



# ***LENT*** ***40 Days*** ***of Renewal***



PRAY



FAST



GIVE

Daily Devotions and Meditations  
for Lent

March 1—April 16, 2017

Written and produced by the Pastor and  
Ministerial Associates of

New Mount Zion Baptist Church

1785 Amelia Street

Orangeburg, South Carolina



**The Reverend Todd A. Brown, Pastor**  
**New Mount Zion Baptist Church, Orangeburg, SC**

*If Jesus is not Lord of ALL then Jesus is not Lord at ALL.  
It's all or nothing. It's now or never.*  
**Are you IN?**

As we enter this Lenten Season, a period of 40 days (46 with Sundays) of reflection and drawing closer to God, commit yourself to eating less as we fast together, indulging in behaviors and habits that are harmful to our spirit and possibly our health. I encourage you to put down the remote control, and turn to studying God's Word more, praying more, meditating more, exercising more, and being more kind, compassionate and loving. This is a time to Develop the Ambassador in you!

My aim is to advance us toward Church-wide Fasting and Bible Study. Join us every Wednesday at noon, every Wednesday night at 7:00, or every Thursday night at 6:00 for Church-wide Bible Study. Prayer Service begins at 6:30 PM on Wednesday evenings.

It is my prayer that all of us will seriously consider the impact each of us has on the growth and development of our church, both individually and collectively.

The 2017 Lenten Fast packet has been distributed and is still available for pickup in the office, also you can still sign up for the 40 day fast, or a modified fast during the 40 days (on the boards in the vestibule of the church). Also make sure to get an accountability and prayer partner to walk with during this Lenten fast. Our first effort toward "The Lenten Meditations" project by the Pastor and our ministerial associates is included herein. I encourage you to read the meditations daily as we remember the great sacrifice that Jesus made for each of us by giving His life in a cruel and brutal crucifixion so that we can have life more abundantly. Are you ready to exercise your faith, and crucify the flesh?

During these 40-Days of powerful enrichment, each member is asked to also participate in performing acts of random kindness. Share with persons as God leads you to bless – *Just Because*. Let them know that God cares about them and so do we. It is an opportunity for us to demonstrate the love of Christ and grow as Kingdom Ambassadors.

Can He and we count on you?

Pastor Todd A. Brown  
Senior Servant



## Meaning of Lent

Lent is a season of preparation leading up to Easter. It is the forty days plus the six Sundays before Easter. The six Sundays in Lent are not counted among the forty days. They are celebrations of Jesus' resurrection (a celebration of Jesus' victory over sin and death) and an appropriate day to "take a break" from the restrictions you have set for Lent. Whatever you have passed up for Lent can be indulged on Sunday. For instance, if you have given up sodas or coffee, you can have a soda or a cup of coffee on Sunday. It is not designed to be a stressful occasion. It is a special time of self examination and penitence. It is a time to draw closer to God and seek to find your purpose in life.

In the worship services, crosses showing the risen Christ are veiled and the word "*Alleluia*" is not used in the liturgy or hymns to mark this season as a special time of renewal. Additionally, this season is marked by giving up some things and taking on others. Examples of these sacrifices are meat, sweets, watching tv, alcohol, smoking, and the like. Moneys from these sacrifices can be used to stock the food pantry or give to a worthy cause at church or in your community. Time saved can be spent reading the Bible, praying, meditating, and fasting on Friday.

Lent in 2017 will start on Wednesday, the 1st of March (Ash Wednesday) and will continue for 46 days until Saturday, the 15th of April (Holy Saturday).

**Wednesday, March 1—Ash Wednesday**

## Overcoming Evil

*Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.* Romans 12:21

Terrorist attacks. Racism. Violence. Hatred. Fear.

Take one look at your phone or newsfeed over the past few weeks and it is undeniable that the world simply is not as it should be. Sin has fractured our relationship with God and with one another, and we feel the effects every single day. In a world where evil seems to be on the rise with each passing moment, how are we meant to respond? How do we live as faithful followers of Christ in the midst of such pain and brokenness?

It is easy to see the needs of the world and feel helpless and overwhelmed, wondering how we can possibly make a difference or bring about peace and hope. I believe it is important to remember that faithfulness begins with seemingly unremarkable acts of goodness and love. Individually, you or I likely will not be able to solve global injustices or terror threats, yet we can seek to bring God's peace to our neighborhoods, families, and workplaces. Where on your own street is there injustice that you can seek to overcome? Where in your family is there brokenness and hurt that need the healing touch of Christ?

Faithful Christian discipleship is often found in the small, unseen places. It is the daily life of prayer and repentance that God uses to change the world. We join him in his renewing work when we turn away from sin and evil and let our lives be filled with the goodness of His presence. As the great novelist Leo Tolstoy once said, "Everyone thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks of changing himself."

When you see stories of evil and sorrow that leave you speechless, do not be overcome with despair. Instead, look close to home and ask the Lord to show you how you can be an agent of His goodness and love in the spheres of influence He has given you. This is how we as Christians learn to faithfully follow Jesus in the midst of a confusing and broken world. As we resist evil and overcome it with good, we encounter a foretaste of the goodness and justice of His coming Kingdom.

**Our prayer:** Lord when we are confronted with evil, give us the strength and power of Your Spirit to overcome evil with good and love Amen.

**Reverend Todd A. Brown  
Pastor**



**Thursday March 2**

## Where Is Your Treasure?

*"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal;<sup>20</sup> but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.<sup>21</sup> For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Matthew 6:19-21 (NKJV)*

God supplies our every need on a daily basis; firstly, because God promises that; secondly, because God loves us just that much. We have a tendency to store up and save. It's our nature to save for a "rainy day". The Word encourages us to not try to hold on to stuff. Moths and rust will destroy it or thieves will steal it. The Model Prayer teaches this principle: 'Give us this day our DAILY bread.'

A stingy brother would not share with his brother. The stingy and selfish one wanted to keep it all for himself. The rich fool (Luke 12:13-21) thought he could secure his life by building bigger barns to secure his holdings. God had other plans. "This night," He said, "your soul will be required of you." To whom now will all his wealth belong?

When we open our hands and our hearts to supply another's needs is when God blesses us more abundantly. When we hoard and hold on, we lose out on everything. Where is Your Treasure?

Prayer: Dear Lord, please guide my thoughts, desires, and actions. Show me that living for you and making right choices and decisions is what is best. Earthly treasure vanishes but heavenly nuggets remain. Amen.

Reverend Yvonne Singleton  
Assistant Pastor



Friday, March 3

## Feed My Sheep

*And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry. Matthew 4:2*

The mindset of today's society is contrary to fasting. Watching TV from 9-11, I counted 27 commercials devoted to food. Traveling down Chestnut Street, I counted 11 restaurants within a 3-mile stretch. Looking in my refrigerator and cabinets at home, my only problem is deciding what I want to eat. It's no wonder that the first temptation with which the devil tempted Jesus was satisfying his hunger.

Today we are given a number of fasting options. Be careful to choose the one that best suits your health, lifestyle, and spiritual needs.

