

# Forty Days With God's Story



2025

A Collaborative Lenten Devotion

Human beings are creatures who are formed, touched and connected by stories. Story telling is how we connect with each other and how we make sense of our world. Stories make up a large part of our scriptures where we hear about the ways God has been at work in the world and the lives of our ancestors of faith.

This daily Lenten devotion will highlight some of the most central stories of scripture. The invitation is to really dwell with them and give these stories a chance to work their ways into our hearts and our lives.

Knowing these stories can help us be on the lookout for the ways that God is at work in our own lives. We invite you to read the story in your favorite Bible, and as many different versions as you have. Read it several times. Listen to it through an app like the YouVersion Bible app.

Nearly all these stories can be found in a children's story Bible. Check that out and share it with any little ones in your life. Come back to it again, later in the day. Using the questions and prayers provided, however, it feels helpful to you.



## **Wednesday, March 5<sup>th</sup>: Creation (Genesis 1:1—2:4a and 2:4b-25)**

Rev. Angel Jackson

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Which story of God's creating resonates most with you at this time of your life? What images come most powerfully to mind when you think about creation?

*Creative God, you have made all things and called them good. Help us to see you and your love in everything around us. Help us to care for everything you have entrusted to us. Amen*

# Thursday, March 6<sup>th</sup>: The Fall (Genesis 3)

Rev. Marissa Harrison

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The voice of the snake deceived Eve to go against God's instructions for abundant life. What internal and external voices deceive, distract, or lead you away from God's instructions for abundant life?

*Creating God, you have crafted a world of abundance for all of your beloved people and creatures. Help us to listen to your voice and follow in your ways so that we can partner with you in tending your garden and working toward abundant life for all. Amen.*



# Friday, March 7<sup>th</sup>: Cain and Abel (Genesis 4:1-16)

Rev. Shari Ayers

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So many of our stories from the book of Genesis speak to beginnings. What is the beginning of this story? Although we call this the story of Cain and Abel, so much of the story focuses on Cain—his anger, jealousy, and fear. How might you retell the story lifting up Abel's point of view? What might he have been experiencing? What is his legacy and impact on us?

*Loving God, human families and communities frequently experience brokenness. Give us strength to choose patience over anger, cooperation over competition, and mercy over spite.*



image by - Microsoft word stock photo

# Saturday, March 8<sup>th</sup>: Noah (Genesis 6:5–9:28)

Rev. Paul Moody

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What sort of brokenness do you hope God might flood out of  
today's world?

How can water heal in times of great distress?

*God, your grace overwhelms us, covering us more deeply  
than all the oceans of the earth. Guide our hearts to seek  
healing and trust, that the world you love might thrive.*

*Amen*

[image by Ilona Froehlich, [unsplash.com](https://unsplash.com)]

# Monday, March 10<sup>th</sup>: Babel (Genesis 11:1-9)

Rev. Tina Crog



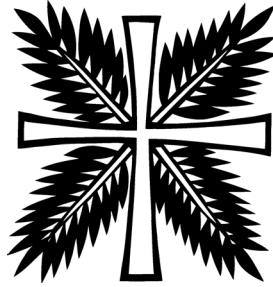
The word “Babel” comes from the Hebrew word “to mix, mingle or confuse.” Think back to a time when something seemed like it should have been simple but ended up being more complicated than expected. Where did you find God in that process. What do you make of the image of God peering from the heavens. Does this impact on how you read the story?

*Gracious God, when our plans falter and our words fail, you are present amid our confusion. Just as you scattered the people at Babel, not to destroy but to redirect, guide us when we lose our way. Remind us that your Spirit unites what human pride divides, and that in Christ, you gather all people into your grace. Strengthen our church to be a place where your Word is heard clearly, and your love brings us together in faith and purpose. Amen.*

# Tuesday, March 11<sup>th</sup>: Call of Abram (Genesis 11:31–12:6)

Rev. Morgan Annable

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What does it mean to be “called” by God? How does your call compare with Abram’s call in this story?

