

# HENLY TODAY

## A WORD FROM PASTOR DON: HE LIVES!

The focus of this month's *Henly Today* is the message of Easter, and how the resiliency of springtime proclaims and reinforces a message of hope. In the providence of God, perhaps this spring, like no other, we need to be reminded of God's eternal purposes and provisions for our lives.

As fear and uncertainty force their way into our consciousness through news of mounting numbers of people contracting the coronavirus or dying as a result, we need a word from God. Like an orchestra building up to a crescendo with its melody cascading over our souls, we have discovered the awareness of God's presence and the promises of His Word. He has come alongside us and met us at the point of need. God has demonstrated His ability to provide a sense of peace in the midst of the storm.

**"In the midst of our stillness, we have sensed God's presence."**



Picture courtesy Dave Sikkema

Perhaps nothing proclaims that message more than sprouts of green growth appearing as though it cannot be stopped on vegetation that previously appeared lifeless. The beauty of flowering plants echoes a message of life that lifts our spirits and fills our hearts with joy. The beauty and wonder of it all applauds the creator who made it all possible.

In addition, we've had weeks of "stay-in-place" inactivity and social distancing. It has dramatically slowed our pace and left us confined to the safety and the solitude of our homes. We are told in Scripture to be still and know that He is God.

In the midst of our stillness, we have sensed God's presence. Our family of faith was invited to contribute a snapshot of testimony through words and/or pictures to be included in this newsletter. It is one way that God can use us collectively to support one another.

Consequently, I suspect the personal thoughts shared on the following pages will speak volumes related to the goodness of God and the hope that is ours through the message of Easter – **He Lives!**

Don



## OUR LEGACY IN COLOR AND LIGHT

There is more than one reason that this month's featured stained glass window is Christ praying in the Garden of Gethsemane. The unprecedented time in which we are learning to navigate today is the perfect time to stop and remind ourselves of an important message illustrated within the chain of events that starts with Christ's observance of Passover with His disciples in the Upper Room and culminates in the miracle that we celebrate on Easter Sunday.

Christ's arrest by Roman soldiers in the garden, which would lead to his crucifixion, could understandably be the catalyst for overwhelming, possibly debilitating, fear and stress. But Jesus knew – and understood – the need, the purpose and the impending agony of the entire sequence of events. In fact, He had told the disciples earlier that He was the sacrificial lamb slain from the foundation of the earth. He had explained to them at least three times exactly what would happen, but the disciples were not at a place where they could cognitively process and understand what He was telling them.

When Jesus arrived in the Garden of Gethsemane, He invited Simon Peter, James and John to accompany Him as He withdrew from the other disciples to pray. He confided to them that his soul was “overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death.” In truth, the weight of the world was on His shoulders. Luke recorded that He prayed so fervently that the sweat from his brow was like drops of blood. Luke also recorded these final words of acceptance: “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.”

John recorded Jesus' prayer for His followers: “I pray for these men. But I am also praying for all people who will believe in me because of the teaching of these men. Father, I pray that all people who believe in me can be one . . . I pray that these people can also be one in us, so that the world will believe that you sent me.”

Prayer had equipped Christ with a sense of peace for that which lay before him. Prayer equipped Christ to face the cross. He did that out of love for us.

So, the message not to be missed in the Easter story is this: If the son of God needed to pray, how much more so do we? Many across our country are immobilized through a sense of panic and fears associated to the threat of the coronavirus. It would serve us well to counter those fears with prayer and our hope in the One who holds tomorrow.



*The Garden of Gethsemane window was a gift of the Henly Baptist Church family of faith in honor of Pastor Don and Treva Forrester.*

**Henly Today** is a monthly publication of Henly Baptist Church. Pastor and Executive Editor: Don Forrester. Our mission is to report on and encourage participation in all church activities, share stories of our church family, and to support the fulfillment of our church's 100-year-plus mission "to be a spiritual lighthouse in the community through the practice of Christ's teachings, evangelism, outreach, and social and benevolent ministries." Please send your news, comments and address updates to: [HenlyToday@gmail.com](mailto:HenlyToday@gmail.com).

## COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS

One of the lessons that my daddy taught me early in life was to be content in ALL situations. He was the most contented person I have ever known.

During this home quarantine, I have found a certain sense of peace and contentment. I love to cook, I love taking pictures, I love doing crafts, I love watching the animals on our property, I love to read, and most of all I love just being with my husband.

I have seen the signs of spring arrive here on Mystic Creek. I have met with our neighborhood pet deer, Walter, on several occasions. I have enjoyed numerous sunsets. We have taken a ride with the top down on a beautiful Texas day.

Life has been good to me, and I am content.

- *Julie Duke*



My God has always met me at the point of need and given me strength to know I'll be okay, that I am loved and that I have a purpose: to be the best I can be to all I meet.

I have learned that no matter the circumstances, the distance put between us or the fear that is following us, we are all truly together, and it's become apparent that we all love each other. Evil will not prevail in keeping our hearts unfocused on God or stop us from loving one another. Grace will see us through.

I took some pictures that show exactly how I feel about the awakening and newness of every spring: irises planted over 60 years ago by Peggy Arbon; the huge elm tree that's the first to lose its leaves in the fall and the first to signal spring's arrival; my veggie seeds popping up – miracles all of them!

Through all the seriousness of this current situation, I've realized that anybody who thinks that prayer and faith in God are unnecessary needs our help to show them the glory and safety of being a child of God.

- *Lindley Pond*



I've been pondering the things I can't participate in or the places and people I'm unable to physically connect with. This coronavirus pandemic is not good! Wait a minute ... life doesn't revolve around me. Maybe I'm learning the meaning of John 3:30: "He (Jesus) must become greater. I (John the Baptist) must become less."

Life is not about me, it's about Him.

- *Tom Gripka*





## COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS



A source of encouragement for me have been the friends who are part of our new women's Bible study. We've continued to reach out to each other via texts, sharing thoughts and scripture and general encouragement. Group studies have always encouraged me, but this takes encouragement to a new level, where in times of crisis and isolation we can still connect and build each other up and pray for each other.

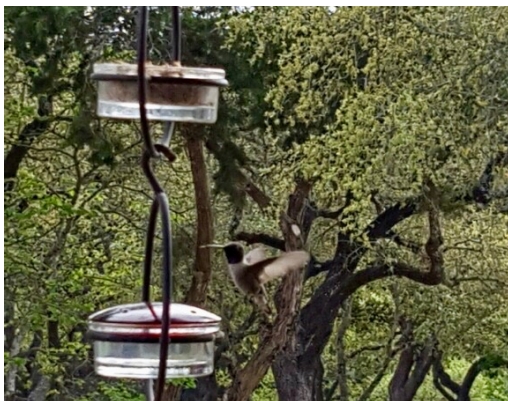
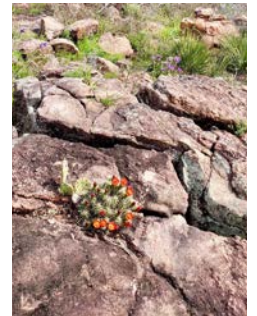
This has strengthened my belief that we all need to read the Bible more and share it, beyond an hour on Sundays. We all have something to share, and I've gained so much from hearing how other people view scripture. It's wonderful to be around people with whom we can be ourselves and share both our struggles and our good news.

I've also realized more than ever not to take for granted all that God has provided. There are so many blessings He has provided, like living in an area that is sparsely populated,

where we can get outside and enjoy nature without fear of being six feet from someone! Even though I miss being in personal contact with my family and friends, I am grateful for the other ways we can connect – phone, email, etc.

