

Holy Eucharist

March 27, 2022

Zoom link:

<https://uso2web.zoom.us/j/85887946777?pwd=eig4MEdsMUh6clV6b2dUblFOQ3I2Zz09>

Meeting ID: 858 8794 6777

Passcode: 782611

Lent 4C

Opening hymn

Hymnal 690

Guide me, O thou great Jehovah

1 Guide me, O thou great Je - ho - vah, pil - grim through this
2 O - pen now the crys - tal foun-tain, whence the heal - ing
3 When I tread the verge of Jor - dan, bid my anx - ious

bar - ren land; I am weak, but thou art might - y;
stream doth flow; let the fire and cloud - y pil - lar
fears sub - side; death of death, and hell's de - struc - tion,

hold me with thy power - ful hand; bread of hea - ven,
lead me all my jour - ney through; strong de - liv - erer,
land me safe on Ca - naan's side; songs of prais - es,

bread of hea - ven, feed me now and ev - er -
 strong de - liv - erer, be thou still my strength and
 songs of prais - es, I will ev - er give to

more, feed me now and ev - er - more.
 shield, be thou still my strength and shield.
 thee, I will ev - er give to thee.

Presider Bless the Lord who forgives all our sins;

People **God's mercy endures for ever.**

All kneel as they are able

The Decalogue

Hear the commandments of God to God's people:
 I am the Lord your God who brought you out of bondage.
 You shall have no other gods but me.

Amen. Lord have mercy.

You shall not make for yourself any idol.

Amen. Lord have mercy.

You shall not invoke with malice the Name of the Lord your God.

Amen. Lord have mercy.

Remember the Sabbath Day and keep it holy.

Amen. Lord have mercy.

Honor your father and your mother.

Amen. Lord have mercy.

You shall not commit murder.

Amen. Lord have mercy.

You shall not commit adultery.

Amen. Lord have mercy.

You shall not steal.

Amen. Lord have mercy.

You shall not be a false witness.

Amen. Lord have mercy.

You shall not covet anything that belongs to your neighbor.

Amen. Lord have mercy.

The Presider says

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just, will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. *1 John 1:8,9*

Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbor.

Silence may be kept.

Presider and People

**Most merciful God,
we confess that we have sinned against you
in thought, word, and deed,
by what we have done,
and by what we have left undone.
We have not loved you with our whole heart;
we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.
We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
have mercy on us and forgive us;
that we may delight in your will,
and walk in your ways,
to the glory of your Name. Amen.**

The Presider stands and says

Almighty God have mercy on you, + forgive you all your sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life. **Amen.**

Lord, have mercy: The Kyrie

S-86

Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son. Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son. Ky - ri - e

e - le - i - son. Chri - ste e - le - i - son. Chri - ste e -
 le - i - son. Chri - ste e - le - i - son. Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son.
 Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son. Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son.

Collect of the Day

Presider God be with you.
People **And also with you.**
Presider Let us pray.

Gracious Father, whose blessed Son Jesus Christ came down from heaven to be the true bread which gives life to the world: Evermore give us this bread, that he may live in us, and we in him; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

The people are seated.

First Reading

Joshua 5:9-12

A reading from the book of Joshua.

⁹The LORD said to Joshua, “Today I have rolled away from you the disgrace of Egypt.” And so that place is called Gilgal to this day.

¹⁰While the Israelites were camped in Gilgal they kept the Passover in the evening on the fourteenth day of the month in the plains of Jericho. ¹¹On the day after the Passover, on that very day, they ate the produce of the land, unleavened cakes and parched grain. ¹²The manna ceased on the day they ate the produce of the land, and the Israelites no longer had manna; they ate the crops of the land of Canaan that year.

Reader Hear what the Spirit is saying to God’s people.
People **Thanks be to God.**

Psalm 32

Beati quorum

¹Happy are they whose transgressions are forgiven, *
 and whose sin is put away!

²Happy are they to whom the LORD imputes no guilt, *
 and in whose spirit there is no guile!