*God of Abram, help me hear your call for my life. Give me the ability to listen for your voice, and answer that call with courage and love. Amen.*



# Wednesday, March 12<sup>th</sup>: Covenant with Abraham

## (Genesis 15)

Rev. Marilyn Matevia

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In similar circumstances, do you think you would feel the same trust in God's promise that Abram exhibits when God tells him that his offspring will be as countless as the stars? How would it feel to learn that there will be hundreds of years of pain and suffering, first, before the promise is fulfilled? *Would you ask for some kind of sign or symbol of God's promise? What would it be?*

*Faithful God, help us to remember how you have accompanied your people through history. Help us to trust in your plan for our lives, even when it is not clear to us. Amen.*

<https://images.app.goo.gl/mi7JxVGZi3TV71U47>



# Thursday, March 13<sup>th</sup>: Joseph (Genesis 37–45)

Rev. Angel Jackson

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Joseph's life is full of disappointments and disasters that, in the end God uses for good. Have there been moments like that in your own life?

When have you been forgiven? When have you forgiven others?

*God of our ancestors, you never leave us or forsake us. Help us to pay attention, to see your presence with us in the ups and downs of life. Help us to forgive as we have been forgiven. Amen*

*[Photo Information- Joseph's Brothers Beg for Help by Pontormo 1515 National Gallery London]*

# Friday, March 14<sup>th</sup>: The Burning bush (Exodus 3)

Rev. Lauren Benton

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God instructs Moses to remove his sandals because he is standing on holy ground. Where should we remove our “sandals”? What would the impact be for us/for our country if we saw all ground as holy? What was Moses hoping to gain by learning God’s name: Was he trying to determine the “real-ness” of God, or Was he trying to wrap his head around this divine encounter?

*Dear God, Prompt me to “turn aside” as Moses did and to see what wonders you are doing, and to remember we too stand on holy ground.*

*Amen.*



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# Monday, March 17<sup>th</sup>: Crossing of the Red Sea (Exodus 13:17—15:21)

Rev. Marrison Harrison

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God delivered the Hebrew people from slavery into freedom.  
From what has God delivered you? Are there areas in your life where you feel like you still need deliverance? Where do we need deliverance as a nation and world?

*Saving God, you deliver your people from the bondage of sin and death, and you grant us hope and newness of life. Save us from all that harms us and our neighbors, that we may lift our voices and sing with Miriam about your freedom and saving promises.*

*Amen*



# Tuesday, March 18<sup>th</sup>: The Golden Calf (Exodus 32)

Rev. Shari Ayers

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This is a challenging story. How do we read stories like this and gather strength and counsel and hope from them?

Are there emotions in the story (of the people, Moses and Aaron, the LORD) that you can relate to? The people cry out to Aaron to give them what they “need”, and Aaron responds. Have you ever been asked for something that you felt in your heart was not in the asker’s best interest? How hard was it to find a faithful and loving response?

*God of deliverance, you led your people out of slavery in Egypt. You lead us every day. When we feel anxious, give us peace. When we look to old ways of being, call us forward into new life. Amen*



*Photo Information- Microsoft word stock photo*

# Wednesday, March 19<sup>th</sup>: Samson (Judges 13–16)

Rev. Paul Moody

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When have you felt far from God's care? Who brought you comfort when you needed it?

Sometimes great violence seems inescapable. Meditate on God's loving presence near you; what does that presence feel like?

*God of mercy, your faithfulness endures from generation to generation, even in troubled and confusing times. Ground us in your tender compassion always. Amen*

[image: *Straining Forward*, January 2024. Paul Jones Moody]

# Thursday, March 20<sup>th</sup>: Goliath (1 Samuel 17)

Rev. Tina Crog



In what ways can I draw strength from the story of David and Goliath. How can I apply that same faith and determination to confront the challenges in my own life? David faced skepticism from his own people before he even confronted Goliath. How do I discern which voices to listen to and which to silence when following God's call?

*Gracious God, When I face giants in my life, remind me that my strength comes from you. Help me to trust not in my own abilities, but in your power at work within me. Open my eyes to the gifts you have given me, even those I might overlook, and use them for your purpose. When doubts arise—whether from others or from within—grant me the faith to listen to your voice above all. Give me the courage to step forward, knowing that you go before me. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.*

#### Artwork Info

William H. Johnson, "David and Goliath", ca. 1944, oil on paperboard, 26 7/8 x 20 1/4 in. (68.3 x 51.3 cm.), Image provided by Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of the Harmon Foundation, 1967.59.999

# Friday, March 21<sup>st</sup>: David and Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11:1—12:25)

Rev. Morgan Annable

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David found repentance difficult, but it led to renewal. How has this also been true for you? How has God's forgiveness revealed itself in your life?

