayer is such a significant part of my daily spiritual life. I find myself giving thanks so much I know God is saying "let up." Yet as the scripture says God is generous with all who call on Him. So develop a personal relationship in prayer to God and never "let up."

Prayer: Dear Lord, I open my heart to You and give thanks for this time to spend with You. It puts joy in my heart knowing that You are my friend and always there. I will never "let up" calling on You. Amen

Katherine S. Burrell

Date: February 21, 2010

Scripture: Luke 4:1-13

This passage entitled "The Temptation of Jesus" could more aptly be called "The Testing of Jesus." Jesus was led into the wilderness by the Spirit where He was tested by the devil for forty days. He ate nothing and answered each of the devil's tests with scripture.

I wonder how we as Christians would fare when dealing with our own wants and desires if we answered ourselves with scripture. How would Jesus handle the tests that we face every day?

Prayer: Allow me Lord, to hear your voice as I face the devil today and every day. Amen.

Sue Hunley

Date: February 22, 2010
Scripture: 1 John 2:1-6

How exciting it is to know that as sinners we have an advocate!!! Jesus Christ died for our sins and is here for us, always. But, even better, He died not just for us, but for “the sins of the whole world.” That’s right; Jesus did not die just for a chosen few. He died for everyone – regardless of race, creed, color, gender, sins.

The passage goes on to say that if we live by the commandments and obey his word we will truly know God and the love of God reaches perfection. To know God is more than mimicking Jesus, going to church and doing good deeds. To know God is to have a relationship with Him – a personal relationship that is much deeper than most understand.

In the theme song from the movie Avatar, “I See You”, the words are:

I see you. My light in darkness breathing hope of new life
Now I live through you and you through me.

I see me through your eyes
Living through life flying high
Your life shines the way into paradise
So I offer my life as a sacrifice
I live through your love

Can you imagine having a relationship with God that makes you feel this way? It is not impossible. It starts with trusting the Lord and allowing Him to enter your life. This will mean being honest with ourselves about our own sins. Obey his word and remember that He is with you always.

Prayer: Lord, let your light will shine in us, and through us, for all to experience the joy of the Lord. Amen.

Jennifer Lewis

Date: February 23, 2010
Scripture: 2 Peter 2: 4-21

There is little in this particular scripture passage that one would find inspirational. Its focus is the condemnation and punishment of “false teachers” within the early Christian community, who sowed doubt and corrupted those whom God had called to holiness of life. These false leaders would eventually receive their just punishment, but it is up to us, to whom God has given all that is necessary for life and piety, to strive to increase our “faith with strength, strength with knowledge, knowledge with moderation, moderation with constancy, constancy with piety, piety with fraternal love, fraternal love with charity” (2 Peter 1: 5-7). Faith is a precious gift from God, but it cannot be taken for granted. We are responsible for cultivating and increasing our faith and being aware that we will encounter much in life that is opposed to true knowledge and the virtues of moderation, constancy, piety and charity.

Prayer: Dear Lord, make us more aware of your presence in our lives and your enveloping Love for each of us. Help us that we may grow in faith and love of You and all creation. Amen.

David Wallace

Date: February 24, 2010
Scripture: Psalm 17

I had some trouble relating to Psalm 17 where David is asking for God’s protection from his enemies who are surrounding him. First he reminds God of his own piety and faithfulness. Then he prays for God to kill his enemies and “thrust them out of this world in the prime of their life.” (New English Bible)

While this is an understandable plea for someone in such a dire situation, I couldn’t help comparing David’s all too human prayer to the teachings of Christ, who even on the cross asks for forgiveness, not for himself, but for those who are torturing and murdering him.

Jesus asks his followers to forgive and love our enemies, and to pray for our persecutors; a difficult challenge given our own human frailties.

But think of the difference it might make if the whole world would really follow this teaching. If everyone would forgive on every level, from governments to families, the implications might be astonishing. Nations would come up with better solutions to problems than our present method of killing each other in wars. And personal forgiveness for large and small grievances might change lives. We can at least begin with ourselves and see what happens from there.

Prayer: Dear God, we thank you for keeping us safe, and pray for your help in following Christ's teachings. Help us to practice forgiveness in our lives and to love those around us. Amen.

Lois Jones

Date: February 25, 2010
Scripture: Genesis 15:1-12; 17-18

These few verses from Genesis 15 are of great historical and contemporary importance to the Jewish people. In His covenant promise to Abraham, God established two types of covenants: the promise of many descendants (vs:1-6); and the land of Israel (vs:7-18). What could be more relevant both in history and in current land disputes in Palestine than the Jew's belief that God gave them, eons ago, the Holy Land. God's covenant promises are everlasting!

We Christians, too, are a Covenant people. Our Covenant relationship is not of descendants, nor of land, but of blood. God's revelation to us is in Jesus Christ who promises (Mt. 26:28) in the Upper Room at the Last Supper: "This is my blood of the New Covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." As we make our Lenten journey, we rejoice that our God so loved the world that he sent his son to suffer and die for us; to take away our sin, and give us new life.

Prayer: We thank you, God of the Covenant, for being our God of love; from Abraham, through Jesus, to us. Amen.

Dick Reichard

Date: February 26, 2010

Scripture: Psalm 27

“Teach me your way, O Lord; lead me on a level path, because of my oppressors”.

A test of character: Can you maintain your integrity when dealing with opponents?

It's harder than I thought. Recently, I've spent time working with communities and developers - asking local officials to improve school provisions in a county plan. Opponents called me an alarmist, a grandstander, and a racist.

