

# Metropolitan

African Methodist Episcopal Church

LENT  
2010

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## Foreword

*The devotions in this booklet were written by the people of Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Church, a community of believers. Writing and distributing the booklet have become an important ministry of the Commission on Christian Education.*

*These reflections are our gift to you. Our hope is that you will find the scripture, thoughts and prayers helpful as you experience this season of Lent.*

*This collection of thoughts and prayers come from a variety of perspectives. Each serves as a testimony to the writer's desire to share his/her spiritual journey. Through these devotions you get a glimpse of our Metropolitan family's efforts to follow the teachings of Jesus.*

*We hope you will find this booklet useful as a rich resource for your daily devotions. We invite you to begin by using the guide on pages 46-47 to chart your spiritual journey through Lent and on to the glory of Easter.*

*May God Bless You!*

*Dr. Yvonne L. Bolling  
Director, Commission on Christian Education*

**WHERE DO YOU STAND WITH JESUS ?**

Luke 9:18-27

It is very easy to experience Advent and celebrate Christmas. It never ceases to amaze me how merchants and different venue owners from various religious backgrounds can play Christmas music and get so involved in Christmas-like activities leading up to the holiday. I know people from other cultures who are the first to put up their lights. It takes no personal, inward commitment to celebrate the birth of Jesus.

Even though Resurrection (Easter) is on the other side, it is a little harder to experience Lent or celebrate self-denial, Passion Week, crucifixion and a cross. These require a personal and inward commitment as well as a special relationship with the one whose birthday can be celebrated without any knowledge of who He really was or is. For too many, Advent is a surface experience; while on the other hand, Lent drives one deep to the very core and heart of one's inward faith and commitment.

Jesus and his disciples were in one of those rare and private moments. Jesus probes the disciples, "*Where do people stand with me?*" The disciples began telling him what the people thought about him and what they were saying. After that exchange, Jesus got very personal with these twelve men who were to witness and carry on his ministry after the Resurrection. "Now that you have told me about the people, tell me, where do you stand with me?"

At some point, where we stand with Jesus is the very personal and probing question with which we must come to grips within our lives. During these next forty days, take the time to focus and refocus on this probing and personal question, "Where do you stand with Jesus?" Prayerfully, along the way you will be able to celebrate your renewed commitment and relationship with the one whose birth you recently celebrated.

**REVEREND RONALD E. BRAXTON  
SENIOR PASTOR**

**FROM CELEBRATION TO SORROW**

*"...He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him;"*

Luke 24: 19-20

It seems just a few weeks ago we were celebrating ADVENT and Jesus' birth. Now we are in the season of LENT leading up to His death and resurrection. How quickly the time passed from celebration to sorrow.

We know that Jesus' time on earth was brief. How shocked the disciples must have been to lose their leader so soon after the celebration of His entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. Their sorrow must have been devastating.

For us, His death is bittersweet. We know that He died, but are thankful that in dying, He saved us. Our sorrow is more pronounced because of the knowledge of His bearing our own multitude of sins. The celebration of His birth was heralded with carols. The commemoration of His death is represented with a cross. We went from "Away In A Manager" to "The Old Rugged Cross" in a short period.

Although our hearts are heavy when we think of Jesus' suffering, we cry out in a loud voice, "Hallelujah, Thank God for saving me."

**Prayer:** *Heavenly Father, thank you for bearing our sins and giving us the gift of eternal life. May we remember that your Resurrection will always be a cause to celebrate. Amen*

**SISTER YVONNE BOLLING  
DIRECTOR, CHRISTIAN EDUCATION**

**REPENTANCE**

*“Peter replied, Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” Act 2:38*

As I think of Lent, I think of a season of repentance which is defined by the Merriam Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary as “the action or process of repenting”.

Many may say that as Christians, we should always be in a repentance mode but repentance to me is getting my act together. When I repent, I am asking the Lord to forgive me of my sins since sin is something done each day both knowingly and unknowingly. God is asking me to turn and look to him and repentance is one way through which I can turn!