**3While I held my tongue, my bones withered away, *
because of my groaning all day long.**

**4For your hand was heavy upon me day and night; *
my moisture was dried up as in the heat of summer.**

**5Then I acknowledged my sin to you, *
and did not conceal my guilt.**

**6I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD." *
Then you forgave me the guilt of my sin.**

**7Therefore all the faithful will make their prayers to you in time of trouble; *
when the great waters overflow, they shall not reach them.**

**8You are my hiding-place;
you preserve me from trouble; *
you surround me with shouts of deliverance.**

**9"I will instruct you and teach you in the way that you should go; *
I will guide you with my eye.**

**10Do not be like horse or mule, which have no understanding; *
who must be fitted with bit and bridle,
or else they will not stay near you."**

**11Great are the tribulations of the wicked; *
but mercy embraces those who trust in the LORD.**

**12Be glad, you righteous, and rejoice in the LORD; *
shout for joy, all who are true of heart.**

Second Reading

2 Corinthians 5:16-21

A Reading from Paul's Second letter to the Church in Corinth.

¹⁶From now on, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. ¹⁷So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! ¹⁸All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. ²⁰So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ²¹For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

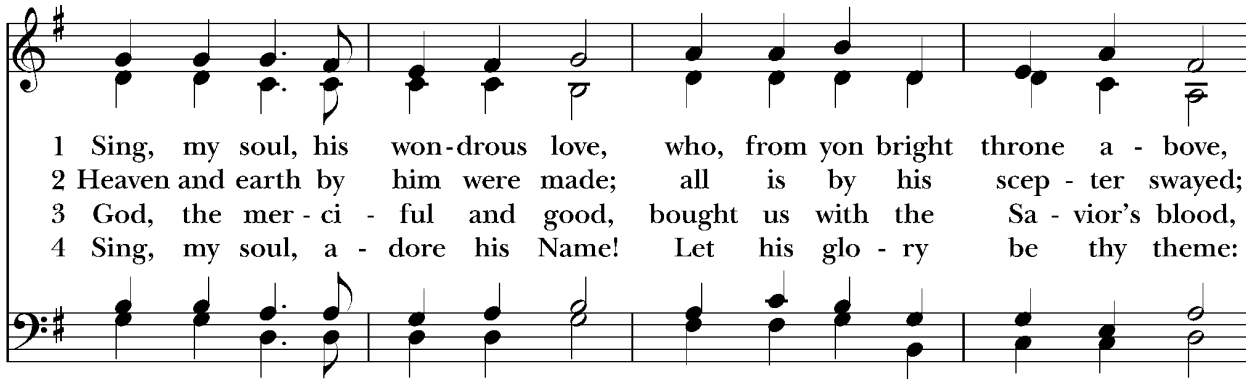
Reader Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Churches.
People **Thanks be to God.**

All stand as they are able.