*Forgiving God, sometimes your Word disturbs and challenges me. Help me to see your grace in the midst of hardship and your forgiveness in the midst of my shortcomings. Amen.*



# Saturday, March 22<sup>nd</sup>: Elijah meets God (1 Kings 19:1-13)

Rev. Marilyn Matevia

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Have you ever felt like your best efforts have come to nothing, or that they are unappreciated? Can you identify with Elijah's frustration and fatigue? Are you surprised by a God who understands those human feelings and offers such basic comforts as sleep, food, and water?

Loving God, at the times when I feel most alone in my struggles, help me to recognize your presence, your companionship, and your care. Amen.



# Monday, March 24<sup>th</sup>: Job (Job 1:13-22)

Rev. Angel Jackson

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Have you encountered something in life that has made you question God? What might it look like to bless God's name, even in the midst of struggle?

*Loving God, we know you never wish for our suffering. Thank you that you always welcome our questions, our doubts and our fears. Like a good friend, you long to hear what is on our hearts. Help us to pour them out to you. Amen.*

*Photo: Cracks and Light - Angel Jackson*

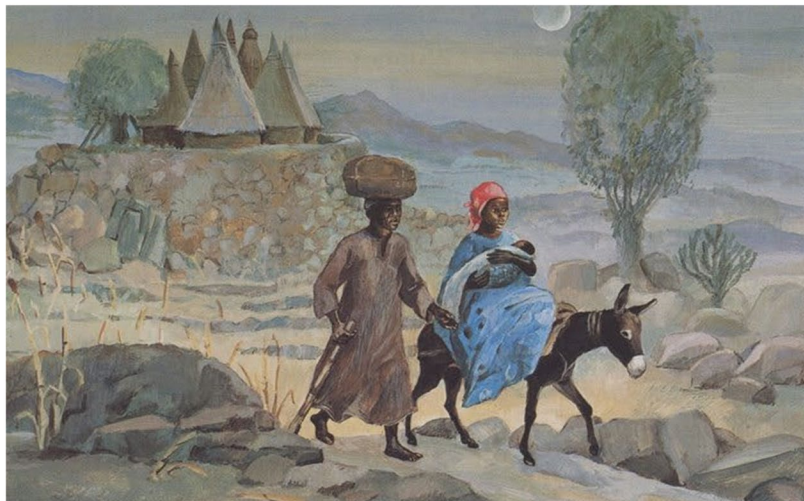
# Tuesday, March 25<sup>th</sup>: Infancy narratives (Matthew 1:1—2:23)

Rev. Lauren Benton

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Matthew could have chosen any stories about Jesus. How do these stories, particularly the genealogy, connect Jesus to the story of the Hebrew people? There is a lot of movement and travel in these stories, often as a result of dreams: Mary and Joseph travel to Bethlehem, the Magi travel from the East and back again, the Holy Family escapes to Egypt and returns when it is safe. What does this movement tell us about God's work in the world?

*Holy God, thank you for being with us always, and that there is no where we can go that you are not present. Help us to take dreams seriously, and to see and aid those who are on the move as Jesus, Mary and Joseph were, escaping perilous situations. Amen.*



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# Wednesdays, March 26<sup>th</sup>: Temptation of Jesus (Matthew 4:1-11)

Rev. Angel Jackson

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Can you remember a time when you were famished? Can you name a time when time felt like angels were waiting on you?

*Oh, Lord God, we give you thanks that you sent Jesus to walk through all the trials of human life. We give you thanks that he was able to withstand the temptation to do things the easy and fast way but walked to the cross on our behalf. Amen*

# Thursday, March 27<sup>th</sup>: Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37)

Rev. Marissa Harrison

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When has a stranger helped you in a time of need? How was the Holy Spirit present?

*Compassionate God, thank you for the neighbors who reach out with helping hands. Inspire us with your compassion and generosity, that we may truly see and respond to the neighbors you have entrusted to us—that we may “go and do likewise,” in Jesus’ name. Amen.*



# Friday, March 28<sup>th</sup>: Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38-42)

Rev. Shari Ayers

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Read the designated verses.

Now, go back and read the stories before and after.