As Christians in this season, let us turn to God as we seek to serve him. Let us this season reaffirm our love for him by recommitting ourselves to him through penitence. God is calling us to turn from our sins and misdoings as we seek to walk with him in newness of life.

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus, today I look to you who are the Lord and Savior of my life. Today, I confess my sins to you and ask that you will continue to be with me as I seek to serve you. Forgive me of any unconfessed sins I may have committed by thought, words or deeds against thy divine majesty. Have mercy on me and help me to serve as you teach me to serve you the way I should. In Jesus Name, Amen.*

**BROTHER LINCOLN BROWN  
VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL TEACHER**

**THE WORD**

*“In the beginning was the word and the word was God.” Genesis 1*

Lent is a time for reflection and repentance, a time for critical and honest self examination. It is a period of preparation for the celebration of the resurrection of Jesus. This is an ideal time to review the Word and incorporate Jesus’ teachings into my everyday life. The directions that we need for life are found in the Word. My commitment for Lent is to read and reflect on selected scriptures and pray for understanding and direction.

**Prayer:** *Lord, keep me focused on your Word. Give me the courage and will to follow your Word as I live each day. Let others see you in me..*

**SISTER ANNE LEVONNE BAIRD-BRIDGES  
WATCH CARE  
QUINN CHAPEL AME CHURCH  
CHICAGO, IL**

**WHAT IS THE MEANING OF LENT?**

*“But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities, the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him and by His wounds we are healed.”* Isaiah 53:5

Lent is a period of fasting and repentance that is practiced in preparation for Easter. The length of the Lenten fast was established in the 4<sup>th</sup> century as 40 days. The period of Lent is intended to be a time of repentance and fasting. The new testament teaches us that our acts of fasting and repentance should be done in a manner that does not attract attention to ourselves. According to Matthew 6:16-18, fasting should not be obvious to men but only to our Father who sees in secret and will reward us.

Fasting is a good thing when it is done with a biblical perspective. It is good and pleasing to our God when we give up sinful habits and practices. There is nothing wrong with setting aside a time when we focus on Jesus’ death and resurrection. These practices are things we should do every day of the year not just for 40 days. The key is to focus the time on repenting from sin and consecrating ourselves to God.

**Prayer:** *Father in the name of Jesus, I commit myself to a sanctified life, a life of holiness pleasing to You. I submit myself to You, Lord, spirit, soul and body. I commit to change whatever needs to be changed in my life because the desire of my heart is to be a vessel unto honor, sanctified and fitting for the Master’s use and prepared for every good work. I ask you now in the name of Jesus to fill me with the Holy Spirit. Thank You, Lord.*

**SISTER DOROTHY PAYNE BRYAN  
PASTOR’S BIBLE STUDY**

**CONVERSION**

*“Dear Friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain (convert) from sinful desires, which war against your soul.”*  
1Peter 2:11

Each year before Lent, I begin to think seriously about what I should “give up”... from what should I abstain...sugar, alcohol, fried foods, soda? This year is a little different...with the snow blizzard, I have had much time to sit still and think. What I have come to realize is that I want to do more than abstain...it’s about *conversion*. This year, I want to fully and completely change my behavior...become a new and improved me. During this Lenten season, as I challenge myself to fully convert to ways that are of God, I challenge you to do more than abstain for forty days, but to fully convert. Let us strive to be like Jesus.

**Prayer:** *Father God, give me the strength to fully convert not just to abstain.*

**TRUSTEE DONNELL KARIMAH**

**“Just A Reminder”**

*“Then he said to them all: “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self?” Luke 9:23-25*

During the season of Lent one should be reminded of the conditions of service to our Lord and Savior. In our scripture lesson Jesus makes it very clear what we must do. We are called to self-denial; we are called to treat ourselves as if we don’t exist. Then we are called to take up our cross daily. To take up our cross means to be prepared to face anything out of loyalty to Jesus. It means to be ready to endure the worst that anyone can do to us for the sake of being true to our Lord and Savior. We, as Christians, must realize that life is given, not to keep for ourselves but to spend for others; not to nurture its flame but to burn it out for Christ and for others.