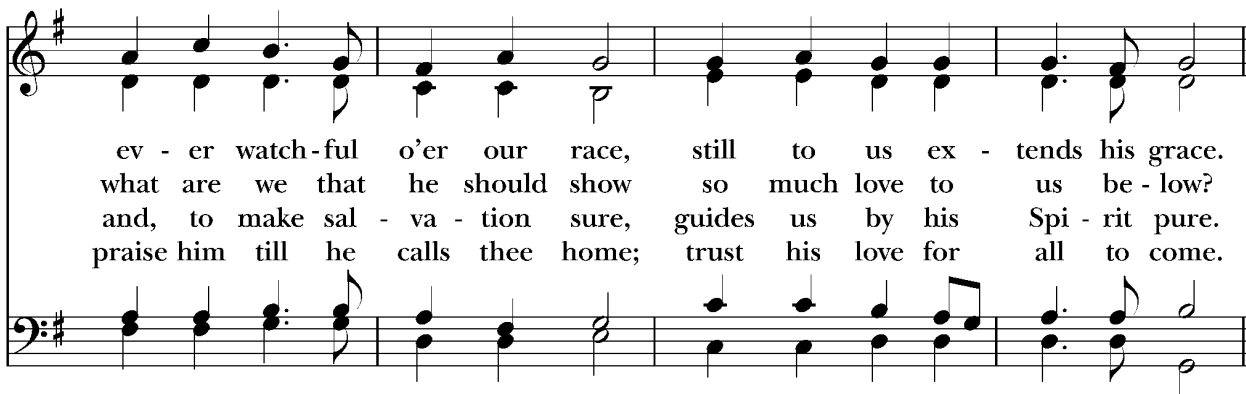
Sequence Hymn

Sing, my soul, his wondrous love

Hymnal 467



1 Sing, my soul, his won-drous love, who, from yon bright throne a - bove,
2 Heaven and earth by him were made; all is by his scep - ter swayed;
3 God, the mer - ci - ful and good, bought us with the Sa - vior's blood,
4 Sing, my soul, a - dore his Name! Let his glo - ry be thy theme:



ev - er watch - ful o'er our race, still to us ex - tends his grace.
what are we that he should show so much love to us be - low?
and, to make sal - va - tion sure, guides us by his Spi - rit pure.
praise him till he calls thee home; trust his love for all to come.

Holy Gospel

Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

Gospeller

The Holy Gospel of our Savior Jesus Christ according to Luke.

People

Glory to you, O Christ.

¹Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. ²And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, “This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.”

³So he told them this parable: ^{11b}“There was a man who had two sons. ¹²The younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.’ So he divided his property between them. ¹³A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. ¹⁴When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. ¹⁶He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. ¹⁷But when he came to himself he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! ¹⁸I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; ¹⁹I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.”’ ²⁰So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. ²¹Then the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ ²²But the father said to his slaves, ‘Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put

it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; ²⁴for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!’ And they began to celebrate.



²⁵“Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. ²⁷He replied, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound.’ ²⁸Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. ²⁹But he answered his father, ‘Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me so much as a young goat, so that I might celebrate with my friends. ³⁰But when this son of yours came back, who

has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!’ ³¹Then the father said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. ³²But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.’”

Gospeller The Gospel of the Holy One.
People Praise to you, O Christ.

Sermon

All stand as they are able.

Nicene Creed

Presider Let us affirm the faith of the Church using the words of the Nicene Creed:

**We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.
We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.**

**For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary
and became truly human.**

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

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

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

**We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

All remain standing as they are able.

Prayers of the People

Presider Sisters and brothers, be glad and rejoice in the Lord; shout for joy, all you who are true of heart. Having been reconciled to God through Christ Jesus, let us pray, “Lord, let your mercy embrace us; accept our prayer.”

Intercessor Gracious God, you have entrusted to your Church the ministry of reconciliation. Reconcile our members to you and to each other, and then work through us to embrace the world. Bless our Bishops Bonnie, Michael, Justin, Moises, Elizabeth, Donald and Craig. Bless all ministers, priests, deacons, ministry teams, those in formation; and our brothers and sisters worshipping at St Paul’s, Romeo, and St Margaret’s, Santo Domingo, in the Dominican Republic; those in The Church of the Province of Myanmar/Burma, and for all the members of Christ’s body. Lord, let your mercy embrace us; **accept our prayer.**

Silence is kept.

Jesus, you are the true bread which gives life to the world: evermore give us this bread that our souls may be satisfied. Satisfy our bodies with the abundant produce of this land, and teach us to feed those who are without food. Open our hearts to welcome strangers as you welcome us. Give us eyes to see others, not from a human point of view, but as you see them. Lord, let your mercy embrace us; **accept our prayer.**

Silence is kept.

We pray, O God, for families. Restore broken relationships. Heal those who have suffered betrayal and alienation. Comfort those for whom reconciliation in this life is not possible. Shield from excess those with reason to celebrate. You, O God, are a hiding place for those in trouble:

you deliver the oppressed; you forgive the guilty; you roll away the disgrace of your people. We make our prayers to you for those in sickness or in trouble [especially_____].

Loving Jesus: Protect and sustain us with your hand. Teach us to love as you love. Open the door of your love that, sealed with your wisdom, we may be free to serve you with joy. You are the fount of every blessing; we give you thanks and praise for [_____ and] all the blessings of this life.