Does it change anything about the story to find it nestled between the story of The Good Samaritan (where loving action is praised) and the story of Jesus teaching his disciples to pray?

How do you know when God is calling you to be Mary and when God is calling you to be Martha?

There are many Bible stories about brothers. There are fewer stories about sisters.

What do you hear in the family dynamics of the story?

How do you experience Jesus as a part of your larger family?

*Holy spirit, holy breath, holy silence. Help us to find times of quiet reflection with you. Guide us when we need to discern how best to love you and our neighbors.*

# Saturday, March 29<sup>th</sup>: Prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32)

Rev. Paul Moody

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How do you attend to the gifts of life that we might be tempted to take for granted?  
When has a generous welcome been offered to you? Who was there? How did you feel?

*Restoring God, throughout the centuries you ground us in reconciliation and love. Bind us to one another and to you, that we might know your faithfulness in all things.  
Amen.*

[image by Luis Villasmil, [unsplash.com](https://unsplash.com)]

# Monday, March 31<sup>st</sup>: Lazarus and the rich man (Luke 16:19-31)

Rev. Tina Crog



In the parable, the rich man's brothers did not listen to the teachings of Moses and the prophets.

What would it look like for me to "listen" to the voices that challenge me to live more faithfully? The rich man lived in comfort but neglected justice and mercy. What do my creature comforts reveal about my priorities?

*Merciful God, as I journey through this season of Lent, open my eyes to the suffering of those around me. Let me not turn away from those in need but instead respond with love and generosity. Help me to loosen my grip on comfort and privilege, so that I may seek your kingdom above all else. Soften my heart to hear your call through Scripture, through the cries of the poor, and through the still, small voice within. May this time of repentance draw me closer to you and transform my life to reflect your mercy.*



# Tuesday, April 1<sup>st</sup>: Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10)

Rev. Morgan Annable

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When have you experienced an invitation from God? Like Zacchaeus, in what ways are you seeking Jesus at this time in your life?

*Inviting God, you seek us out and invite us in, even as we are seeking you. Help us know that your invitation extends to all. Amen.*



Artwork Info: "Zacchaeus" by Joel Whitehead

# Wednesday, April 2<sup>nd</sup>: Wedding at Cana (John 2:1-12)

Rev. Marilyn Matevia

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Imagine yourself at the wedding in Cana. Are you in the wedding party – at risk of embarrassment from running out of wine? Are you the steward, marveling at the audacity of a host serving the best wine last, when the guests are already drunk? Are you among the lowly servants, the only witnesses to the miracle of water turned to wine?

*Generous God, in so many ways, we are obsessed with having and being ENOUGH. Teach us to trust in your generosity. Remind us that you desire abundant life for all and shape our hearts to desire the same. Amen.*

# Thursday, April 3<sup>rd</sup>: Woman at the well (John 4:3-42)

Rev. Angel Jackson

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When have you felt refreshed by a “spring of water gushing  
up to eternal life?”

Who could you run and tell about it?

*Oh Lord we give you thanks that you are living water. Help  
us to drink deeply and to be satisfied. Helps us to tell all we  
meet about your invitation with the enthusiasm of this  
woman at the well. Amen*