**Full Fast:** Drink only liquids. You establish the number of days.

**The Daniel Fast:** Eat no meat, no sweets and no bread. Drink water and juice. Eat fruits and vegetables.

**3-Day Fast:** This fast can be a Full Fast, Daniel Fast or give up at least one item of food.

**Partial Fast:** A partial fast is from 6:00 am to 6:00 pm or from sun up to sundown. You can select from three types of fasting - a Full Fast, Daniel Fast or give up at least one item of food.

**Isaiah 58:6** Is this not the fast that I have chosen: to loose the bonds of wickedness, To undo the heavy burdens, To let the oppressed go free, And that you break every yoke? (NKJV)

Keep in mind that whatever fast you chose, your body or flesh is going to rebel (want food) more than normal. Once the devil knows that you are fasting and just not skipping a meal, it becomes spiritual warfare. To combat this, remember what the Bible says in Matthew: 4:4 - "*man shall not live by bread alone.*" Yes, your body may be the vessel God is using to fast, but it's not about you or me. We are just being used to help "**Feed God's Sheep.**"

**Prayer:** Father God, teach me how to present my body as a living sacrifice so that through fasting

You can use me for Your purpose to benefit the Kingdom. Amen.

**Reverend John H. Campbell**  
**Associate Minister**

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**Saturday, March 4**

## **God Knows Exactly What You Need**

*My God will supply all your needs according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.*  
*Philippians 4:19*

We should see the challenges and trials we face as God's way of preparing us for greater heights. When we are going through troubled times, God often puts someone in our path who can assist us through our trial period by lending emotional support. If we close ourselves off from the world, it may be hard to see that person and get through the situation we are facing. However, when we welcome and receive help, this support can aid in lifting us up from the pit.

Job faced a mighty challenge in his life. Even his wife, children, and friends offered poor advice. They could not really sense what Job was going through. They did not sense the love Job had for God and doing the right thing. Then God sends Elihu to speak to Job. Elihu is who Job needed to comfort and assure him. (Job 32-37)

When we are confronted with the trials and challenges of life, we must remember the promises of God. When we are in our darkest hour, we must know that God waits for us to recognize Him; for us to call on Him. God knows exactly what we need, even during our darkest trials.

Prayer: Dear God, I acknowledge Your Presence in my life. I yield myself totally to You to do with me as You desire. I trust You to supply my every need. I need You every hour. Amen.

**Minister Eartha Davis**  
**Associate Minister**

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**Monday, March 6**

## **A Made Up Mind**

*But Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king's choice food or with the wine which he drank; so he sought permission from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself. Daniel 1:8 (NASB)*

Daniel was determined that he would not allow the pressures and circumstances of the life around him to compromise his trust, faith, devotion and commitment to God. When we purpose in our hearts that we will stay committed to God, though temptations may arise, He will always give us the strength to overcome and will give

us the way of escape.

Johnny was a Christian in the eleventh grade. He was determined to hold fast to his commitment to live a life that pleases God and honors the Lord Jesus Christ. As with all teens, temptations arose in school. On many occasions, Johnny was faced with the decision to follow the crowd and indulge in some of the things his classmates were involved in just so that they would not make fun of him, or to stand on God's Word. Determined to please God rather than man, he always chose to obey God.

When we make a decision to obey God instead of giving in to temptations and pressures, He will always provide a way of escape (1 Cor. 10:13).

Prayer: Dear God, my mind and my heart are made up and determined to follow you no matter what. I need you to help me to be faithful in my commitment to you and to give me the strength and wisdom to overcome temptations. In Jesus' name, Amen.

**Minister Cassandra J. Fuller  
Associate Minister  
Director of Evangelism**

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**Tuesday, March 7**

## **He Came to Us**

*The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth...Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known. John 1:14, 16-18 NIV*

Mankind has always had a desire to know God. When we look at the majesty of his creation, we are filled with awe and a sense that there must be a God somewhere who created it all. For generations, humanity has always wondered who is God, where is He, what is His plan, and what is our purpose? Many myths, philosophies, and religions have attempted to fill the void for our desire to know God. However, all of them have fallen desperately short.

Over two thousand years ago, a wonderful thing happened. The God that many felt couldn't be known decided to make himself known to us. In the personage of Christ, the infinite triune God revealed himself by becoming flesh and dwelling among us.

Because of his great love for us, he was compelled to step out of eternity into time and space, wrap himself in an earth suit, and undertake the greatest rescue and recovery mission of all time. He endured trials, tragedy, treachery, and even death to rescue humanity from eternal tyranny.

As followers of God, let us follow the example of Christ. Let us not retreat to our churches, homes, and other safe places only to experience temporal bliss until His return. Instead, let love compel you to engage and meet the need of hurting humanity. Let love compel you to endure difficulty, disgrace, disaster, and even death in partnering with Christ in carrying out the greatest rescue and recovery mission of all time.

Prayer: Dear Lord, help me to be available to you. Empower me to stand strong and be a beacon of hope for those around me. Lord, order my steps so that I will go where you would have me to go and do what you would have for me to do. Amen.

**Adolphus Johnson  
Associate Minister**

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Wednesday, March 8

***Isaiah 40:31 - But those who wait on the Lord Shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint.***

Even the most dedicated and committed believers sometimes get weary. Our zest and zeal for the Lord can become a burdensome task for those of us who seek to do the will of God. Sometimes the fruit of our labor is not readily apparent and so we tend to withdraw out of discouragement. I have learned in my life that things are not always as they seem.

We serve a God who loves us and wants us to succeed. He speaks to us in a still small voice. Sometimes in order to hear that voice, we must stand still and listen. In other words, we must WAIT. For most of us, waiting is not an easy thing to do but God has promised us that if we just wait, not passively, but with the expectation of answered prayers. Wait with the anticipation of a servant who is looking forward to a reward that is greater than any earthly treasure.

If we wait, He has promised us renewed strength that will lift us up from the dark and dismal disappointments that we face daily. He will strengthen us both physically and spiritually to run the marathon and not just the 50 yard dash. When persecution comes, His loving arms will sustain us so that our walk will be by faith and we will not faint.

***“Remember, when we get weary we are most likely serving in our own power and strength. Wait on the Lord and be of good courage.”***

***Elaine Keitt  
Associate Minister***

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Thursday, March 9

## **They Did What They Could**

So Joseph brought some linen cloth, took down the body, wrapped it in the linen, and placed it in a tomb cut out of rock. Then he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. Mary Magdalene and Mary the Mother of Jesus saw where he was laid. Mark 15:46-47 (NIV)

This tomb was probably a man-made cave hewn from a hill. It was large enough to walk into. Joseph wrapped Jesus' body, placed it in the tomb, and rolled a heavy stone across the entrance. The religious leaders also watched where Jesus was buried. They placed guards by the tomb and sealed stone to make sure that no one would steal Jesus' body and claim He had risen from the dead. (Matthew 27:62-66)

These women could do very little. They couldn't speak before the Sanhedrin in Jesus' defense; they couldn't appeal to Pilate; they couldn't stand against the crowds; they couldn't overpower the Roman guards. But they did what they could. They stayed at the cross when the disciples had fled. They followed Jesus' body to its tomb; and they prepared spices for His body. Because these women used the opportunities they had, they were the first to witness the resurrection. God blessed their devotion and diligence.