So, I double-checked my motivations:

- (1) Misleading? My opponents completely misrepresented the impact of the plan. My information was accurate - but a bit misleading? Perhaps . . . I met with some adversaries, listened, and revised a few statements. Strict honesty paid off: Several opponents became allies.
- (2) Proudful? One day I stated the drawbacks of every solution to my concerns. “Do you want an answer or are you enjoying the spotlight?” said an exasperated developer. Hmmm - time to step away from center stage, and give credit widely. It's amazing what you get done when others get the praise.
- (3) Prejudiced? I supported a group with the same demographics as the community who opposed me. However, sometimes I was more focused on keeping our kids in strong schools than in supporting multiethnic students. I worked with minority parents and advocated a solution for a nearby multiracial school. Much more productive.

God will “lead us on a level path”, and help us deal with our opponents.

Prayer: Lord, give us the self-reflection to hear your message and examine our actions. When we choose your way, we can face our adversaries - with integrity. Amen.

Liz King

Date: February 27, 2010

Scripture: Philippians 3:17-4:1

Frankly, I like to eat and drink well. Despite the cholesterol warnings, I love nothing better than a grilled steak and baked potato, accompanied by a good wine. I suspect many of you are like me, despite all the medical warnings. The challenge Paul gives us in this passage is that we need to be careful not to make these earthly delights the purpose of our existence. Doing so makes our lives “enemies of Christ’s death on the cross,” and makes these “bodily desires” our god instead of Christ. Paul’s insight, in his wonderful phrase, is that we are “citizens of heaven,” not just citizens of earth. Our real purpose in life is our life in our Lord. Our goal is to be friends of the cross, not enemies. How do we do that? Paul encourages us to be “like Him” and follow his example, both in life and in death, in the hope of resurrection, following the example of selflessness set by Christ. Does this mean we can’t enjoy good food and wine? No, but we need to keep that enjoyment in the perspective of Christ’s love for us and our responsibility to be like him. Our most nourishing meal is the one we share in Christian fellowship during communion.

Prayer: Dear God, help us to always remember that the gift of life you have given us is also the gift of citizenship in heaven. Help to become more like your Son, who gave us the gift of Himself. Amen.

Larry Ries

Date: February 28, 2010

Scripture: Luke 13:31-35

Jesus had been performing his ministry of teaching and healing some three days before he was to enter Jerusalem for the last time before his execution. The Pharisees warned him that Herod wanted to kill Him and that He should leave Perea (part of Herod’s kingdom) immediately, hoping to scare him away, perhaps to Judea.

However, Jesus had a task to perform, a journey of faith. He replied that He had work to do yet and He would not be killed. “Prophets are killed in Jerusalem”. Jesus knew what was planned for Him to do and He would accomplish his mission.

And, you know, we all have a journey of faith as we seek to learn more about God. Our journey involves putting our hearts and minds into, helping make God's world a better place for others and ourselves. We need to show God's love in the world. Jesus had a journey of faith which he carried out for God a plan to teach God's word, love and redemption.

I don't worry about whether I will be with God at his judgment day. I have faith and I relish the peace and comfort of feeling his presence with me NOW as I go forward in my life's journey as I think of Him and trust in his love. God is with me now as he must be with you.

Prayer: Lord, we are on a journey in this world. Help us daily with our faith to make it a Journey of Faith, doing our best to do your will. May we continue to thank you for your blessings and presence. Amen.

Gene Boone

Date: March 1, 2010

Scripture Text: Romans 4:1-12

We are not scholars. You are probably wondering who is "we". "We" are the Women's Bible Study Group, which is a group of women interested in learning about the Bible and who enjoy the Christian fellowship. To my surprise, my assigned Scripture text for the Daily Devotions for Lent 2010 is in Romans - our study group currently is studying Paul's letter to the Romans. As it is, I struggle in understanding Paul's letter and how we become "right with God". In my assigned Scripture text, Paul identifies several Old Testament people and events to remind us how God changed certain people, and through that change a person became an example of the truths. In Romans 4:3, "Abraham believed God" ..., just as it states in Genesis 15:6, "And he [Abram] believed in the Lord". Paul's desire to preach the truth of God's Word to those in Rome continues today through us; and, our faith in the Lord assures us that we are on the right path in spite of our challenges along the way.

Prayer: Gracious God, help us to be examples of the truths, through Jesus Christ.
Amen.

Patti Leppert (with appreciation to Sue Waldrop)

Date: March 2, 2010
Scripture: 1 Corinthians 10:1-13

Often I think of temptation in terms of harmful sins, such as murder, adultery, or stealing. These sins, with a few minor exceptions for the latter, like the time I “borrowed” \$10 from my father’s wallet as a child, I have not committed. Therefore, I am good Christian, right? However, in my everyday life, I am tempted to gossip, to avoid the truth, to put people down to make me feel better about my inadequacies, and to take my frustrations out on my family and friends. Although acting upon these temptations appears to have minor consequence, they are destructive to relationships and well being of my family, friends and coworkers. I believe that God will only tempt me with what I can handle and will, with prayer, show me the way.

Prayer: Dear God, please give me the strength to stand up to my temptations, no matter how minor the consequences appear to be. Amen.

Sheri Parker White

Date: March 3, 2010
Scripture: 2 Chronicles 20: 1-22

Jehoshaphat was a king of Judah who kept pressing his relationship to God. He was devout and yet he would do things that seemed to favor neighboring rulers or his wife who had other gods and interests. God would come down on him (and Judah) until he behaved more in the fashion God preferred. Yet God did not forsake Jehoshaphat. When Jehoshaphat learned that the Moabites and their allies were gathering to ravage Judah, he gathered the people and publicly sought the guidance of God, recalling God’s help in former times, His aid, and His comfort to Israel and Judah. God heard him and the prophet Jahaziel gave him God’s word: “Have no fear, go and meet the enemy. The battle is in God’s hands, not yours.” And so it went. When the

people of Judah met the hosts of the Moabites and their allies, they found them all dead, for the peoples of the enemy had fallen to bickering and fighting amongst themselves. All that remained for the people of Judah was to gather up the spoils of war on the battle ground and go home. Their entry into Jerusalem was triumphant and they went into the temple to give thanks.