Holy Jesus, it is our prayer that you may live in us, and we in you, both in this mortal life and for all eternity. Preserve us, with St Barnabas, John Keble, Innocent, and all your saints, forever. Hear our prayers for these whom we remember before you [especially_____]. Lord, let your mercy embrace us; **accept our prayer.**

Silence is kept.

Presider Lord Jesus: Protect and sustain us with your hand. Open the door of your love that, sealed with your wisdom, we may be free to serve you with joy. **Amen.**

Peace

Presider The peace of Christ be always with you.
People **And also with you.**

Then the Ministers and the People may greet one another in the name of the Lord.

Holy Communion

Walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself for us, an offering and sacrifice to God. *Ephesians 5:2*

The People then are seated.

Announcements

The people stand as they are able when the offerings are presented and placed on the Altar.

Offertory Hymn

Doxology

**Praise God, from Whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures here below;
Praise God above, you heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.**

The people remain standing as they are able.

Great Thanksgiving

Presider God be with you.

People **And also with you.**

Presider Lift up your hearts.

People **We lift them to the Holy One.**

Presider Let us give thanks to God.

People **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

God of grace, you lift our hearts because,
though we squandered your abundant gifts,
you waited for us to turn back to you;
and though we hardened our hearts to your mercy,
you came to find us and draw us home to your banquet.

In Christ you made the journey into the far country of our exile from you,
and in his death and resurrection, you justify and sanctify us
to stand in your presence, and be reunited with your grace.

And so we give you thanks, gathering around
the table of your kingdom with angels and archangels
and all the company of heaven, raising your unending praise.

**Holy, Holy, Holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.**

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

The Presider continues

God of blessing, you are the host of our joy;
in Christ you have made every preparation for this feast,
even giving your own body, that we might never be hungry again.

Send down your Holy Spirit, that we may once again belong
in your house as your sons and daughters,
and that these signs of sustaining bread and renewing wine
may be for us the body and blood of your Son Jesus Christ;
who, at supper with his disciples, took bread,
gave you thanks, broke the bread, and gave it to them, saying,
"Take, eat: this is my body which is given for you;
do this in remembrance of me."

After supper he took the cup.

Again he gave you thanks, and gave it to his disciples, saying,

"Drink this, all of you: this is my blood of the new covenant,
which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

Great is the mystery of faith:
Christ has died.
Christ is risen.
Christ will come again.

The Presider continues

Gathering God, when we languish with the pigs
in a humiliation of our own making, may this broken body
heal, restore, and renew our bodies.

When we lurk in the shadows
in a resentment of our own devising, may this shed blood
soften and cleanse and refresh our hearts.

Strengthen our hands, that we may seek a world
where there is no hunger except hunger for you.

Empower our spirits, that we may strive for a world
where there is no thirst except thirst for your righteousness.

Hasten the day when this body shows us your desire for our well-being,
and this blood reveals how far you go to save us from ourselves
and restore us in the image of your Son through whom, and with whom,
and in whom all honor and glory are yours, now and forever. **AMEN.**

The Presider then continues

As our Savior Christ has taught us, we now pray:

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen.

Breaking of the Bread

A period of silence is kept.

The Presider says

Christ our Passover has been sacrificed for us.

Therefore, let us keep the feast.

Come to this table, not because you must, but because you may,
not because you are strong, but because you are weak.

Come, not because any goodness of your own gives you a right to come,
but because you need mercy and help.

Come, because you love the Lord a little and would like to love him more.

Come, because he loved you and gave himself for you.

Come and meet the risen Christ, for we are his Body.

All baptized persons are welcome to receive Holy Communion.

The following is sung after all have received, and the table is being cleared.

Post-Communion Hymn

WLP 827

O Lord hear my pray'r, O Lord hear my pray'r.

When I call, an - swer me. O Lord hear my pray'r. O

Lord hear my pray'r, Come and lis - ten to me. O

Fine

After the hymn, the Presider says

Let us pray.