As believers, we should take advantage of the opportunities we have and do what we can for Christ, instead of worrying about what we cannot do. (Mark 15:47)

**Prayer:** Dear Lord, I thank you for the risen Christ who has proven that He keeps His promises. I thank you for every opportunity to live and share your word. Thank you for your son Jesus. Amen.

**Rev. Claude Collins  
Associate Minister**



Friday, March 10

## Everything is Possible with God

With God all things are possible. Matthew 19:26

Through trials and tribulations, God is here. We all have experienced God the Father on many levels. One can relate to God through an emotional experience such as saving a relationship that was broken or a physical experience of being ill. Another person's experience could have been mental. God healed you.

When life's trials had gotten the best of you and you almost lost your mind, God healed each one regardless of the type of experience that you endured. There is no obstacle that we face in this world that God cannot handle. If we allow God to direct our paths and guide us through life, we will delight in knowing that with Him all things are possible.

**Prayer:** Dear God, help me to cast all my worries and fears on you. Help me to trust You even when all I see is darkness. In my time of trouble, I shall remember that with You all things are possible. Amen

**Minister Kemeka Johnson**  
**Associate Minister**



Saturday, March 11

## Do You Love Me?

So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, *son* of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Feed My lambs." He said to him again a second time, "Simon, *son* of Jonah, do you love Me?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Tend My sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon, *son* of Jonah, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Feed My sheep. John 21: 15-17 (NKJV)

Love, no words can define it. It is something so great, only God could create. It endures sadness. It overcomes the broken heart. It is eternal, Love. It is measured by the unseen heart which can transform tears into joy, heartaches into praise, and broken spirits into true worship. For the bible declares in 1John 4:16 (NKJ) And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him. We have the ability to Love if we so choose to Love. So then, love reaches out for a response.

Jesus asked Peter three times if he loved him. In Peter's first and second response to Jesus question, he said, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." However the third time his response was different, he said in verse 17, "You know all things; You know that I love You."

God showed us His Love by sending His only Son into a sinful world to die for all our sins. Now, that love is reaching out so we would respond to Jesus question, Do you love Me. His question is for all of us, what say you?

**Prayer:** Grateful Father, your love is unmeasurable and undefinable. You have called us to be your express of love in a world that don't know you. Holy Spirit help us to speak the love of Christ to God's sheep. Remind us that Jesus died so that we can be save, and by that love we will live eternally with him. Do You Love the Lord Jesus Christ? Lead us in your Love, is our prayer in Christ name, Amen.

**Rev. L. E. Keitt, Sr.**  
**Associate Minister**

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**Monday, March 13**

## ***Joy and Pain***

*Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.*

*Romans 12:15*

Throughout the journey of life, there are moments of unspeakable joy and crushing heartache and pain. Most likely, as you read these words, you may have recently experienced joy and pain, celebration and sorrow. Often these emotions exist within us at the same time, where moments of joy are tempered with sorrow, and seasons of pain can be relieved by the promise of hope and peace.

So often, our experience of joy and sorrow is entirely out of our control. Joy comes to us as a free gift, or sorrow becomes an uninvited companion on our journey. In a sense, there is a passive reality to emotions; we often receive them whether we want to or not.

In the Apostle Paul's words to the early Christians in Rome, we find another dimension to emotion: a radical invitation to an active and intentional life of joy and sorrow.

What if joy isn't simply an emotion that comes your way but is instead something you intentionally look for and seek out? To do this, it means you must broaden your capacity to love and celebrate, looking not simply for your own joy but for the joy of others as well. A sign of the Spirit's work in your life is the ability to celebrate with others even when you receive no direct benefit in return. Their joy truly becomes your joy, free from all envy, jealousy, or comparison.

Likewise, we must ask for the grace to take the sorrow and pain of others into our hearts and let it become our own. This is an active and intentional choice, for it is possible to hold the pain and brokenness of others at arms length, remaining emotionally detached and unaffected. It is for good reason that Paul's words to us are a command, not a suggestion. We must choose to weep with those who weep, actively looking for those who are in sorrow and letting their pain become our pain.

This way of life goes against our natural desires and inclinations. It requires that we open ourselves up to the joy and sorrow of others. Our personal joy and pain cannot be our only concern.

**Prayer:** May God give us the grace to live this radical life of empathy and compassion for the sake of others and as a sign of his coming Kingdom in Jesus name. Amen.

**Pastor Todd A. Brown**

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**Tuesday, March 14**

## **Gospel in Haiku**

*Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."* *Luke 19:9,10*

During the Christmas holidays, one of my sisters and a brother began texting about the festive occasion. One short response led to another - usually in rhyme and rhythm. So I cannot take full credit for this little ditty.

A traditional Japanese **haiku** is a three-line poem with seventeen syllables, written in a 5/7/5 syllable count. The first and last lines of a haiku have 5 syllables and the middle line has 7 syllables. The lines rarely rhyme.

While this is not *perfect* haiku, it is a thoughtful reflection of what the gospel is all about. During this period of drawing closer to God, may your days be filled with love, joy and gladness as you, reflect on the reason we

celebrate.

Christ is his title.  
Jesus is his name!  
Deliverance is His game.

Salvation is His Aim.  
We were the blame.  
He's coming again.

But He's here...in you!  
Ain't that the truth!!  
From the Amen booth!

Prayer: God when the rhyme and reason of life seem distant or no where in sight, help us to remember your love and perfect timing. Help us to feel the beat of the rhythm of life. Let us march to what we hear and feel.  
Amen

**Reverend Yvonne Singleton**  
**Assistant Pastor**

**Wednesday, March 15**

## **Such As I Have I'll Give**

*Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you. Luke 6:38*

To often because of our own lack of Alms we feel that part of Lent doesn't apply to us. We simply say God you know if I had I would give. It's true we are encouraged to give Alms (money) during this time of year, but you can't give what you don't have. We must remember there's a common thread that binds our giving and that thread is simply "Give" Here are a few other ways we can give.

**Give your time:** Help out at the soup kitchen, visit the sick, volunteer at the children church, etc.

**Donate (give);** Go through your closets, and cabinets, don't give what you don't want, give what you don't need.

**Give:** A hug, a smile, an encouraging word, an invitation to Bible study, someone a ride to church.

**Give:** Financially with an open heart and a clear conscience **2Corinthians 9:7 So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver**

**Give:** Your life completely over to God that others may see his works in your life. Which will encourage them to Give their lives to him.

**Prayer:** Lord provide me with the opportunities to give such as I have. Be it Alms, time, or simply Christian stewardship. Never forgetting that it rains on the rich and the poor, and I'm not any better than the least of these in your sight. Lord it is my prayer that as you increase my ability to Give, that you increase my desire to be Giver.