Jehoshaphat was a slow learner and other expeditions, especially that with Ahaziah, king of Israel, did not fare as well.

Yet Jehoshaphat provides a guide for us in that, when things were serious, he knew to call to God for support and to urge the people to hold firmly to faith in God. Because Jehoshaphat was at heart a good man, although often in error, God attended to the needs of the people with mercy. It wasn't that Jehoshaphat called on God only in time of trouble, but because he was a righteous man, just and equitable to his people that God attended to him.

Prayer: Oh God, help me to be true and faithful to your will at all times. I know that I may not always meet your requirements, but look with forgiving mercy on my life so that I may receive your favor, even when I fail. Amen

Mike Poston

Date: March 4, 2010
Scripture: Isaiah 55:1-9

The Israelites are in Babylon and are suffering greatly – they are poor, have little to eat and drink, and feel they will never get out of exile and live the good life. Rather than focusing on things that fail to bring real satisfaction, Isaiah urges the Israelites to listen to the Lord and nourish their souls with the free salvation that God offers to us all. Isaiah invites them to come to a feast where they can drink and eat delicious food – all provided free by God. He assures them this is the feast that gives life true meaning, and is more satisfying than any earthly thing they can purchase or earn.

This lesson has relevance for us today. How often have we thought that money is the key to our happiness – that having the right lifestyle will bring us lasting satisfaction? But as we've seen just in recent times, money and the "things" in life that it brings are very fleeting, and when times get tough, they don't bring us true meaning or value. Only in God do we find the love, hope and joy that fulfill us and give us the promise of eternal life.

Prayer: Dear God, help me to open my heart to your free gift of salvation—to listen to your word and trust in You, to embrace your forgiveness and share in your mercy. Amen.

Sherry Peske

Date: March 5, 2010

Scripture: Psalm 63:1-8

This is a psalm written by David when he was wandering in the desert of Judea, living as an outlaw, hunted by King Saul. Even then he remembers the joy and satisfaction of God's presence. There is confidence and trust in his voice, but also longing.

Our life is also a journey, longing for renewal in the Lord's presence. A lifetime of trying to walk with God, but full of doubts and fears as well as joy.

Two children walking in a field covered with snow made a wager as to who could reach a lone tree on the hilltop by the straightest path. The younger watched each step, carefully putting one little foot directly in front of the other. Upon reaching the tree, imagine the amazement of seeing the little foot prints in a zigzag pattern in the snow. The other child who had followed a straight course shared the secret: keep your eyes on the goal, the tree, not on distractions along the way.

Prayer: O God, eagerly we seek you. Grant us to know your Son, Jesus Christ to be the Way, the Truth and the Light, that we may walk in the way that leads to eternal life. Amen.

Bill Wertman

Date: March 6, 2010

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 10:1-13

Initially, this verse bewildered me with its global focus. As I returned to the verse later, I focused on the line "The old has gone, the new has come!", which I relate to our world today. Old habits of excessive materialism and shows of wealth are disappearing, and people are getting in touch with more abstract types of wealth, such as increased time with family, working less and playing more, focusing on our mental, physical and spiritual health. These "luxuries" seemed less attainable than material wealth in the past, but when confronted with financial upheaval, we have regained a sense of what is truly important.

This time in the church year looks at the physical side of Christ's life, having just celebrated his birth in December, and preparing for his crucifixion on Good Friday. As we approach his resurrection, when the physical is no more, we can also prepare for our "new selves", to be a "new creation". We are Christ's "ambassadors", and as such, we can offer our hearts, minds and time to unite peoples that are divided, to promote peace where there is chaos, and to show others what Christ's message means to us today.

Prayer: Dear Lord, help us to be the ambassadors of your Word, to share the grace you bestowed upon us with the gift of your son. Amen.

Pamela Schuettler

Date: March 7, 2010

Scripture: Luke 13:1-9

"Repent or perish", reads the heading above verses 1-5 in the New Standard Version. I prefer, "You can do better." Jesus instructs that those who suffer are no worse offenders than those who do not, but notes such suffering can be overcome through repentance. The message is that I should not rest comfortably in the notion that I am merely no worse a sinner than others, but instead accept God with all my heart, strive to keep the commandments, and acknowledge my failings to God.

Verses 6-9 tell the parable of the fig tree planted in the vineyard which fails to bear fruit after three years. While the vineyard's owner wants the tree cut down for its failings, the gardener asks to nourish the tree for one more year. This story evokes the parable of the prodigal son: God is patient with us when all his care and attention initially fail to bear fruit. But ultimately, our fate is in our hands; for we cannot be saved if we reject Him.

Prayer: Dear God, help us to set high standards and be proactive in our faith. Give us the wisdom to recognize and appreciate the nourishment of your almighty grace. Amen

Andrew Szamosszegi

Date: March 8, 2010

Scripture: Romans 2:1-11

According to the apocryphal book, "Acts of Paul," the apostle is described as "bald headed, bow legged, strongly built, a man small in size, with meeting eyebrows, with a rather large nose." Not very good looking apparently, but boy, could he write, as today's text shows!

One needs to read more than this second chapter of Romans to get the true force of Paul's message. Study shows that Romans is the longest, the weightiest, the most influential of Paul's correspondence. Its theme is the gospel as God's power for salvation to all who believe.