Presider and People

**Loving God,
we give you thanks
for restoring us in your image
and nourishing us with spiritual food
in the Sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood.
Now send us forth
a people forgiven, healed, renewed;
that we may proclaim your love to the world
and continue in the risen life of Christ our Savior. Amen.**

Blessing

A priest blesses the people, saying

Look down in mercy, Lord, on your people who are here before you; and grant that those whom you have nourished by your Word and Sacraments may bring forth fruit worthy of repentance; through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Closing Hymn

LEVAS 137

Just as I am

1. Just as I am, without one plea, But
2. Just as I am, though tossed about With
5. Just as I am, thy love unknown Has

1. that thy blood was shed for me,
2. ma - ny-a con - flict, ma - ny-a doubt;
5. bro - ken ev - ery bar - rier down;

1. And that thou bidd'st me come to thee, O
 2. Fight - ings and fears with - in, with - out, O
 5. Now to be thine, yea, thine a - lone, O

Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Dismissal

Minister My sisters and my brothers, let us go forth in the name of Christ.
People **Thanks be to God.**

Postlude

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As we pray for an end to violence and for those fleeing Ukraine, please also pray for Episcopal Relief & Development and other ecumenical agencies working to respond to the current crisis. Specific needs will change as the crisis evolves. *As of right now, there is a need for food, water and shelter. Please consider partnering with Episcopal Relief & Development in this response. Visit episcopalrelief.org/ukraine-crisis for more information.*

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Faith in Action provides leadership in collecting donations of food to support households in need in the Chelsea and Dexter areas. They are in need of our continuing help. You may bring your donations to FIA, or to Nancy who will see that they get there. **If you bring food directly to FIA**, please let Nancy know, so she can continue to keep our records of donation. If you write a check, please make it to *Faith In Action*. The **next Food Drive is April 24**. Please contribute as generously as you can.

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Sign-up sheet for our community's Hospitality is available in the church hall. Please sign up to bring **simple** food for coffee hour, and/or to clean up after. If you have questions, please contact [Kitty](#).

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Compline for Lenten Wednesdays will be observed on March 30 at **7:00 pm**. Use this link: <https://uso2web.zoom.us/j/86179980160?pwd=YVhPR2FWMDhsOEpsUkhBZ3RuYXV1Zz09>
Meeting ID: 861 7998 0160; Passcode: 046006 Anyone interested in being the People's Respondent for the April 6 service should contact [Amma Marion](#).

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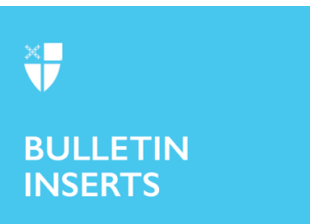
The **Winter Book Discussion** group had its most recent meeting on March 24, via Zoom. The sessions begin at **6:30**. The next session will be on a *date to be set*. All are welcome to participate. You can get the book-- [The Gifts of Imperfection](#), and its [workbook](#)-- from Amazon or other sources. Funds are available; contact [Kathy O](#).

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Upcoming Commemorations

- March 27 Charles Henry Brent, Bishop, 1929
- 28 James Solomon Russell, Priest, 1935
- 29 John Keble, Priest and Poet, 1866
- 30 Innocent of Alaska: Bishop, 1879
- 31 John Donne, Priest and Poet, 1631
- April 1 Frederick Denison Maurice, Priest, 1872
- 2 James Lloyd Breck, Priest, 1876

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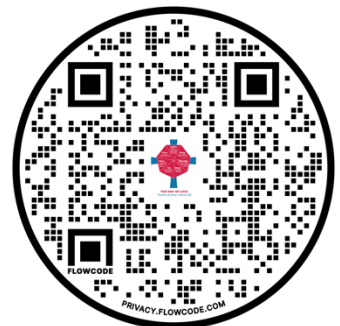


Lent 4C March 27, 2022

Week 4: Life Transformed – The Way of Love in Lent

The journey through Lent into Easter is a journey with Jesus. We are baptized into his life, self-giving, and death; then, we rise in hope to life transformed.