**Rev. John H Campbell**  
**Associate Minister**

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**Thursday, March 16**

## **Behold The Man!**

*Jesus then came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, "Behold, the Man!"*

*John 19:5 (NASB)*

Behold the Man! Those words of Pilate ring deep in our hearts and souls when we look at Jesus beaten and battered beyond recognition as He endured the punishment for our sins. Look at Jesus as He hung on the cross. He could have come down from the cross at any time but because of His great love for us, He endured the pain and shame.

The woman, dirty and worn out, walked down the street, pushing the shopping cart that contained all her possessions. As she walked past the church, she felt shame, embarrassment and humiliation as the good churchgoers just stared at her, pointing and talking about her. She felt a deep loneliness as she longed for someone to invite her in and point her to the loving Savior that they claimed to know. Instead, they looked at her with disgrace and disgust. My, how Jesus must have felt to see that when they looked at the woman, they failed to see Him!

When you look at Jesus, what do you so see? Do you see the loving Savior who gave His life for everyone? When you see the nails in His hands and feet, do you see the One who died so that you may live? When you see His broken body do you see your sins forgiven? When you see His precious blood that was shed, do you see the One who washed your sins as white as snow? Behold the Man!

Prayer: Dear Jesus, thank you for dying for my sins. Please help me to see you when I look at others. In Jesus' name, Amen.

**Minister Cassandra J. Fuller  
Associate Minister  
Director of Evangelism**

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**Friday, March 17**

## **The Gift of Love**

Oh, give thanks to the LORD! Call upon His name; Make known His deeds among the peoples! Sing to Him, sing psalms to Him; Talk of all His wondrous works! I Chronicles 16:8-9

We live each day in His love.  
Enjoy the many blessings from above.

Sometimes we might feel that God does not care  
But never live in despair.

God sees everything and He is everywhere.

Prayer: Heavenly father grant unto us the love that we need to abide in everyday in Jesus's name I pray: Amen.

**Minister Eartha S. Davis  
Associate Minister**

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**Saturday, March 18**

## **A Rough Start**

<sup>9</sup> *The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world.*<sup>10</sup> *He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him.* <sup>11</sup> *He came to that which was his own, but his*

*own did not receive him. <sup>12</sup> Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—<sup>13</sup> children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. John 1:9-13 NIV*

A popular self-help guru once said that your purpose will be apparent to you and others. Furthermore, he said that your gift will lead others to elevate and prosper you.

As for our Savior, he didn't receive the red carpet treatment. As a matter of fact, his earthly journey started out very rocky. When he was born, he wasn't born in a home or hospital like most, nor in a palace which would have been fitting for royalty. However, he was born in a place for animals – a manger (... a cave). Even as an infant, he had a death penalty placed on his head. The situation was so dire that his family fled to Egypt to ensure his safety.

As we endeavor to discover our purpose, it is easy to misinterpret "trouble" as an indicator that we are moving in the wrong direction. It is also easy to allow the commentary of others to cause us to veer off track. Remember, although Jesus Christ's purpose was (and is) to be the "light" of the world, he wasn't received well by the world that he came to set free. However, His purpose was never shaken no matter the trials he encountered.

Prayer: Dear Lord, help me discover my purpose in the counsel of your Spirit and your Holy Word. Empower me to be a light even in dark places because that is where you need me most. Give me the strength to lift up the gospel as the solution for our world even when I feel like it is unpopular. Lord, order my steps so that I can stay on course even when things get rocky. Amen.

**Adolphus Johnson**  
**Associate Minister**

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**Monday, March 20**

***John 17:17-19 - Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. <sup>18</sup> As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. <sup>19</sup> And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth.***

My grandmother told me that every time you tell a lie it becomes easier to turn away from that which is true. Pretty soon you begin believing the lies because you can no longer distinguish the difference between what's true and what's false.

Our society today finds itself in just that kind of situation. Lies and truth seem to have become one and the same. Information from so many sources has tainted our minds and now even the simplest truths are no longer taken at face value.

We begin to question whether what we believe to be the truth is really the truth. There are those whose life mission is to mislead you so that you will begin to question the things you hold dear as truth.

Jesus tells us that we are sanctified (set apart) by the truth of God the Father. It is by His word that we can rest assured that the attack of the enemy will not prevail. Just as Jesus was sent into the world by God to take away the sins of the world, Jesus sends us to proclaim that which was fulfilled through Him. The Good News, The Gospel of Jesus Christ that all who believe the truth will be saved.

***"The truth will set you free."***

**Elaine Keitt**  
**Associate Minister**

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**Tuesday, March 21**

## **“The Guarded Tomb”**

Make the tomb as secure as you know how.” So they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting a guard. (Matt. 27:65-66). (NIV)

The Pharisees were so afraid of Jesus’ predictions about his resurrection that they made sure the tomb was thoroughly sealed and guarded. Because the tomb was hewn out of rock in the side of a hill, there was only one entrance.

The tomb was sealed by stringing a cord across the stone that was rolled over the entrance. The cord was sealed at each end with clay. But the religious leaders took a further precaution, asking that guards be placed at the tombs entrance. With such precautions, the only way the tomb could be empty would be for Jesus to rise from the dead. The Pharisees failed to understand that no rock, seal, guard, or army could prevent the Son of God from rising.

He will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove the disgrace of his people from all the earth. (Isiah 25:8) (NIV) When the Lord speaks, He does what He says. It is comforting to know that God’s plan and actions are closely tied to His word. When we pray according to God’s word and claim His promises, He hears us and answers our requests.

**Prayer:** Dear Lord, I believe in Your word. I know if You said it, it’s done. I pray that Your word continues to give me comfort and the ability to understand and do Your will.

**Rev. Claude Collins  
Associate Minister**

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**Wednesday, March 22**

### **With Me**

Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. John 15:4 (NKJV)

A young child once described faith as, seeing the cookie jar high on the shelf, but believing if he climb up, there will be cookies in the jar. That’s what living in faith is like, believing that God will supply the need even when you can’t see it. It may seem a high climb, a long time, a hopeless journey, but we reach our goals if we only believe by faith.

As believers we have been grafted into the vine of Christ. A new way of thinking, trusting, and living for the betterment of the Vine. Christ had you in mind to advance this program to save the lost, encourage the saints, whereby we grow stronger in the Vine. As we abide in Him and he builds us up in wisdom and understanding, our lives are transform to live a holy life before Him.

Sometimes we don’t understand what God is trying to do in our lives. We get discouraged because we don’t understand, can’t figure things out. But we must remember that we serve a God who knows it all. He hasn’t forgotten us. He is speaking so we can understand. He said, Abide in Me, and I in you. Come to Me, let me supply all your needs. You can do all things, With Me!

Prayer: Grateful Father, please forgive me for each times when I tried put away from you to be and done things on my own. I repent of my selfishness that have cause me to be disobedient to your Word. Now Lord I chose you as the only Living and True Vine that gives life and life more abundantly. Amen!