I stand convicted as I read Paul's blistering words about judging others. How often I judge others! It is easy to have a "holier than thou" attitude. I judge people by how they look, what they say, what they do, etc., in spite of myself.

"You have no excuse," writes Paul. I need to remember that passage, as well as what he wrote to the Ephesians: "By grace you have been saved." Grace -- my salvation is free, gratis.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, once You taught: "Do not judge, and you will not be judged, do not condemn and you will not be condemned." Let this be my guide. Amen

Jesse S. Hangen

Date: March 9, 2010

Scripture: Romans 2:12-16

All of us like to think we're pretty good people; I know I do. We have laws designed to keep us from committing the most egregious wrongs, but the law goes only so far. Obeying the law is not enough.

We were created with a moral law written on our hearts, and a conscience to nag us about it. God's standard is perfection, and that is, on a daily basis, beyond our capabilities. But we can strive for perfection, because we know we will be judged fairly and impartially by God. This is our spiritual responsibility.

In the passage above, Paul warns us there will be a final day of judgment. Obeying man-made law is not justification enough to be absolved by God; we must work to eliminate those moral and ethical transgressions in thought and deed that each of us commits. Through faith and grace, rather than resting on our laurels, help us to do our best to try to eventually rest on God's laurels.

Prayer: Dear God, I ask that You realize I am trying. I ask for your help in overcoming my frailties, and your forgiveness when I fail.

Mae Scanlan

Date: March 10, 2010

Scripture: Luke 10:25-37

The parable of the Good Samaritan, for many of us, is one learned at an early age. We read about the ministering of one person to another, regardless of cultural differences. I think of this now in relation to attitudes towards others, in addition to physical acts of caring. I remember my first job out of nursing school, on a busy unit in a large teaching hospital in D.C. We had patients from all walks of life; ranging from homeless people to upper level executives and politicians. The assistant head nurse was a mentor to me as she cared for patients. For her, no one held more value than another and I never knew her to pass judgment. No matter what the disease or reason for admission, whether rich or poor, young or old, formally educated or not- she ministered to all with the same level of compassion and skill. She showed love for these, her neighbors.

Prayer: Dear Lord, help us to embrace Christ's words to "Go and show mercy", in our attitudes and our actions. Help us to put these words to work in our daily lives. Amen.

Anna Roberts

Date: March 11, 2010

Scripture: Joshua 5:9-12

Sometimes it is difficult to set things in their correct context. Alone and isolated they make little sense. You see that in movies or television. The camera slowly backs up from an extreme close up turning your first impression completely on its head.

I remember a television show about the early days of coal mining in England. The camera closed in on the confining image of a narrow mine shaft leaving an image of a small miner (he had to be small) deep inside a large dark mountain. But the camera pulled way back to reveal that the mine shaft had been exposed in a deep road cut for a highway. What had seemed confining, now offered an escape. What had seemed lost inside a mountain, now was only a short distance from the surface.

This passage is like that. Out of context it makes little sense. I seem lost inside a much larger story - a story that I only barely understand. The Jews are crossing into the Promised Land. They are eating their first meal of the produce of the land. What lies ahead? What is behind them? What is the significance of this meal?

Prayer Lord, help me sometimes to back up from my close up view of the world. Help me to understand how you want me to see the world. Amen.

Jim McGee

Date: March 12, 2010

Scripture: Psalm 32

This psalm means that the people who believe and confess their sins to God rejoice. They are happy that God has forgiven them. This also means that God will teach you in the way you should go. Lastly, the people who are evil and do not believe in the Lord

will suffer greatly. While the people who trust in the Lord are embraced in mercy for they have confessed their sins. Psalm 32 means that if you believe and trust in the Lord you will be forgiven of all sin, embraced with mercy, taught, and protected from trouble.

Prayer : Dear God, please let us acknowledge our sin and let us not conceal our guilt. Let us be forgiven so that we may praise and rejoice you. Let us be taught in the way we should follow and have God help protect us from many troubles. Let us not be evil so that we may not suffer, but let us trust the Lord so that we may receive mercy. In your name we pray, Amen.

Heather Lundberg

Date: March 13, 2010
Scripture: 2 Corinthians 5:16 - 21

Paul tells us that as Christians, Christ is in us and, therefore, we should live our lives as ambassadors for Christ - being his representatives here on Earth. How we live our lives should reflect Christ in us. Have you ever had a car cut you off and then notice a "What would Jesus Do?" bumper sticker on it? What does that say about the Christian driver? We need to remember that as Christians, our daily lives reflect Christ in us. So lets try to be a good reflection of him.

As Christians, we are writing a Gospel by the things that we say and the things that we do. What is the Gospel according to you?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me live my life as a reflection of what Jesus would do. Let the Gospel that I write with my life show others your love. Amen.

Bobbie and Ken Seidelmann

Date: March 14, 2010
Scripture: Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

The parable Jesus told of the son leaving his father to lead a reckless life being welcomed back with a celebration was used as an example of God's never ending love for us. Those searching for identity fail to see that God will welcome them. If they can stop to look at their lives before they hit the bottom, they will see He is patiently waiting to help. The portion about the older son resenting his father's acceptance of his brother after what he did should remind us that God doesn't care how we became lost. He just cares that we repent and join with believers for their support as we grow in Christ. This can also teach us to forgive others and help them see God's mercy and love.

Prayer: Thank you dear Father for the unwavering love for your children. Continue to guide us in helping others know your great love. In Jesus name, Amen

Phyllis Axtell

Date: March 15, 2010
Scripture: Revelation 19:1-8

The book of revelation is God's revealing his powers, his love, his justice, his presence to his people who walk in the light. In Chapter 9 He has crushed the minions who have followed the guiles of Satan. He has opened the door to reveal his omniscient power over the forces of evil and his works in the world He has created.