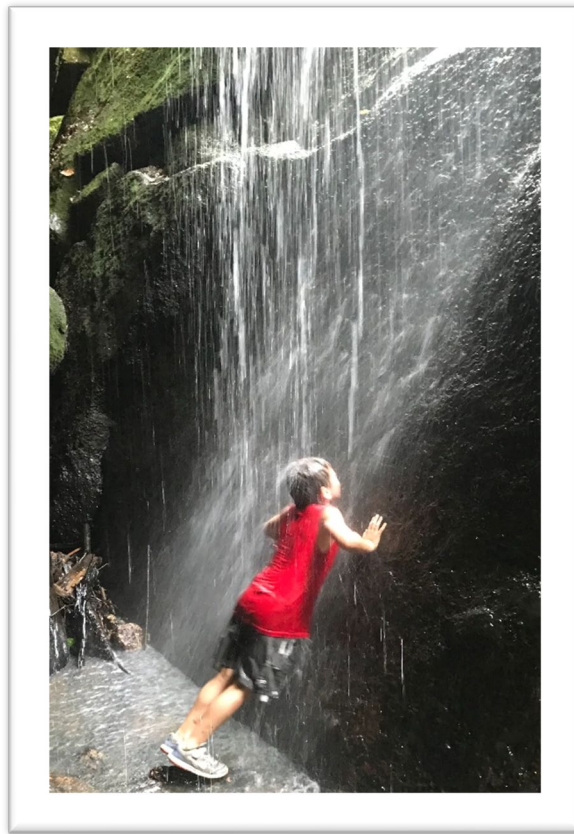


Photo Information Angel Jackson

# Friday, April 4<sup>th</sup>: Woman caught in adultery (John 7:53-8:11)

Rev. Lauren Benton

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Why does Jesus speak up for the woman? What does this story tell us about standing up for the other? For the oppressed? If you were Jesus, what would you have been writing in the dirt?

*God of Compassion, open our eyes to injustice and strengthen us to stand up for those in need. Amen.*



# Saturday, April 5<sup>th</sup>: Man born blind (John 9:1-41)

Rev. Angel Jackson

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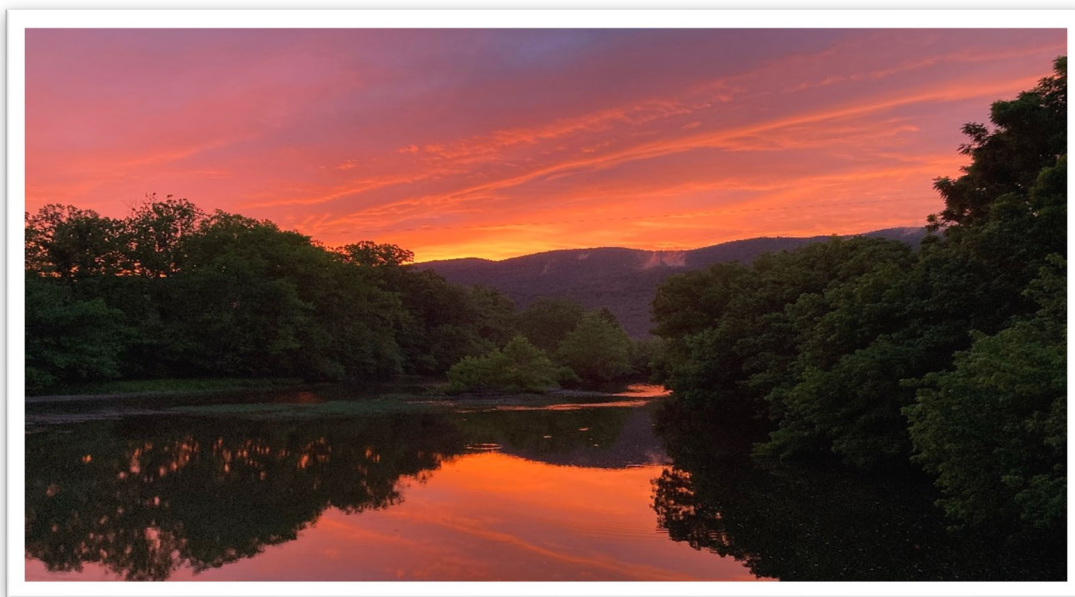
What has Jesus helped you to understand that you might have missed in the past?

So many characters in the story were afraid, or even hostile when they heard the man was healed.

How do we respond to the good news of our neighbors?

*Holy Jesus, we are lost without you, we misunderstand, we seek to see with your eyes. Have mercy on our fear and the ways we cast others out. Continue to open our hearts and help us, like you, to walk with those who need community.*

*Amen*



# Monday, April 7<sup>th</sup>: Good shepherd (John 10)

Rev. Marissa Harrison

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How do you hear the voice of God, the Good Shepherd?  
What helps you to discern and listen to God's voice? How do  
you distinguish God's voice from other voices?

*Shepherding God, thank you for laying down your life for  
your beloved sheep. Help us to follow you as one flock and  
listen to your voice as you seek to love, heal, and bless the  
world. Amen.*



# Tuesday, April 8<sup>th</sup>: Raising of Lazarus (John 11:1-44)

Rev. Shari Ayers

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In many Bibles, this story is divided into four parts (verses 1-16; verses 17-27; verses 28-37; and verses 38-44). Try taking a prayerful pause after each of the sections and asking yourself:

What would I think this story is about if I only read the verses in this section?