**Rev. Lavern E. Keitt**

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Thursday, March 23

## Fight the Good Fight of Faith

I have fought a good fight, I have finished my cause, I have kept the faith. II Timothy 4:7

Stand strong and know that your labor is not in vain. You almost gave up because of the troubles of life. When people talked and criticized you for your work and walk with the Lord, you held on to the still small voice in your spirit that encouraged you to keep the faith. When the enemy came to destroy you and your loved ones, you were encouraged by the life of your dear brother Job and held strong to the faith that God would replace all that you lost.

There were many who started the race with you but they went astray. Be encouraged in the Lord and know that when you started the race He was there. When you almost gave up, He was there. And He will be there at the finish line waiting to reward you eternally for keeping the faith.

**Prayer:** Dear God, Thank you for not giving up on me even though there were many times I wanted to give up on myself. Please continue to give me the strength to endure life's many temptations and tribulations. Help me to continue the race and keep the faith. Amen

**Minister Kemeka Johnson**  
Associate Minister

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Friday, March 24

## Forgive Quickly and Often

*Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, 'Lord how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seventy times?' Jesus answered, 'I tell you, not seven times but seventy-seven times.'*  
Matthew 18:21-22 (NIV)

The offense of sin hurts. Sin wounds indiscriminately. It is no respecter of persons. Sin builds walls. It ravishes relationships and it separates. Sin is a sorry excuse for wrong behavior. Sin is deceptive, carnal and Christ-less. Sin is unfair, sad and sometimes sadistic.

Sin follows a process of desire, conception, birth, maturity and death. James describes its diabolical development in his epistle to the saints. "Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death" (James 1:15). So sin is not and should not be taken lightly. Certainly its infliction of pain cannot be ignored for long. It can kill relationships.

Nonetheless, when you are sinned against, you are to forgive. When someone's sin assaults you, you are to forgive them. When someone's sin berates your work, you are to forgive them. When someone's sin violates your trust, you are to forgive them. When someone's sin steals your joy, you are to forgive them.

When someone's sin crushes your dreams, you are to forgive them. When someone's sin steals from you, you are to forgive them. This level of forgiveness is counter-intuitive and counter-cultural, but it is the way of Christ and His disciples. Forgiveness is God's game plan. You will lose if you don't forgive. Unforgiveness is tortuous to the soul. It is unhealthy for the body and emotions.

It doesn't matter who is right or wrong. Forgiveness cuts through the varying degrees of guilt and erases the entire debt, as to forgive is to cancel a debt that is owed. True forgiveness comes from the heart of the one offended. It is not a flippanant acknowledgement, but a sincere removal of anything that is owed. When the

offended one forgives, he or she wipes out the expectation for an apology, a pay back or change. It is forgiveness clear and simple. Forgiveness is letting go of the hurt, anger and shame. When you forgive you are free. You are free from the shackles of sin. When you forgive you trust God to judge others in His time. His judgment is just. God can be trusted with the consequences of sin's offense.

Jesus does not deal in forgiveness quotas. The forgiveness of the Cross was swift, full, final and forever. Unlock your relational restraints with the key of forgiveness. Set others free with forgiveness and you will be set free. There is freedom in Christ. Forgive fast, and forgive often.

Our prayer: Father thank you for your forgiveness. As you have continually forgiven us, Father give us the strength and ability to forgive those who offend us, that our heart and soul might always be pure before you Amen.

**Reverend Todd A. Brown  
Pastor**

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**Saturday, March 25**

## **Hidden Figures**

Rizpah daughter of Aiah took sackcloth and spread it out for herself on a rock. From the beginning of the harvest till the rain poured down from the heavens on the bodies, she did not let the birds touch them by day or the wild animals by night. When David was told what Aiah's daughter Rizpah, Saul's concubine, had done, he went and took the bones of Saul and his son Jonathan from the citizens of Jabesh Gilead. II Samuel 21:10-12

An enlightening, lives-discovering movie currently shown on theater screens across the country portrays the lives of three women who spent their livelihoods around the National Aeronautical Space Administration (NASA) in the during the early years of the US space program.

The incredible untold story of three women: Katherine G. Johnson, Dorothy Vaughan and Mary Jackson portrays these brilliant African-American women who really were the brains behind the launch of astronaut John Glenn into orbit, a stunning achievement that restored the nation's confidence, turned around the Space Race, and galvanized the world. The visionary trio crossed all gender and race lines to inspire generations to dream big. (google.com)

Hidden figures indeed! Rizpah was one who kept watch through many nights over her 2 sons and 5 sons of Saul to protect them from the prey. Likewise, there are so many of our biblical women who had such profound roles and whose stories are virtually hidden from us. Hagar, Abigail, Lydia, Anna, Candace, Dorcas, Deborah, and many more.

John Glenn was adamant about knowing that Katherine Johnson had calculated the angle of trajectory of the spacecraft to assure him of his return to earth. Like these hidden figures, we all can use our gifts and talents to make our mark in history. Our stories may not be told worldwide, but our communities and neighborhoods will witness the impact we may have on them.

What will be your legacy? Someone's babies need protection. Don't let the birds touch them by day or the wild animals by night.

**Prayer:** Lord, in this season of dedication, show me where I need to go and be and do. Help me to be like Rizpah — faithful unto death. Amen

**Reverend Yvonne Singleton  
Assistant Pastor**

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Monday, March 27

## If You Don't He Won't

*For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. Matthew 6:14, 15*

One of the things we are asked to do during the season of Lent is to enter into a mindset of Repentance (or Forgiveness). Granted this is a personal act, but it's also twofold. As the scripture instructs us, we must also forgive our Brother who has trespassed (sinned) against us, before we can expect God to forgive us for our trespasses (sin).

During my years in ministry I've had to counsel people who have been often hurt by other Christians. So many times I've heard these words, "I'll never forgive them" followed by "you have no idea what they've done to me." Many times the only comfort the wounded person has is an unforgiving heart. Unfortunately, God does not have a list of transgressions that are exempted from forgiveness, such as *He did that to me so I don't have to forgive him; she did that to me so I don't have to forgive her.*

During this season of Lent, before we go before God with our list of things for which we want Him to forgive us, let's stop and ask God to open our hearts to forgive those who have trespassed against us. A lot of times we walk around with unforgiveness in our hearts and the person doesn't even realize that s/he has hurt us. Woe unto us if we go before God with unforgiveness in our hearts, and after all we've done as Christians, hear Him say "*depart I don't know you.*"

**Prayer:** God, please open up my heart to be able to forgive my Brother, then I'll have the privilege to come to you and ask forgiveness for my sin. Father, I must admit that it's hard sometimes to forgive those who have hurt me, but nevertheless if I want to see your face I must learn to forgiveness.

**Rev. John H. Campbell**  
Associate Minister

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Tuesday, March 28

## The Little Things that Please

The LORD is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him. Exodus 15:2

Thank God for everything in your life: because He is the maker and ruler of the entire universe. God will keep you in His care.

**Prayer:** Father you have given us everything we need for this life. We thank you!

**Min. Eartha S. Davis**  
Associate Minister



Wednesday, March 29

## He Is Risen!

*He is not here, but He has risen. Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee, saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.” And they remembered His words, Luke 24:6-8 (NASB)*

How wonderful it is to know that we serve a risen Savior! The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the key to the hope and assurance of our faith. Without the resurrection of Christ, there is no forgiveness of sins, there is no access to the Father, and there is no victory over death! Because Jesus rose from the grave, our salvation is secure forever.