His power and glory shine brightly and his followers are awed as they glorify Him.

Isn't this showing the ultimate destination possible in this life's journey of faith? Our faith, trust, and love of God as we strive to do the things He would have us do can bring us peace for the struggles with the hard times and the rapture in the realization of his benefits bestowed on us.

Prayer: Dear God, please help us to be aware of and follow your plans for our lives. Your power and the brilliance of your glory are more than we can imagine, but your presence is with us. We thank you for your presence as we continue on our journey. Amen.

Date: **March 16, 2010**

Scripture: **Revelation 19:1-8**

The book of Revelation is God revealing his powers, his love, his justice, and his presence with his people who walk in the light. In Chapter 9 He has crushed the minions who have followed the guile of Satan. He has opened the door to reveal his omniscient power over the forces of evil and his works in the world He has created. His power and glory shine brightly and his followers are awed as they glorify Him.

Isn't God's revelation the ultimate destination possible in our life's Journey of Faith? Our faith, trust, and love of God as we strive to do the things He would have us do, can bring us peace for the struggles with the hard times and the rapture in the realization of his benefits bestows on us.

Prayer: Dear God, please help us to be aware of and follow your plans for our lives. Your power and the brilliance of your glory are more than we can imagine, but your presence is with us. We give You thanks for that presence as we continue on this life's journey. Amen.

Date: **March 17, 2010**

Scripture: **2 Kings 4:1-7**

The story we read today is one of many works of the prophet Elisha as recounted in 2 Kings. One thing that stands out is the woman's and her sons' obedience to Elisha's direction. She did what she was instructed to do apparently without question., as did her sons, per the account in 2 Kings. She went where she was to go; she did what she was to do even when it did not seem as if this "action plan" would remedy the situation. The situation was very serious, too. She might have to give up her sons if she could not repay her debt!!!! Even as I write this, I am questioning HOW could she be that trusting?

How many of us have unquestioning obedience and faith? I can not count myself as one. My reaction to Elisha's command would likely have been "You want me to do

what???" "Why?" Blessed are those who respond to God's direction without questions.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for this lesson. Please help me to accept your plans for me as I walk my life journey. Amen.

Date: **March 18, 2010**

Scripture: **Isaiah 43:1-7 - Your Promise to Rescue Me!**

In this Isaiah passage You speak to me, O God. May I listen as You speak to my heart.

I respond – My God and my Creator, You who made me in your image. You talk to me at all times.

Triune God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit - you created me - body, soul and spirit (1Th 5:23)

At this time, You tell me not to fear, because You have not given me a spirit of fear but of power, and of love and of a sound mind (2 Timothy 1:7)

Today many of us are fearful because of the economy. Some fear for their jobs, others for their children. So many circumstances in the world to fear for. Do we know that doubt is opposite of faith? Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen (Hebrew 11:1) Fear and doubt are brought by the enemy to nullify our faith.

I thank You Lord, because You know me by my name, You have written my name on the palm of your hands. As you have opened the Red Sea for your people on their way to the promised land , so You do for me today. You take me out of the water (Psalm. 66:12) and you give me abundance.

You are God, You never change. I thank you for keeping your eyes on me because You love me.

I thank You for taking away my fear because You are with me. I thank You for bringing back all my people, all who believe in You, all who have this common faith in Christ Jesus. You speak of Cush and Seba in Africa but I know that You are thinking of all your people in far away places.

Thank You for giving me your name. A Christian I try to be. You formed me, You made me, You created me for your glory. So I give You honor and glory, because You alone are worthy.

In Jesus name I ask You to hear my prayer. Amen

Afiwa Kpetigo

Kristi Johnson

Date: March 19, 2010

Scripture: Psalm 126

This reading emphasizes that God is always with us to fill our hearts with joy. As his followers we know that He is with us even when we are filled with sorrow. This passage also reminds us of all the times that the Lord has been there for us. There are times when I have been sad, when I have needed help, and when I needed that last push from God to get through. I feel that I can achieve anything if I set my mind to it with God by my side.

Prayer: Dear Lord, we thank you for cheering us up everyday and in times of need. As You have been gracious to us, we will try to be gracious to our companions. Amen.

William Szamoszegi

Doug Murtland

Date: March 20, 2010
Scripture: Philippians 3:4-14

Jess and I have lived at the National Lutheran Home in the Independent Living for over 11 years now. Old age is getting harder and harder to ignore. We could spend a whole day visiting friends and neighbors living at the Home now because they can no longer live independently. Every day is a new opportunity to serve comes in unexpected ways. Our liturgy about things left undone always speaks to me. Paul reminds us that we should forget what lies behind and follow a humble path which may include suffering and pain - mental and physical - before we enter into heaven.

At the NLH we are on this journey together and can support one another. A little bit of heaven is always here as we help each other. This is not a commercial for NLH, but Jess and I find it a very supportive community. It helps me on my journey. I need to remember that the journey will not always be easy, but it seems that God walks along side every day.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, walk with us on our journey of life. We pray that you will be there at the end with the heavenly call to your kingdom. Amen.

Shirley B. Hangen

Date: March 21, 2010
Scripture: John 12: 1-8

As Mary washes Jesus' feet with perfume costing 300 denarii -- at the time a year's wages -- Judas says the perfume should be sold and the money given to the poor. The "do this not that - do that not this; fund this not that - fund that not this" is not limited to something that happened almost 2,000 years ago; it is very contemporary. We hear it in the issues of today, whether it is health care reform, public funding of federal, state or local projects, charitable requests or any of the countless requests we get each day. And it was Judas who said this. Are there Judases asking us really for their own purposes? How do we know what to choose, what to do? What we do know is that while Jesus is not physically present, the spirit of God will always be with us. We pray and make what seems to be the best choice and give our best effort and even if the choice turns out to be the wrong choice, ours is a forgiving God who will someday say "Well done good and faithful servant."