Lent is a season of soul-searching and repentance. It is a season for reflection and taking stock. It is also a season of private inspection of oneself and his or her walk with the Lord. During the season of Lent we are reminded of the events linked to the Passion of Christ and that culminates in Easter, the celebration of the Resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus The Christ. We prepare ourselves through prayer, penitence, almsgiving, and self-denial. The season of Lent lasts forty days. The forty days represent the time that, according to the Bible, Jesus spent in the wilderness where He endured temptation by Satan before the beginning of His public ministry.

Forty days is a significant number when you look through the Bible. Moses spent forty days on Mount Sinai with God (Ex. 24:18), Elijah spent forty days walking to Mount Horeb (1 King 19:8), God made it rain for forty days and nights (Gen. 7:4), and the Israelites spent forty years traveling to the promise land (Num. 14:33). During this Lenten season let us focus on what it takes to be a child of the King. **“Just A Reminder”**

**Prayer:** *Oh God, our Lord and Savior, I praise and magnify your name. Forgive me of my sins, strengthen me to serve you with all that is in me, let my light so shine that I might always glorify your name in all that I do and say. Amen*

**REVEREND RODNEY BARNES**  
EZEKIEL’S MIGHTY MEN UNDER CONSTRUCTION

**THE WORD OF OUR GOD STANDS FOREVER**

[Isaiah 40:8](#) NKJV

For this Lenten Season, let's renew our minds with some of the wonderful promises God has given to us through His Word. Let's not just read them casually, but process them slowly, deeply, prayerfully and repeatedly, letting the truth of them change our thinking and strengthen our faith.

- 1) *'No weapon formed against you shall prosper, and every tongue which rises against you in judgment you shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord... ‘([Isaiah 54:17](#) NKJV)*
- 2) *'The Lord... is with you; never again will you fear any harm... he is mighty to save. He will... deal with all who oppressed you... ‘([Zephaniah 3:15-19](#) NIV)*
- 3) *'Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or discouraged because of the king... With him is only the arm of flesh, but with us is the Lord our God to help us... fight our battles... ‘([2 Chronicles 32:7-8](#) NIV)*
- 4) *'My soul finds rest in God alone; my salvation comes from him. He alone is my... fortress, I will never be shaken' ([Psalm 62:1-2](#) NIV)*
- 5) *'Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything; tell God your needs and don't forget to thank him for his answers. If you do this you will experience God's peace, which is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand... ‘([Philippians 4:6-7](#) TLB)*
- 6) *'For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord' ([Romans 8:38-39](#) NKJV).*

**Prayer:** *Dear Heavenly Father, YOUR fingerprints, Lord, are all over human history. Thanks you for being in control not only of my life but also of the whole world. You alone know the future and can orchestrate the events of life. Keep me from foolishly believing that I can control the outcome of my own plans. Give me the grace to trust that you know best and that you will work for my good and your glory.*

**DR. M. VALERIE MILLS**  
**TRUSTEE**

**LENTEN THOUGHTS**

What is your vision of Lent? Is it those 40 days of "giving up something" - sacrifice, fasting, extra prayers, etc.? Lent is so much more!

By definition, Lent is a penitential season of six Sundays and forty weekdays that prepares for the high feast of Easter. Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, the seventh Wednesday before Easter, and ends the Saturday before Easter Sunday. As we begin the Holy Season of Lent, which is a time of internal restoration, let's look into our respective lives to see what needs to be refurbished or thrown out. Instead of giving something up this Lenten season... throw something out; some vice, weakness, failing or sin. OR better yet, put something worthwhile in it, like peace, patience and understanding.