When the women went to the tomb of Jesus, the angels asked the women why were they looking for the living among the dead. The angels had to remind them that Jesus had told them previously all that would happen to him and then they remembered His words.

The tomb is empty! Jesus is alive! Without the resurrection of Christ our faith is in vain (1 Corinthians 15). Celebrate the one who died and rose from the grave for your sins and mine! We serve a risen Savior!

Prayer: Lord, thank you that the tomb is empty. Thank you for your gift of salvation that is for all who will believe and accept you. Help us to celebrate the fact that you rose from the grave and you reign forevermore! In Jesus' name, Amen.

**Minister Cassandra J. Fuller**  
**Associate Minister**  
**Director of Evangelism**



Thursday, March 30

## Power and Authority

“And He called the twelve together, and gave them power and authority over all the demons and to heal diseases. <sup>2</sup> And He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to perform healing.” – Luke 9:1-2 (NASB)

After walking with Jesus and learning from Him for some time, Jesus called the twelve disciples and gave them power and authority over demons and to heal the sick. Note that there is a difference in power and authority. Power is the ability to do something. Authority is the right to do it. Jesus not only gave them the power to do what He had called them to do, He also gave them the right to do it.

This same power and authority is given to all who are true followers of Christ. However, we must remember this power and authority is Jesus', not ours. We cannot share the Gospel, preach, cast out demons or heal the sick in our own name because we have no power or authority of our own. It is only through Jesus Christ, His authority and the power of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 8:11 tells us that the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead is also in the believer – you and I. Discover the power and authority you have within you. During this Lenten season, tap into that power and allow the Holy Spirit to work in and through you.

**Prayer:** Father, thank You for the power and authority You have given me. Help me to grow, understand and use it for Your glory. In Jesus name, Amen.

**Min. Cassandra J. Fuller**

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Friday, March 31

## Skeptics Are Welcome

*<sup>45</sup> Philip found Nathanael and told him, “We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” <sup>46</sup> “Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?” Nathanael asked. “Come and see,” said Philip. <sup>47</sup> When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, “Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit.” John 1:45-47 NIV*

Phillip was so excited about his new found relationship with Jesus Christ that he wanted others to know him too. So, he started out by finding his friend Nathaniel. He told Nathaniel that he had found “the One” that Moses and the prophets wrote about. Then, he told Nathaniel where the Messiah was from and to whom he was related.

Now, Nathaniel wanted to believe his friend, but the claims seemed to be nonsensical. Nathaniel couldn't hold back any longer and blurted out “Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?” Although Phillips first evangelistic appeal was met with skepticism, he didn't let that cause him to shrink back. Instead, he challenged the skeptic to “come and see”.

For many Christians, dealing with skeptics can be awkward, offensive, or even unnerving. However, it is important that we realize that everyone will not come to faith instantaneously. Sometimes people have a problem connecting the dots because of preoccupation, preconception, misconception, or deception. We have to patiently and lovingly persevere in challenging the skeptic to “come and see”. This can be done by engaging in spiritual conversations, sharing your testimony, inviting them to church, developing a relationship, or by sharing a book, video, or discussion that helps them to understand things more clearly. In verse 47, we learn that we serve a God who welcomes the skeptic. When we are faithful in witnessing for Him, He is faithful in appealing to the hearts of men. This is why Christ proclaims “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.”

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord, help me to be faithful in sharing the love of Christ with those around me. Grant me the insight and wisdom to help the skeptic come to faith in you. Provide me the strength to press past my fears and anxieties to share the Gospel so that family, friends, acquaintances, and even strangers will have the opportunity to receive salvation and eternal life. Amen.*

**Adolphus Johnson**  
Associate Minister

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Saturday, April 1

## He Has Risen

As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed. “Don't be alarmed, he said, “You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go tell his disciples and Peter, “He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.” Mark 16:5-7 (NIV)

The resurrection is vitally important for many reasons

- (1) Jesus kept his promise to rise from the dead, so we can believe he will keep all his other promises.
- (2) The resurrection ensures that the ruler of God's eternal kingdom will be the living Christ, not just an idea, hope or dream.

(3) Christ's resurrection gives us the assurance that we also will be resurrected.

(4) The power of God that brought Christ's body back from the dead is available to us to bring our morally and spiritually dead selves back to life so that we can change and grow (1 Corinthians 15:12-19). 5) The resurrection provides the substance of the church's witness to the world. We do not merely tell lessons from the life of a good teacher; we proclaim the reality of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Jesus' resurrection should give us confidence that all his promises will be kept.

**Prayer:** Heavenly Father, I thank you for your Son who died on Calvary's Cross and shed His blood for all of our sins. I thank you for the promise of salvation. In Jesus name I pray, Amen.

**Reverend Claude Collins  
Associate Minister**



**Monday, April 3**

## **I Don't Feel Like It!**

Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for Him; Do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, Because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass. Psalm 37:7 (NKJV)

In the course of life these words have been used far too often, I don't feel like it! Sometimes it can be illness, sometimes it is fatigue, and sometimes it's laziness that bring us to this place. It's interesting that we always have time to do the things we love to do. Little commitment is needed for doing what we want to do. True commitment rises up in the life of one who sacrifices time, money, and life for the cause of Christ.

The Lord prepares the vineyard, He leads us by His spirit, He empowers us for service, but I don't feel like it.

In Psalm 37:7 David wrote about resting and waiting patiently on the Lord. The obscured views of the world and imperfect lifestyles have lured God's people from the rest needed to do God's Work without grumbling and complaining. Albert Barnes wrote, "Life, if properly viewed in any aspect, is great, but mainly great when viewed in its relation to the world to come".

**Prayer:** While the riches of many can be seen in our walk with you, keep our minds on you Lord so that we stray not from your path. Lord Jesus, help us to remember who we are because of you. Remind us that we are your servants, and when we rest in You we are strengthened by the Holy Spirit. Teach us to wait patiently on You, especially when we don't feel like it. Amen!

**Re. Lavern E. Keitt  
Associate Minister**



**Tuesday, April 4**

## **A House That Stands**

Unless the LORD builds the house, the builders labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the guards stand watch in vain. Psalm 127:1

If you build a house without a solid foundation, over time the house will eventually crumble. If you wait on man to keep you safe without the guidance of God, you will eventually die. A true foundation only comes from the Father. Safety only exists if the Father is a part of the security team.

Dear God, thank You for being my solid foundation. I know that I cannot do anything without You. Thank You for watching over me and being my TRUE Protector. Amen

Minister Kemeka Johnson  
Associate Minister



**Wednesday, April 5**

## **Servant Leadership**

*And Jesus called them to him and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."*  
Mark 10:42-45

Of all the things Jesus taught His disciples, the way of humility was one of the hardest for them to grasp. His disciples thought they were following a revolutionary: someone who would overthrow the Romans and help God's chosen people regain their rightful place in the world. This is why these words from Jesus in Mark the 10th chapter immediately follow a request from James and John to sit at Jesus' right and left hand when He conquers and begins His reign. What then is all this business about coming not to be served but to serve?