Prayer: Lord help us when we have hard choices to make and help us to remember that You are always there for us. Amen.

Bob Jones

Date: **March 22, 2010**

Scripture: **Hebrews 10:19-25**

Confidence is a wonderful way to approach life in general. We try to give our children that confidence when they are young so that they will try different things as they grow up, like food and sports and music. We want them to gain trust in the family and extend that trust to work with others in the large world outside the home. It's exciting to be able to go into a new situation, examine the dynamics there and feel confident that we belong there too, that we have a place among those in the community.

When I was leaving home for college in a new town with all new people who would become my friends, I was excited and anxious about what would happen. When I got to campus, met my new roommate and the other guys on the floor, my new classmates, I knew that we were all in something together, something exciting!

In this same way the Book of Hebrews anticipates the excitement of Christians as they enter into a new relationship with our Lord, one that is based upon the sacrifice of Jesus. We are cleansed from sin by this act of sacrifice and can approach the Holy Sanctuary of God, that is, God's presence, with a new confidence that is founded on a true heart and a full assurance of faith that comes to us as a gift of God's Grace. Further, we know we are invited guests in this Holy place and therefore have a hope that we can express and thereby continuously provoke each other to show our love and share good deeds; each day is another opportunity to share this confidence in generous living! Finally, our meeting together in the Church, our coming together to encourage one another, is a way to give support through the dark times with a faith that persists through life to what can never be taken away: That Day of the Lord that is Eternal because our God is from the Eternal.

Prayer: Dear God, who is from the Eternal, enrich our lives with the confidence that faith has brought so that we live according to the Hope that is ours through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Jan P. Lookingbill, Pastor

Date: **March 23, 2010**

Scripture: **1 John 2:18-28**

The situation that John writes of in these verses is that of people who had once been a part of the church, pulled away and were now trying to influence others to follow them. These “antichrists” may have been teaching ideas about Jesus not being the perfect man and that they should all deny the Father and the Son. John states that those that left never belonged and that we all have knowledge of God and that He will continue to teach us truths.

We must all continue to abide in the Word that we heard from the beginning. When we abide in the Son and in the Father, we are be given what He has promised, eternal life.

We should all remember that no matter what goes on in our lives, whatever we are struggling with, we should hand it all to Him and wait; live in the present and be at peace with what He hands us in return.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, let us never to stray from you. Help us to “walk in the truth” and live each day with your guidance. In your name we pray. Amen.

Marianne Beardall

Date: March 24, 2010
Scripture: Habakkuk 3:2-15

When I saw the reading in Habakkuk, I took it myself, thinking, well, I know nothing about this book of the Bible, so I shall learn. My Bible explains that He was a prophet living about the time of Jeremiah. He was reported to be a man of great faith and a prophet who spoke comfort to the people.

The verse appointed for today, Habakkuk's prayer, is really a psalm and a song of praise for God's grace. In fact, Habakkuk's name means "one who embraces." In this set of verses he is truly praising an embracing God's grace. He says "I stand in awe of your deed." He speaks of the wrath of the seas, the lighting, the splendor of the sunrise. Seeing God's love is like seeing the rays of sun after a dark night.

This prayerful time of Lent can be thought of as our dark night. Habakkuk is preparing us for the radiance of God's great gift of salvation on Easter morning. We ARE Easter people. Let us embrace God's grace as Habakkuk did. Then let us be open to receiving God's endless mercy. Let us put aside the darkness in our lives. God's grace and mercy are for ALL God's people.

I am also thankful I got the chance to meet Habakkuk!!!

Prayer: Father, God, let each of us be open to receiving your grace in our lives. Help us through our dark days to receive the splendor of the rays of grace from your hand.
Amen

Ginger Boone

Date: March 25, 2010

Scripture: Isaiah 50:4-9

"The Lord has given me a well-trained tongue, that I might know how to speak to the weary a word that will rouse them."

This passage from the Book of Isaiah is one I have proclaimed often as a lector over the years. It describes the very essence of a lector's ministry, a message I take to heart each time I prepare to deliver the Old or New Testament readings at a Sunday or weekday liturgy.

As lay readers of the Word of God, we have the great privilege and the profound responsibility to "rouse the weary," giving our listeners hope -- hope that our God IS there to help us, even when we experience suffering. To do this well requires that we lectors truly believe what we read and understand our important role to help the congregation better understand what we are proclaiming.

It is no coincidence that this passage has been chosen as the Old Testament reading on Palm Sunday as we begin our intense contemplation of the Passion and

Death of Jesus. Especially in Holy Week, effective lay lectors help teach what we believe, encouraging the congregation to reflect on the Lord's great love for us. Christ Himself patiently "*endured buffets and spitting,*" and ultimately suffered a painful death on the cross for us and for our salvation. His suffering gives us hope. With careful preparation and practice, the lectors powerfully narrate the accounts of Christ's suffering and death. The events of Holy Week are made real to the listeners. We collectively meditate on Christ's agony in the garden, His scourging and crowning with thorns, His carrying the heavy cross, and His death on Calvary.

Our proclamations of these mysteries of our faith must "*rouse*" the weary congregations who hear them. But our attention and reflections on the readings on the Passion and death of the Lord alone are not "*end of job.*" We must also "*Go out to all the world and tell the Good News.*" Then the gifts of a "*well-trained tongue*" will bear much fruit.