In some Bible translations, verse 35 (“Jesus wept”) is the shortest verse in the Bible.

How do you hear this short verse in the context of the larger story? How does it impact how you see and know Jesus?

*God of those who grieve, give courage and comfort to all who mourn. Give hope to those who weep. And call us all to arise and follow where you lead. Amen*



*Photo Information- Microsoft word stock photo*

# Wednesday, April 9<sup>th</sup>: Feeding of the multitudes (Matthew 14:13-21)

Rev. Paul Moody

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When have your most beloved people in life gathered for an incredible meal? What was served? How did that time nurture you?

Sharing what God has given us is a sign of abundance, even when we are tempted to thinking there won't be enough. What is one way to be generous today?

*God of bread, God of life, we are so grateful for your nourishment. Tend to our hearts, that we might learn what it means to both give and receive. Amen.*

[image by Shelby Cohron, [unsplash.com](https://unsplash.com)]



# Thursday, April 10<sup>th</sup>: Lost sheep (Matthew 18:10-14)

Rev. Tina Crog

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Just as a lost sheep might feel overwhelmed by the mountains around it, I sometimes struggle to find my way. What areas of my life do I need to surrender to God's direction and care?



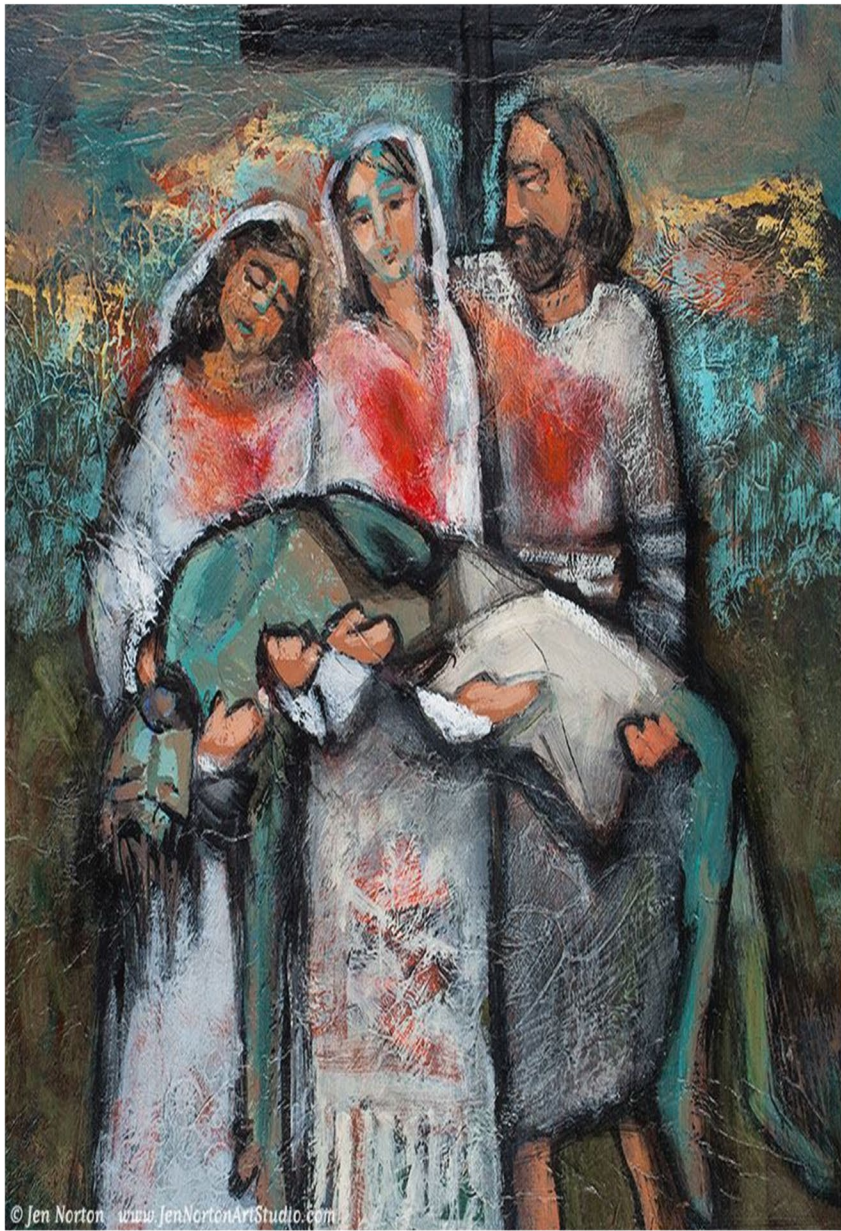
*Guiding God, You Walk with us through vast and rugged landscapes, calling us back when we stray. Like the Good Shepherd in Tanner's vision, you are present even when the path seems overwhelming. Help me to see the world not just as a backdrop to my story, but as a place where you are at work—calling, seeking, and restoring. Teach me to fight against the evils of indifference and injustice, knowing that you go before me, guiding my steps. May I never lose sight of the One who leads with love and light. Amen.*