Though they couldn't see it at the time, Jesus' approach to leadership was in fact, deeply revolutionary. When we look at Jesus, we see that true glory is only found through humility. That strength is found in weakness. Good Friday must precede Easter Sunday. This is the upside down nature of God's kingdom, and the invitation of the gospel is for us to reframe our lives in light of this value system.

Jesus is fully aware of the radical nature of servant leadership. He knows it stands in direct opposition to the way people "make it" in this world. Yet He is also fully aware of the destruction that comes from inflated egos and leadership power plays. He knows that when we enter the rat race and fight our way up the corporate ladder, we will eventually find ourselves bitter, broken, frustrated, and burnt out.

Because Jesus loves us deeply, He says to His disciples, "It shall not be so among you" When He says this, Jesus redefines what it means to be a leader. In God's kingdom, a leader doesn't have to have the corner office. A leader isn't someone with power over employees or an agenda to push. No, in God's kingdom, a true leader is the person who has the courage to walk the way of humility. A servant leader sees their brokenness and weakness, not as a source of shame or embarrassment, but as a way to point beyond themselves to the one who came, and has graced them with His presence and power "not to be served but to serve, and give His life as a ransom for many."

Our prayer: Lord help us to understand and walk in the fullness of servant leadership. Let our first response be what we can do, as opposed to what we can get. Help us through the power of Your Spirit to join You in the work of Your will, as a servant leader Amen.

**Pastor Todd Brown**



**Thursday, April 6**

## **Fences**

The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the

horn of my salvation, my stronghold. Psalm 18:2

On Christmas Day 2016, the movie “Fences” played in theaters across the country. Moviegoers were taken aback by the portrayal of the characters in this film adaptation of playwright August Wilson’s creation. Most of the attention focuses the husband and father character named Troy who struggles to provide for his family.

Earlier in life, Troy was an excellent baseball player in [Negro league baseball](#). Circumstances landed him in prison for an accidental murder he had committed during a robbery. He continued practicing while in prison. However, because of the color line, Troy was unable to play Major League Baseball to make good money or to save for the future. So he lived a menial, respectable life of trash collecting; eventually crosses the race barrier to become the first black truck driver instead of just a barrel lifter.

Troy has two sons, Cory and Lyons, who is Troy’s son by a previous marriage. Facing the challenges of life and the race culture, Troy found himself either building a fence or tearing down a fence. He tore down one fence when “he went up to the boss and asked why [black](#) men are not allowed to drive garbage trucks. The relationships he shared with his sons caused him to build an emotional barrier separating him from the kind of good relations that can exist between fathers and sons. Troy later admits to his wife Rose that he had an affair and is now the father to a little girl Raynell. Another fence goes up. Rose can no longer love Troy as she had before – especially not after he brings Raynell home and asks Rose to raise her as her own. Rose wanted the fence – and needed the fence -- to keep inside what was hers.

Have you ever built a fence in your life? Sometimes fences are built to keep things out and at other times, fences are built to keep things in. Fences, whether good or bad, become barriers to shield and protect us from what we feel is tormenting us. However, when we walk with the Lord, we have no need to worry for He is our rock and our fortress (fence) and our deliverer. Take refuge in Him and relinquish the carpentry work of building fences.

Prayer: Lord, I make you my strong tower, my fortress, my shield to protect me and secure me in Your safe-keeping. Keep me in Your keeping power. Amen.

**Reverend Yvonne Singleton  
Assistant Pastor**

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**Friday, April 7**

## **Prayer Is Just A Conversation With God**

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*Pray without ceasing. 1 Thessalonians 5:17*

As a young boy I was raised by my grandparents. My grandfather, Deacon Neal DuPree, would kneel down by his bed and pray a prayer. In reflection, that image, to this day, brings back sweet memories.

I grew up thinking that if i could not pray like Deacon DuPree, God didn't hear me. I got saved two years before he transitioned and I remember asking him, “Daddy, how did you learn how to pray like that?” I will never forget the smile that came on his face as he said, “I just be having a talk with God, and we talk every day, all day.

On a recent trip to Florida my oldest and dearest friend and I decided that in order to stay alert and not have to stop, we would talk to one another during the whole trip. Having been friends for over 50 years we had more than enough to talk about. The more we talked the more I realized why he was my best friend.

It's the same with Jesus — the more we pray (or talk to Him), the more we realize why He is our Lord and

Savior. One of the reasons we as Christians do not have a strong and effective prayer life. Is because we think that we have to pray like Deacon DuPree prayed. However, all we have to do is simply have a little talk with Jesus.

**Prayer:** Lord as I go through this day that you have made, it is so reassuring to know that I can talk to you at anytime and about anything. Amen.

**Rev John H. Campbell**  
**Associate Minister**



**Saturday, April 8**

## **Spread the Good News**

*Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you [b]always, even to the end of the age. Matthew 28:19-20 (NASB)*

The Gospel is for everyone but how can they receive it unless we share it? Jesus commanded us to go and make disciples. He did not leave the task for a select few. So often we feel it is the preacher's job to reach the lost. Or sometimes we may even feel that since we don't have a seminary background we don't know enough.

The disciples never went to seminary but they did spend time with Jesus. The first step in getting comfortable with sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ is to spend time with Him by studying His Word. Once we begin to spend time with him daily, we will soon discover the power of the Holy Spirit within us to spread the Good News!

So often we are quick to share bad news, whether or not we have verified it as being true. We can always be sure that when we share the Gospel, we are sharing truth! Dig into the Word of Truth and spread it everywhere you go.

Prayer: Dear Lord, teach me to confidently share your word everywhere I go. In Jesus' name, Amen.

**Minister Cassandra J. Fuller**  
**Associate Minister**  
**Director of Evangelism**



**Monday, April 10**

## **Searching**

You will show me the path of life, fullness of joy in your presence, the delights at your right hand forever.  
Psalm 16:11

There is no need to worry about the path for life. God is the leader and He is our guiding light.

**Prayer:** Dear God Continue to be our guiding light to help us find the way and we will forever give your name the praise.

**Minister Eartha S. Davis**  
**Associate Minister**

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Tuesday, April 11

### Hype Man!

<sup>32</sup> Then John gave this testimony: "I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. <sup>33</sup> And I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' <sup>34</sup> I have seen and I testify that this is God's Chosen One." John 1:32-34 NIV

At many of today's concerts and events, you may have observed the presence of a "hype man". According to the Urban Dictionary, a hype man is "the person who fires up the crowd for the main act." Many have attributed the use of a hype man to hip hop culture. However, we can trace the origins back much farther.