Prayer: Lord, help us as proclaimers and listeners to your Word, to believe what we read, to teach others what we believe, and to practice what we teach. Amen.

Martha Novelly

Date: March 26, 2010

Scripture: Psalm 31:9-16

As I write this, I am preparing for total knee replacement, and this psalm is perhaps more meaningful to me than I might otherwise find it. Our psalm writer is expressing deep distress. In verses 1-8, he mixes his cries for help with expressions of confidence, then his grief captures his attention (most of verses 9-16) and then finally, he expresses joyful trust and urges others to love and confidence toward God.

The news in the past week has been of the horrors in Haiti – yes, mingled with stories of a newborn infant found after eight days in the rubble, but other stories of uncounted people losing their lives due to many causes – lack of access to resources we count on in this country, violence, even additional tremors. I imagine, as I read verses 9-16, that the writer is someone who has had great tribulation, something that might repel others ... perhaps leprosy.

It is often hard to trust in the Lord as we approach our trials and tribulations, hard to believe that He will find us important enough to intervene. After all, we do not see "miracles" in this day and age very often! But we believe, like the psalmist, that "my times are in your hand - let your face shine upon your servant; save me in your steadfast love." vv. 15-16

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the experience of suffering, and thank you for the hope that You offer us in your steadfast love. For "I trust in You, O Lord ... You are my God." v. 14 Amen.

Jane Rosenquist

Date: **March 27, 2010**

Scripture: **Philippians 2:5-11**

Philippians is one of St. Paul's prison letters, although, many scholars now believe that the letter is in fact a combination of portions of two or possibly three separate letters, but with a clear and consistent message. The church in Philippi was experiencing threats and harassment from both Romans and "Judaizers" (Jewish-Christian missionaries who would follow after Paul, teaching that his theology was flawed in that it was theologically necessary to impose certain minimal aspects of Jewish law on gentile converts to Christianity) outside the church; and members within the local church who were causing discord and divisions within the church by living selfish, grasping lives. Paul exhorts the members of the church in Philippi to come together in unity and harmony. He does this by raising Jesus Christ as the exemplar after whom all Christians should model their lives. He points out that, though Jesus had the innate character of God, He emptied Himself of his godly image and took on the form of man and the mantle of the slave or servant. Thus, they should not strive to meet their own individual ends out of selfish ambition, but rather be sharing and compassionate, living their lives in humility and behaving toward others as if the others were better than they themselves; thus not only pleasing God, but restoring Christian unity and cohesiveness to their local church.

Prayer: God, grant me the wisdom and strength to reject the modern world's model of behavior and follow Christ's example. Help me resist my tendencies toward selfish egotism and arrogance. Let me treat all those with whom I come in contact with humility and compassion; this I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. Amen.

Richard Knutsen

Date: March 28, 2010 Palm Sunday

Scripture: Luke 23:1-49

Luke's gospel presents an argument on 'why Jesus has to die.' He portrays those who should have seen 'the best' actually saw 'the least'. The problem of why Jesus had to die is not only tied up in the law but in the sinful hearts of mankind. The Pharisees had to do something with the lawbreaker, Jesus, and their decision was to hand Him over to the Romans to be killed. Nevertheless, Jesus realizes that the Pharisees had not understood the gravity of what they were actually doing. This was evident when Jesus hung on the Cross and prayed, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34). There were those who did not know because they had not been told; there were those who did not grasp. All needed forgiveness.

This directs us to question, was it necessary that Christ to suffer? Wasn't His death a sacrifice for our sins? To us, most law-abiding citizens, it was the only way for God to enter our territory. The cross was the best way for Jesus to suffer and die in order to atone for our sins. Death on the cross was the cruelest punishment at the time of the Roman Empire and was reserved for political rebels or chronically defiant slaves. Death by crucifixion symbolized humiliation, shame, and torture.

The manner in which Jesus died seems to be the most effective way for God to enter into our lives. In God's infinite wisdom, He created a perfect sacrifice for the atonement of our sins. There were no alternatives, but through the killing of God's Son. Everyone wanted justice and revenge. Jesus' eagerness to forgive everyone He came in contact with threatened the establishment. That system could not continue because God did not want to be separated from his children. It had to be stopped and therefore someone divine had to suffer and die. Therefore, God sent his Only Son to bear this burden. For this reason, hope resided within the resurrection since God is the only one who can resurrect. For if God did not send Jesus to suffer and die for us, we would not have been forgiven: we would not have hope.

Prayer: Gracious God, forgive us, for we do not know what we do. Amen. Kim Groves

Date: March 29, 2010

Scripture: Hebrews 9:11-15

Jesus played the role of a high priest, a person who had the job of performing temple sacrifices to bring people forgiveness of their sins. But unlike an earthly high priest, Jesus offered his own blood — not the blood of calves and goats. His blood sacrifice on the cross brought us back into a right relationship with God for all time. He "offered himself without blemish to God," says today's passage from the letter to the Hebrews, in a sacrifice designed to "purify our conscience from dead works to worship the living God!" If there is a list in heaven of those Jesus died for, we are all on the list. And when you are on the list, you can never be lost.

We all know that the thing about elite lists is that they are just about impossible to get onto. Consider the list of the 90 members of the Foreign Hollywood Press that

hands out the Golden Globes, this is a list that is nearly impossible to get on. Such a list is tough to crack, and so are the high-octane rosters of Most Powerful Women, All-Star Athletes and Most Admired Men.

This list is different. This list is for everyone - not just the elite. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not perish but may have eternal life."