**Artwork Info:** Henry Ossawa Tanner, "The Good Shepherd" (Atlas Mountains, Morocco), ca. 1930, oil on fiberboard, 29 7/8 x 36 in. (75.8 x 91.3 cm), Image provided by Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Norman Robbins, 1983.95.198

# Friday, April 11<sup>th</sup>: Passion (Matthew 26–27)

Rev. Morgan Annable

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What parts of Jesus's passion story stand out to you?

We see Jesus's death as the event of salvation. In light of this, how might we look at the actions of Peter, Judas, Caiaphas, Pilate, and others differently? Why?

*Saving God, as I meditate on Jesus's passion, help me to see others through your eyes. Give me compassion so that I might not turn away from pain and suffering but look for your presence and love in the midst of it. Amen.*

# Saturday, April 12<sup>th</sup>: Lord's Supper (Matthew 26:26-30)

Rev. Marilyn Matevia

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Imagine yourself at the table with Jesus and the other disciples, sharing this Passover meal. What is the mood in the room? Do you and the other disciples find the words Jesus uses surprising? Disturbing? Do the others understand what he is saying?

*Gracious God, when I receive the bread and wine, help me to see how deeply I am nourished by it. Help me to trust that through this grace, I am empowered to live in your word and walk in your ways. Help me to go out singing with gratitude for gifts of salvation and eternal life.*

# Monday, April 14<sup>th</sup>: Resurrection (Matthew 28:1-15)

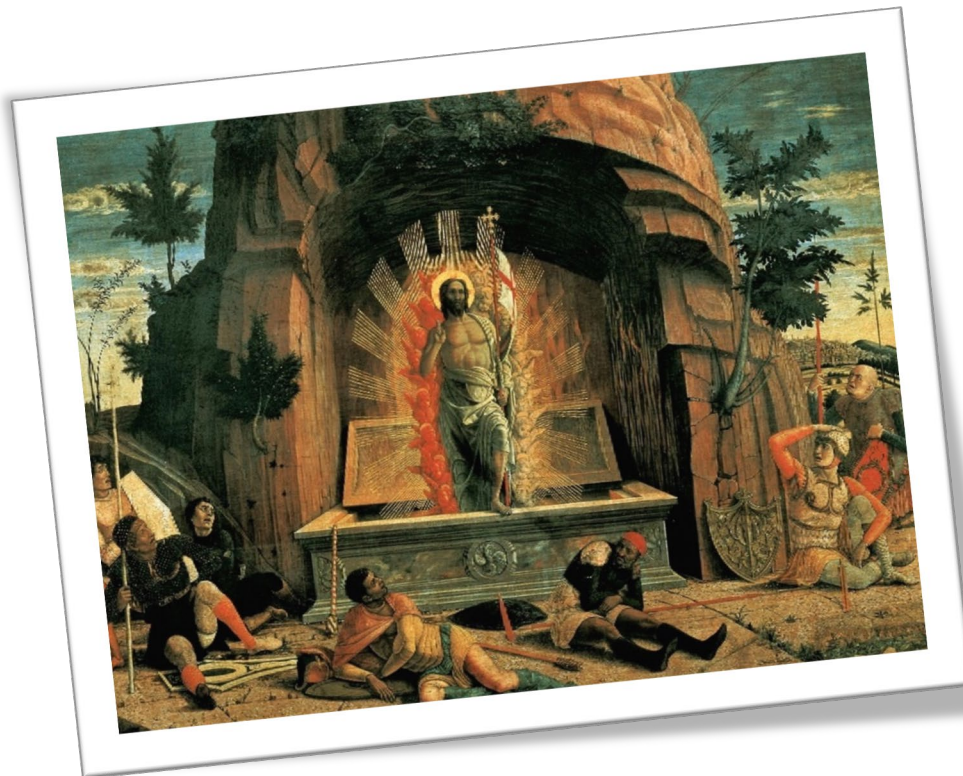
Rev. Angel Jackson

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Close your eyes and imagine the sights, sounds, smells of this scene.