When Jesus began his earthly ministry, there was a special hype man (or witness) designated to perform the introduction. His name was John. He didn't qualify for this honor because he held a special position in society or in the temple, nor because he won friends and influenced people. Instead, John was considered outspoken and countercultural. He lived in the wilderness, wore odd clothing, practiced a weird diet, and preached a peculiar theology. Although he was unique, God called him to be a witness. Interestingly, people were drawn to his ministry not because of his charisma, style, personality, nor intellect, but because of the power of God's Word and the witness of the Holy Spirit that dwelled in him.

John gives us an excellent roadmap of how our witness for Christ is prompted by the Holy Spirit. The scriptures tell us that John (1) received the Spirit, (2) was filled with the Spirit, (3) was guided by the Spirit, (4) received confirmation from the Spirit, and (5) was empowered by the Spirit. Like John, let us also forsake the ways of this world and yield to the Holy Spirit so that we can be witnesses for Christ and His kingdom.

*Prayer: Dear Lord, let us not be so enamored by the trappings of this world that we forsake our sacred call to be witnesses. Grant us strength as we yield ourselves to the counsel of your Holy Word and the guidance of your Holy Spirit. Take the scales off of our eyes so that we can see how excellent, magnificent, beautiful, and praiseworthy you are. By your Spirit, empower us to be "hype men" for you in word, action, and deed. Amen.*

Minister Adolphus Johnson  
Associate Minister

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Wednesday, April 12

## If You Love Me Keep My Commandments

"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments" – John 14:15

It's a wonderful feeling when someone tells us they love us. Everyone loves to hear those three little words – "I Love You". It is an even greater feeling when the one who says "I love you" also shows their love for you.

How many wives have felt truly loved because their husbands had given them a much needed and deserved break by cooking dinner and getting the children ready for bed? How many husbands have felt truly loved because their wives prepared their favorite meal, found a babysitter for the children and made sure that he has a night to relax and enjoy being with her?

Jesus desires for us to show Him how much we love Him as well. Jesus said it clearly – "If you love me, you will keep my commandments". The greatest expression of our love for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is to be obedient to what He says. 1 John 5:3 --"For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome". So we can never say that it is too hard to obey God. By doing so, we are saying it is too hard to love Him as well.

Just as we enjoy when someone expresses their love for us, Our Heavenly Father longs for us to express our love for Him. The greatest expression of your love is to obey Him.

**Prayer:** Father, I love you. Please help me to show you how much I love you by being obedient to you. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Min. Cassandra J. Fuller  
Associate Minister

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Thursday, April 13

## Jesus Predicts His Death

He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. (Mark 8:31) (NIV)

The name for Jesus, Son of Man, is Jesus' most common title for himself. It comes from Daniel 7:13, where the Son of Man is a heavenly figure who, in the end times, has authority and power. The name refers to Jesus as the Messiah, the representative man, the human agent of God who is vindicated by God. In this passage, Son of Man is linked closely to Peter's confession of Jesus as the Christ and confirms its Messianic significance.

From this point on, Jesus spoke plainly and directly to his disciples about his death and resurrection. He began to prepare them for what was going to happen to Him by telling them three times that He would soon die (8:31; 9:31; 10:33, 34).

And you are heirs of the prophets and of the covenant God made with your fathers. (Acts 3:25-NIV) God promised Abraham that he would bless the world through Abraham's descendants, the Jewish race (Gen. 12:3), from which the Messiah would come. God intended the Jewish nation to be a separate and holy nation that would teach the world.

**Prayer:** Lord, please give me the strength to hear and understand your word. I know that you have all power in your hand and as take my daily walk, please walk with me and protect me along the way. Amen.

Rev. Claude Collin  
Associate Minister

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Friday, April 14

## Going Thru

When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.  
Isaiah 43:2 (NKJV)

As Christians we are living in some interesting times. God is trying to get our attention. Things that never happen are happening. We see and hear things today we have never experienced before. Sometimes it's hard to believe because it's so evil.

But the Lord didn't say this road would be easy he said in Matt 10:16 Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. Paul after he had experienced so

much on his journey told us about going thru this way -- 2Corinthian 4: 8-9 We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; 9 Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; We are the light Christ has sent to shine in darkness.

Therefore, God knows where He wants to take us and how He wants to get us there. God calls on us to understand that He is intimately involved with us.

Just like Israel, we too find ourselves in positions not according to the will of God. Israel was punished for their disobedience; so are we. Today we, too, are called to abide in the Lord.

Sometime we don't recognize when we're going through.

**Prayer:** Grateful and Loving God, you have been so good to us in all our ways. Turn our unbelief into unquestionable faith. You have been there in the challenging times of uncertainties and your Word declares that you will not change and your Word will not return void. Help us to go through as we trust by faith in your Word and your provisions. Amen!

**Rev. Lavern E. Keitt  
Associate Minister**

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**Saturday, April 15**

## **The Protector**

I lift up my eyes to the mountains— where does my help come from?  
My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.  
He will not let your foot slip— he who watches over you will not slumber;  
indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.  
The LORD watches over you— the LORD is your shade at your right hand;  
the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night.  
The LORD will keep you from all harm— he will watch over your life;  
the LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.

As a child you depend on your parents to defend and protect you from the many challenges this world offers. However, once you become an adult, you realize that true protection comes from the Father of heaven and earth. It is He who keeps you from falling and He never gets tired of watching over you -- unlike people who become tired after a day of hard work and can barely keep their eyes open.

How glad we are that God is not like man. The Father continues to guide you through the various directions in which life takes you. Be encouraged and know that God will never leave you nor forsake you.

Dear God, Help me to keep my eyes focused on you. When I slip or slumber, remind me that it is You who keeps me safe for Your protection and guidance over my life. Amen

**Minister Kemeka Johnson  
Associate Minister**

## **NMZ Ministers Motto**

**“Reaching, Teaching, and Touching  
Growing, Knowing and Going”**

## Special Days and Services

**Shrove Tuesday** is actually the day before Lent begins. The day is named for the “shriving” or confessing that was traditional on this day before beginning Lent. This day is also known as Mardi Gras, or “Fat Tuesday” because it was a time for eating the things from which one would abstain during Lent.

**Ash Wednesday** is the first day of Lent . The theme for the day reflects that we stand as sinners condemned to die, but God’s amazing grace interceded on our behalf. This is symbolized by the imposition of ashes on the forehead, with the words, “You are dust and to dust you shall return”. In the Old Testament, ashes were a sign of penitence (feeling regretful at offenses) and mourning.

Ash Wednesday is one of two days of special observance (the other being Good Friday) for which fasting is recommended.

**Palm Sunday** is the Sunday before Easter and the last Sunday in Lent. The day commemorates Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem. We celebrate this day by issuing palms to worshippers. In some traditions, some of the Palm Sunday palms are kept and used to make the Ash Wednesday ashes for the next year.

**Maundy Thursday** is the Thursday in Holy Week (the week leading up to Easter). The day is a time for remembering The Last Supper

**Good Friday** is the Friday in Holy Week. It is a time for remembering Jesus’ death. Traditionally there is a Good Friday service at noon as Jesus hung on the cross from noon until 3 P.M. There may also be an evening service. This is the second day of special observance for which fasting is recommended.

**Sunday, April 16**

**Resurrection Sunday**