The list lasts forever. Christ "entered once for all into the Holy Place," says the letter to the Hebrews, "not with the blood of goats and calves, but with his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption." Jesus gave his life, and the result is eternal redemption – his list is never going to change or diminish or disappear. And we can respond, as so many have before us, with faith and with gratitude, with wonder and with worship.

With our names on this list, we'll never be lost.

Prayer: Loving and Gracious Lord, we thank you for coming into the world for us. Help us to respond to your gift, a gift that we can never repay, with faith, with worship, and with love for neighbor. Amen.

Pastor Robert L. Lewis, Jr.+

Date: March 30, 2010

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 1:18-31

"God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise.; God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty."

This passage is Paul's effort to address what seems weak and foolish to the Jews and the Greeks. A lowly carpenter's son is put to death on a cross and this new Christian religion sees this being as their God?

If He is an exalted being why was He put to death? On a cross, no less? If He is God, how is that He died?

Many of today's Christians fail to see how illogical early Christianity appeared. They portray Jesus as a heroic figure next to an American flag. They engrave bible verses on their automatic weapons.

Yet it was exactly its appeal to the weak and powerless that enabled it to spread so rapidly in the early centuries. Jesus reached out and touched the very people that were ignored and scorned by the society of its day, the poor, the feeble, the weak, prostitutes and others.

Prayer: Dear Lord, help us to always remember that You ministered to the poor and to the outcasts of your society and that your mission for us today is to continue that work. Amen.

Donna McGee

Date: **March 31, 2010**
Scripture: **Hebrews 12:1-3**

As I read through this passage in Hebrews, I was immediately drawn to one particular element that Jesus is "the author and perfecter of our faith." Not only did He create us to have faith in Him, but He perfected us by dying on the cross for our sins. We are surrounded today by celebrities, magazines, and television that tell us what we should look like and how we should act. Sometimes, we are so fixed on these earthly things that we forget to fix our eyes on Jesus instead. Trying to keep up with the latest trends can cause us to become weary and lose heart like this passage suggests. However, we can find peace by remembering that we are created in God's perfect image, and as believers, even our faith is flawless. Jesus has a path clearly marked for each and every one of us; we just need to open our eyes.

Prayer: Dear God, thank you so much for creating us through your perfect eyes. Help us to see what You see when we look in the mirror so that we may not only love ourselves, but others as well. In your name we pray, Amen.

Jessica Lashway

Date: **April 1, 2010 Maundy Thursday**
Scripture: **1 Corinthians 11:23-26**

Witnessing the First Communion of our young members is always a special and spiritual experience for me. There is such excitement, such joy and yes, such reverence and solemnity in the sharing of the meal. Families and friends gather together to partake of the Lord's Supper as their first communicant eagerly accepts the bread and

wine. What a joyous occasion! What a celebration! What a blessing from God! I especially enjoy watching the expressions of those young people as they leave the "table." The smiles of delight tell all. Communion is a celebration of life through Christ. It is an opportunity for pure joy as we are cleansed from sin. Every time we gather together and partake of the Lord's Supper, we see and participate in the living illustration of the Gospel message. It gives us an opportunity to examine our hearts and to ask for forgiveness.

On Maundy Thursday, Emmanuel's "supper" offers an intimate sharing of our Lord's body and blood. We share the meal with friends and family. We share the excitement and joy, the reverence and solemnity of the Lord's Supper with those who believe. Those seated around the table receive the blessing of redemption through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Come celebrate! Come and rejoice! What a blessing from God! We are saved through Christ!

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, as we humbly come to your table and seek your forgiveness, help us to remember the message in your meal, that we are children of God, blessed through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Judy Lookingbill

Date: April 2, 2010

Scripture: Hebrews 10:16-25

On Good Friday we remember God's New Covenant with us. It was "cut" by the sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus. Covenants in the bible and in ancient Mesopotamia were executed by the ritual cutting of animals in half and having the parties to the covenant walk between those pieces, signifying a self curse: "May we suffer a fate similar to that of these dead animals if we violate our covenant." (Genesis 15:7-17; Jeremiah 34:18-20). We join the Lord Jesus in this sacrificial rite through our baptism. God's New Covenant was heralded by Jeremiah (31:27-34). Under the New Covenant: God places his will within us and writes it on our hearts; we need no longer teach one another to know God for we all know God; and God forgives us our trespasses and remembers our sins no more. The New Covenant replaces the Old Covenant concluded

at Sinai, a covenant that we cannot keep on our own. Under the New Covenant God transforms us into his children who together with God delight in his will and walk in his ways to the glory of his holy name.

Prayer: Dear God, lead us into your kingdom where your will is done as it is in heaven. Amen.

Tobias and Marijke Asser

Date: April 3, 2010

Scripture: Romans 6:3-11

Paul's letter to the Romans lays out the key doctrines of the Christian faith. In Romans 6, Paul reminds us of the powerful change in our life that comes through baptism. Through baptism, we are incorporated into the body of Christ. As He died and was resurrected, through Him we too "die" from a life of sin and enter a new Christ-centered life with its promise of salvation.

These verses remind me of the day my two grandsons were baptized. My son and daughter had decided to have their sons baptized together at Emmanuel. What a joy to stand at the altar with my grown children, their spouses, the other adoring grandparents, and read together the familiar words of our baptism service. And what a sight to see Pastor Lookingbill hoist these two squirmy, very chubby little boys in his arms for his traditional walk around the church to introduce them to their new church family. Paul's letter reminded me that their "introduction" went far beyond the congregation at Emmanuel. With the ritual of baptism they were "introduced" to a life in Christ and brought into that new and very special relationship with God that is there for all believers.

Prayer: Dear Lord, guide me in helping all my grandchildren grow in their faith .In Jesus name I pray. Amen.

Sue Waldrop

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