Do you remember a time when you went through a roller-coaster of feelings, like the characters at the tomb experienced?

*God of death and resurrection, you call us to a life of both. Help us to feel your presence in the daily dying's in our own lives. Sit with us in the confusion of the times in between. Help us to see and join in the new life you bring in our midst. Amen.*



Artwork Info: *La Resurrection* by Andrea Mantegna 1475-1459  
<https://commons.wikimedia.org>

# Tuesday, April 15<sup>th</sup>: Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35)

Rev. Laren Benton

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They recognize Jesus when they eat. Why?  
How do we pay attention differently when we are at  
table, fellowshiping together?  
Think of a time of sorrow or grief. What or who was able  
to penetrate the grief? How were you able to find even  
temporary focus on something/someone else?

*God of Incarnation, show us how to be real and present for  
one another, particularly when our neighbors are grieving.  
Amen.*



# Wednesday, April 16<sup>th</sup>: Thomas (John 20:24-29)

Rev. Angel Jackson

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Has anyone ever told you a story about how they've seen  
the Lord? Did you believe them?  
How have you experienced Christ's peace?



*My Lord and my God, you show up. Not always when we  
want you to, but when we need. You don't blame us for our  
questions and our disbelief, and you offer us peace, again  
and again. Help us to be your hands and feet for others who  
want to see you. Amen.*

*Photo Information – Angel Jackson*

# Thursday, April 17<sup>th</sup>, Jesus appears to the disciples/Ascension (Matthew 28:16-20)

Rev. Marissa Harrison

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How do we follow Jesus' command to "Go and make disciples?" How do we share our faith? Who can you invite to worship, bible study, or share this devotional with? What small steps of evangelism might the Holy Spirit be calling you to? Easter Sunday is right around the corner and a great time to bring someone with you to church!

*Commissioning God, you send us out in your name to share your love and light with a hurting and hungry world. Embolden our proclamation. Send us out with your Holy Spirit, that we might "go!" with enthusiasm. And remind us that you are with us until the end of the age. Amen.*



Photo Information – Marissa Harrison

# Friday April 18 Pentecost (Acts 2:1-13)

Rev. Shari Ayers

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There are both visual and audible aspects to the Pentecost story. Which of the two most grabs your attention as you engage this text? Put yourself in the midst of the story. What do you see? What do you hear?

The final verse (verse 13) is short but important. Have you had an experience of God's presence in your life that others discounted? Have you ever "sneered" at the experience of another?

*God of the rushing wind, blow around and through us. God of the tongues of flame, dance upon and within us. God of language and good news, speak to us that we may speak.*



*Photo Information – Microsoft word stock photo*



# Saturday, April 19 Conversion of Paul (Acts 9:1-30)

Rev. Paul Moody

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Changing directions in life can be hard, if not impossible.  
When was a time you had a change of heart?  
Who helped you when the path ahead seemed  
uncertain?

*God of community, you find us and guide us throughout  
our lives. Hold us close to you when relationships are  
strained. Grow patience among us as we together seek  
the way forward. Amen.*

[image: Seeking Direction in the Wilderness, Summer 2024. Paul Jones Moody]

# Reverends and their Churches

In no particular order:

- Rev. Angel Jackson - St. Jacob's Lutheran Church, North Canton
- Rev. Marissa Harrison – Good Soil Lutheran Ministries, Rocky River
- Rev. Shari Ayers - First Lutheran Church, Lorain
- Rev. Paul Moody – Messiah Lutheran Church, Lyndhurst
- Rev. Morgan Walker Annable - Grace Lutheran Church, Wadsworth
- Rev. Dr. Marilyn Matevia – Celebration Lutheran Church, Chardon
- Rev. Laura Franks Benton – Meadowlake Presbyterian Church, Huntersville N.C