Remember, Lent is a preparation for an event. Lent is a waiting period. Lent is a journey towards that which is good and leaving behind that which can harm us spiritually. Lent places emphasis on recalling our baptism. Lent, my brothers and sisters is a time to come back to God!



**Prayer:** *Heavenly Father, help us to remember that this is the time for us to come back to You.*

**SISTER MARIA WALLACE  
PRESIDENT  
ROBERT R. & ORA B. KELLEY  
LAY ORGANIZATION**

**THE ULTIMATE SACRIFICE**

*"Father into thy hands, I commend my spirit." Luke 23:46*

We read further that no greater love is there than that a man lay down his life for his friend.

Periodically in Christendom, we enter into the season of Lent. During that time of observance we lay down, cast away, give up, let go- surrender temptation, hidden shares, fears, doubts, many vices and unnecessary habits that have no place in our physical, mental, or spiritual development.

We say we give up for Lent; that 40-day period when we are most conscious of those vices that have no purpose in contributing to the richer fuller development of our lives in Christ Jesus. Jesus came that we might have life and that more abundantly. This we must remember not just for a season but for always.

We have the audacity to pray- "lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil." Shame! It was alone the Savior prayed in dark Gethsemane. But before that ultimate surrender, what did He do for me and for you? Think about those 33 years on these mundane shores in which we live, He gave Himself for you and for me. He was beaten, denied, forsaken, bore the wooden cross of shame, bruised, even denied by His best friends, nailed to the cross, stabbed in His side, hung His head and died for you and me and still He prayed to the Father—"Forgive them..."

Yes, Jesus paid it all. There is no greater love.

How can we go our merry way- 40 of the 365 days as man counts the years-to act as though it is enough to surrender all a few days in love for our fellowman, woman and child, yet knowing that these are the days that try men's souls?

God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. The Son gave His life that opened the way to a home of bliss for all who would receive the ultimate sacrifice and dwell with Him throughout eternity.

**Prayer:** *Our Heavenly Father, we sing, "All to thee my blessed savior, I surrender all." May this be our earnest prayer each and everyday. Amen*

**DEACONESS MONTA TAYLOR**

**LIVING IN THE WILDERNESS**

*“Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil.” Matthew 4:1*

Not long after Jesus was baptized, he found himself in the wilderness for 40 days tempted by Satan. As many people know, I recently went through what could be described as a self imposed wilderness experience of hell and disappointment for 30 days in Utah. I found out that everything that glitters is not gold. Needless to say, it wasn't fun being homeless, jobless, and hungry living on the streets of Salt Lake City in the freezing weather. The only thing I had was a Bible, switch blade knife, 2 big suitcases and my faith in GOD.

Jesus' Wilderness experience gave him the power to sweat blood on Calvary for all the sins of the world; giving each of us the power to be saved when the cruel world and its demons arise in the wildernesses of our lives. Thank GOD that CHRIST loved us so much that he thought it not robbery to save the whole world from its sins.

Moses and the children of Israel spent 40 years in the wilderness to find the land GOD promised. As horrible as it may seem and be, it seems that the wilderness is a place that is sometimes unavoidable and must be experienced. Psalm 95:8 says, *“Harden not your heart, as in the days of provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness.”*

As we travel this 40 days Lenten journey for the 2010 season, let us humble ourselves to obtain strength and courage from Jesus our CHRIST for any wilderness experience we may encounter. During these days and beyond, let us focus on the truth of the lyrics, “I am weak and I need your strength and power to help me over my weakness hour, let me through the darkness thy face to see, Lead me, O LORD Lead me.”

**Prayer:** *LORD JESUS, help us to live a godly life of faith, hope and love; so we can be beacons of light to others. Please allow us to always embrace your presence, so when the time of a wilderness experience appears, we will receive your GRACE of revelation and arise from the situation or complex problem with renewed maturity and power AMEN.*

**BROTHER IMMANUEL BIBBINS**

**FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT**

*“Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” Matthew 22; 36*

You are invited in for today's Lenten reflection. The Summary of the Decalogue is one of my favorite moments during church service and I want to share its special relationship to the sacred season of Lent.