This Lent, communities are invited to walk with Jesus in his Way of Love and into the experience of transformed life. Together, we will reflect anew on the loving actions of God as recounted in the Easter Vigil readings. Together, we will walk through the depths of salvation history into the fullness of redemption. Throughout Lent, come along with us as we explore Life Transformed: The Way of Love in Lent, produced by Hillary Raining and Jenifer Gamber. You can find resources mentioned below at iam.ec/lifetransformed or by scanning the QR code to the right.



Week 4

Sunday, March 27

Today's Practice: Watch the Rev. Dr. Hillary Raining's video at iam.ec/lifetransformed for Week 4. The topic is based on the practice "Bless" and is titled, "A New Heart and a New Spirit".

Read: Ezekiel 36:24-28

Monday, March 28

Today's Prompt: Practice *lectio divina* with this scripture.

Read: Luke 15:17-24

Tuesday, March 29

Today's Prompt: How do others experience the love of Christ through you?

Read: "By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things." - Gal. 5:22-23

Wednesday, March 30

Today's Prompt: What can you say "no" to so you can say "yes" to prayer, rest and joy?

Read: "Six days shall work be done; but the seventh day is a sabbath of complete rest, a holy convocation; you shall do no work: it is a sabbath to the Lord throughout your settlements." - Lev. 23:3

Thursday, March 31

Today's Prompt: What challenges are you facing today?

Read: "And you will have confidence, because there is hope; you will be protected and take your rest in safety." - Job 11:18

Friday, April 1

Today's Prompt: Create a prayer representing how you seek to serve God and follow Jesus.

Read: "No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house." - Matt. 5:15

Saturday, April 2

Today's Prompt: Where do you find joy and passion?

Read: "They said to each other, 'Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?'" - Luke 24:32

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Reflection on the Opening Hymn: Guide me, O thou great Jehovah Hymnal #690

text by William Williams (1717-1791); tr. Peter Williams (1722-1796)

William Williams was the son of a prosperous Welsh farmer and received a good education. He originally studied medicine, but decided to enter the ministry. He was ordained a deacon in

Church of England in 1740. He then left his parish and became an itinerant evangelist. For over fifty years, he was to travel an average of nearly three thousand miles a year throughout Wales, often with his wife, a singer. Williams's hymns were his chief contribution to religious life and literature in Wales. He wrote more than eight hundred in Welsh and another one hundred in English.

"Guide me, O thou great Jehovah," originally in Welsh, was translated by Peter Williams in 1771. The tune, by Williams's compatriot John Hughes, has long been popular at Welsh hymn festivals and is still sung fervently, with this text.

Many of us have romantic ideas of what a pilgrimage entails, but William Williams knew the truth. In his near-half century of travels the length and breadth of Wales, he must have often prayed, "Guide me, O thou great Jehovah, / pilgrim through this barren land."

During one of the summers in which my husband and I guided a group journey to England, we stayed in the town of Ashford, close to the Pilgrims' Way, a route used by medieval travelers between Winchester and Canterbury. On a free day, some of our number decided to walk part of that historic footpath. Since others of the group chose to travel by coach to Canterbury later in the morning, the walkers planned to meet the coach at noon and travel the rest of the way with us. They studied the map carefully, and decided that they could easily travel the six miles to a crossroads marked "Godmersham" during the course of the morning. At noon, the coach arrived at Godmersham and drew up alongside a stucco house with a pink rambler rose twining around its entrance. The sign said "Old Post Office," but was obviously no longer in business; there was not a soul in sight. We sat waiting for nearly half an hour, but finally had leave a message with a man tending his garden. We left without our pilgrims.

When the coach returned to pick up the wanderers an hour later, they had finally arrived at Godmersham. It turned out that, though the footpath was a mere six miles, it was not by any means horizontal. The modern-day pilgrims had needed to walk uphill and downhill, climb over fences and styles, and pick their way carefully through pastures dotted with cow pats. It had not been a leisurely walk, but a strenuous effort.