I have so much, where others have so little. Although I've always known this, this crisis brings more into focus how truly thankful I am. Life lesson: Be thankful!

- *Cathy Milner*



Whether I'm watching the colorful birds return to the song and wild bird feeder or sitting on the back porch watching the hummingbirds buzz and gather around the feeder or watching them and a variety of insects feed on the spring flowers, plus seeing the deer feeding on the new spring forbs, it heralds the regrowth and rebirth of the new season. Walking through nature and experiencing firsthand the new buds, blossoms and leaves on the trees, bushes and flowers renews my mind, body and soul.

Where is God? He is everywhere -- in my backyard as I walk or hike along the creek, in the hills or in the mountains. Wherever I/you are He is there with me/you. Where is God? He is everywhere.

- *Carole Smith*



## COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS



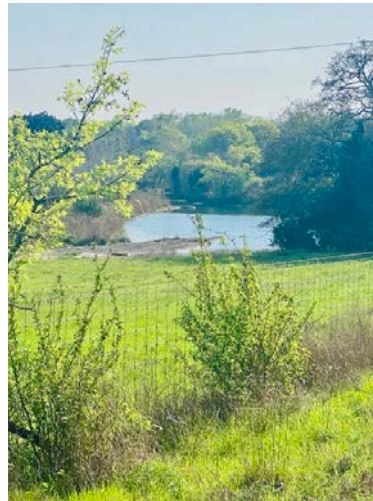
Spring brings gentle reminders of God's love. The beautiful wildflowers begin to bloom and return color to the Hill Country fields, and pastures turn from brown to green. The sun is shining more and bringing us warmer days. All these things bring joy to my heart!

I have been working remotely with little to no contact from the outside world. Today I have six new co-workers sharing my front porch office. Three pair of hummingbirds have made their nests in a nearby cedar tree. I fill the bird feeder daily. They, like many of us, are eating our way through the pandemic! These small creatures have no knowledge of COVID-19, nor do they have fear or anxiety.



I am reminded that God knows every hair on my head. I have chosen to take God's advice to fear not! Indeed, the very hairs on your head are all numbered. Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows. (Luke 12:7)

- Susan Gripka



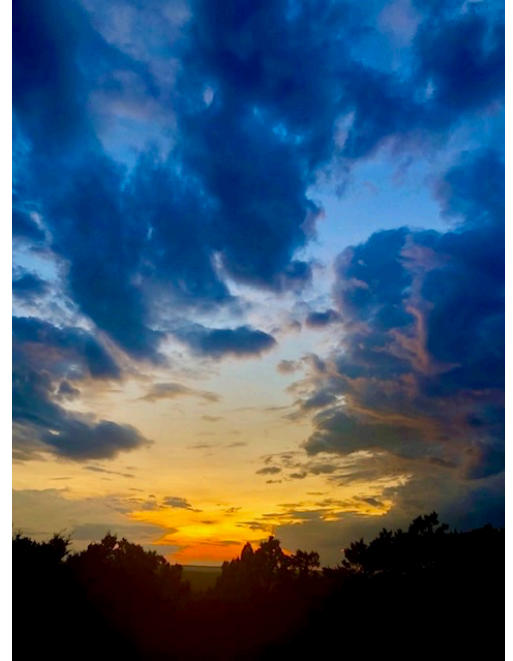
I woke up this morning to a beautiful sunny day! I went into my garden and noticed that some beans I had planted just a few days before had sprouted! I had a new blossom on my tomato plant. My pansies are as beautiful as they have been all winter! Various shades of green from sleeping trees are beginning to dot the landscape. My cows are fattening up, and unfortunately so am I. Everywhere you look there are miracles being performed right before our very eyes!

So, I'm going to stick to my belief that nothing can possibly compete with my GOD! He has always been here for us. He is here with us now, and He will be with us forever!

- Wayman Curry







To view Pastor Don's messages of hope and faith, please visit <http://www.henlybaptistchurch.org>.