On a great day, (which are most days for me) each morning I dwell on the meaning of the scripture, *“Thou shall love the Lord thy God with all thy mind, heart and soul. This is the first and great commandment, and the second is like unto it, thou shall love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments, hang all the laws and the prophets.”(Matthew 22:37-40)* The words themselves are not overly complicated; yet in their simplicity they are extremely awe inspiring and poetic for me. The primary question of how to achieve the first and second Commandments is a gauge of my walk with God. How we are to treat God, each other and ourselves is also reflected on my favorite tapestry bed pillow that reads, *Fruit of the Spirit: Peace, Love, and Joy.* The full listing of the fruits as provided in Galatians 5:22 [English and Greek versions] are: Love (agape), joy (chara), peace (eirene), patience (makrothumia), kindness (chrestotes), Goodness (agathosune), faithfulness (pistis), gentleness (prautes), self-control (egkrateia)

In my house, new bed linens have come and gone over the years as my taste has changed. Yet the fruit pillow has remained a treasured item, primarily because it is a constant reminder of what I should always feel in my heart. At times I can feel God's presence very strongly, and at other times, more softly inviting me to lead and be led with my heart in addition to my mind. Clearly, Jesus was the full manifestation of all the fruits and it is a constant journey to emulate His example. And so I oblige, with a full and gracious heart that yearns for God's everlasting love, to reflect His spiritual fruits. Therefore, my friends, this Lenten season I offer Jesus' love and peace and joy to you.

**Prayer:** *Most heavenly Father, to you Abba we pray your word in this sacred moment as defined in Galatians 5. ‘But what happens when we live God’s way? He brings gifts into our lives, much the same way that fruit appears in an orchard- things like affection for others, exuberance about life, serenity. We develop a willingness to stick with things, a sense of compassion in the heart and a conviction that a basic holiness permeates things and people. We find ourselves involved in loyal commitments, not needing to force our way in life, able to marshal and direct our energies wisely.’ The Message Bible, Galatians 5*

**SISTER JACQUELINE COLEMAN  
SECOND STEWARD BOARD**

**ON CHRIST THE SOLID ROCK I STAND**

*So this is what the Sovereign Lord says “See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who trusts will never be dismayed.” Isaiah 28:16*

As we fast and pray during this season of Lent, let us strengthen our faith in the foundation that God laid for us by sacrificing his Son so that we could have a strong and steady rock on which to build our hope. Let us remember our ancestors who held that faith and hope and worshiped in barns, fields and shacks or anywhere they could to praise the Lord. That foundation girded them through years of slavery and subservience and they never lost hope. It enhanced their creativity and led them to unexpected success and fulfillment despite all of the challenges. Today we continue to have challenges but, fortunately, we still have that Solid Rock that girded our ancestors. With faith we can meet those challenges and recall “*For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.*” (1 Corinthians 3:11)

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**Prayer:** *Dear Gracious Lord, we praise and adore you and thank you for blessing us with your son Jesus Christ our solid rock. Amen*

**SISTER BARBARA FARROW JONES  
STEWARDESS**

**GLORIFYING GOD TO GROW SPIRITUALLY**

“Glory to God in the Highest...”

My greatest desire this Lenten season is to grow spiritually. I know the path to achieve this wish is to increase the spiritual disciplines of prayer, meditation, Bible reading and study. However, I also believe that spiritual growth only occurs when we live to the glory of God. How then do I aim my life to His glory and actually reach the point of humility where I am content to give Him glory no matter it costs me? During this Lenten season, I will lay emphasis on glorifying God by reciting his attributes as part of my prayer life.

What are some of his attributes?

\*God is good ! God’s goodness is revealed in many ways but most clearly in that He sent his Son into the world to show us ultimate goodness.

\*God is sovereign – He is all-powerful and rules over the entire universe and all events are under his control.