Like the Pilgrims' Way, our earthly pilgrimage is usually anything but a straight and level path. Instead, the landscape often challenges us; the walk from birth to death requires effort on our part.

William Williams knew that we do not walk alone.

Sometimes the path is barren; we feel bored and listless, and it is difficult to summon the energy to put one foot in front of the other. At times like that, God is there as the bread of heaven, the traveler's sustenance. Sometimes our thirst—for love, for companionship, for consolation—almost overwhelms us. Then God provides living water, healing and surrounding us with compassion. Sometimes we feel we are lost, yet the God who led the Israelites with fire by night and a cloud by day will not abandon us. Should we become fearful about "treading the verge of Jordan" as we face our deaths, the Jehovah whose power led Jesus through the darkness of the grave into everlasting life will walk beside us then, as well.

Reflection on the Concluding Hymn: *Just as I am* LEVAS #137

Charlotte Elliott (1789-1871)

Some of the most popular hymns of the Victorian era were “invalid’s hymns,” and many of these were written by Charlotte Elliott. She began at an early age to write humorous poems, and was interested in music and painting. At the age of thirty-two, she suffered an illness that resulted in her becoming permanently bedbound. The next year, she met Cesar Malan, an evangelist from Geneva, who inspired her to devote the rest of her life to religious and humanitarian pursuits. Her correspondence with him lasted forty years.

In 1834 she undertook to edit the Christian Remembrancer Pocketbook, and prepared this volume annually for seventy-five years. She assisted in the publication of *The Invalid's Hymn Book*, printed in Dublin in 1836, in which this hymn first appeared. Her brother, the Rev. Henry V. Elliott, had arranged a bazaar to raise funds for building a college, to be named St. Margaret's Hall. Because she was neither able to attend or to help in any way, Elliott, oppressed by feelings of uselessness, finally penned the poem in order to overcome her sense of futility. The irony of the story is that the sale of this hymn aided the cause more than any bazaar. A tribute was later given by Elliott's brother, who wrote, "In the course of a long ministry, I hope I have been permitted to see some fruit of my labors; but I feel far more has been done by a single hymn of my sister's." After her death, more than a thousand letters were found among her belongings thanking her for the hymn.

I used to smile at what I considered to be the sentimentality of this hymn text until I read the story of Charlotte Elliott. One with disabilities who ministered to others through her poetry, she obviously met a real need in an era before awareness of preventive health care and the miracles of modern medicine were the norm. Because she herself had studied in the school of suffering, she could teach others. She spoke to people who felt useless or stricken, and her words rang true.

It is only to healthy people in the prime of life in the 21st century that these words are likely to sound sentimental. There are many others who have learned, through hard experience, the wisdom of Elliott's words.

I frequently visit a local extended care retirement community where there is a skilled nursing unit. There are some residents of the unit who could tell us a great deal about uselessness. One of them is a young man named Jeff, who is afflicted with Lou Gehrig's Disease, or ALS, a progressive degeneration of the nerve cells in the brain and spinal cord that control the voluntary muscles. The illness, mercifully, does not at this point affect his mind, but Jeff cannot move and he spends his waking hours in a wheel chair. His call button for the nursing station is a mouth-operated device. He cannot feed himself, but depends on the nursing assistants and the goodwill of volunteers from the retirement community.

When I asked Jeff how he was the other day, he said, "I'm fine, I'm just 'Jeffing.'" He could have said, "Just as I am without one plea." Jeff has learned a new approach to life, in which the value of thoughtful, reflective being supersedes the usual societal value given to usefulness. Because he is so good at "Jeffing," he has many visitors: professors, students, retirement community residents, people from the town, and myself. Going to see Jeff is like visiting a guru, who reminds us of why we are called human beings, rather than human doings.

I would like to think that we can all learn the value of "Jeff-ing" or "Nancy-ing" or "Whatever-your-name-is-ing" without being struck by illness or accident or extreme old age. Our whole lives long, we need to remind ourselves that we are valuable in God's eyes, not because we are capable, but because we are ourselves.

I am sure that none of us arrives at that insight easily. It is human nature to resist dependence and weakness with all our power: very likely we would be "tossed about / with many a conflict, many a doubt," should we ourselves end up in a situation like Charlotte's or Jeff's. Elliott's poem reassures us that, on the other side of that struggle, lies a treasure: the absolute dependence, not merely on others, but on the fact that God's great love, with all its breadth, length, depth, and height, is ours, just as we are.

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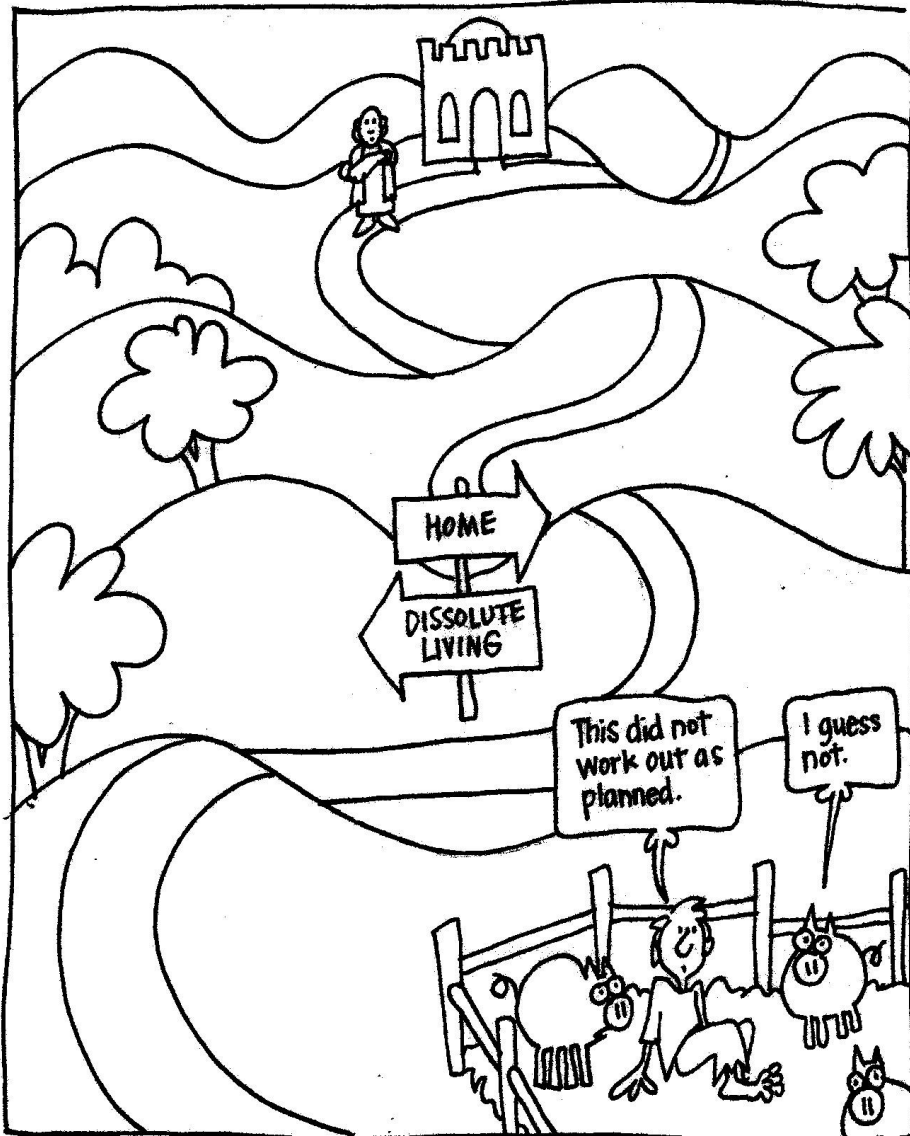
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Our Mission:

We seek to grow as diverse disciples of Jesus Christ, and to serve Jesus by serving others in the world, guided by the values of Ancient Rites, Open Minds, and Affirming Hearts.



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