\*God is Self-Sufficient. God is the One who contains all, gives all that is given but who Himself can receive nothing that He has not first given to others.

\*God is infinite—He is everywhere and can’t be fully grasped by the mind of us humans.

\*God is omniscient, all-knowing. God sees the end from the beginning of history and is the ultimate source of all knowledge and truth.

\*God is Love and \*God is holy.

Prayer: Father God, thank you for your wonderful attributes. When I consider, for example, your vast goodness that is revealed in creation, Your Word, in Redemption, in Christ and the Holy Spirit, my belief expands and my little problems and concerns fade into nothingness. I praise and glorify You. In the Name of Jesus, Amen.

**Steward Dorothy Gilliam  
Public Relations**

**STUDYING GOD’S WORD**

*“Blessed is the man who finds wisdom, the man who gains understanding.”  
Proverbs 3:3*

Bible study is a vital part of Christian life. God has given us his word to guide, instruct, and encourage us. While on my Christian journey, I am learning to be a student of his Word through prayer and Bible study.

My spiritual condition has varied from time to time. Since joining Metropolitan A.M.E. Church in 2004 I have attended Sunday church service regularly. Yet, I felt spiritually unfulfilled. Several years ago I was divinely inspired to include three other aspects to my Christian life; praise, prayer, and bible study.

I have found that Bible study is powerful because it opens up to us the very mind and heart of God. The study of the scriptures is not just a study of a book that contains history, poetry, songs, prophecy, letters, biographies, advice, and law, but the study of God’s Word revealed. It can be a light in a dark place, a map in an unknown territory, words of comfort in the midst of trouble, or instructions for a difficult task. We may ask ourselves, “Why is God telling me this?; What lesson am I to learn from this?; What changes do I need to make to my life to conform to God’s will?” With concentrated Bible Study, these answers will be revealed.

Bible study can be intimidating to some of us if we try to do it alone. This is because we think we have to figure out what the scriptures mean all by ourselves. This can lead to guessing, which is not a good Bible study method because if we guess wrong we can distort or misinterpret the understanding of God’s Word.


We truly have amazing opportunities to participate in group Bible Study here at Metropolitan. At the Pastor’s Bible study on Wednesday evenings, we have a group of parishioners that are eager to learn more of God’s Word. The Pastor is an excellent teacher and helps us to interpret the meaning of the scriptures. Our study allows us to delve deeper into God’s Word as we learn how to pray, the majesty of his kingdom, and the correct interpretation of His Word.

How is your life’s journey? The journey that I speak of can enrich and change your life for the better. It has changed mine. All it takes is a willingness, an open mind, desire to learn more of His Word, companions to join you along the way, and your Bible.

Prayer: *Thank you, God for Your Word. Amen*

**BROTHER CHARLES SUMMERS  
PASTOR’S BIBLE STUDY**

**“JESUS KEEP ME NEAR THE CROSS”**

It would be nice, if all could have in their pocket, wallet or purse, a simple small wooden cross. Thanks to a Chaplain housed at the Fairfax Inova Hospital, in Virginia, I have such a cross and wherever I go, my cross  goes with me. The kind Chaplain gave it to me as I held a vigil at a beloved young relative’s bedside.

While we may not have a physical replica of a cross, we can carry a picture of a cross in our mind as we tend to some of our everyday challenges/activities. Examples of this process are as follows:

1. As I wait in a long line at a grocery store, I might ask that *Jesus keep me near the cross* or reflect upon Isaiah 40:31, which states “*But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint*”, or reflect upon Romans 15:5, which states “*Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like minded one toward another according to Christ Jesus*”
2. While awaiting a novice teenage driver to arrive home safely through an unexpected snowstorm, I might ask that *Jesus keep me near the cross* or reflect upon Psalm 125:2, which states “*As the mountains are round about Jerusalem so the Lord is round about his people from henceforth even forever*”, or reflect upon Psalm 121:8, which states “*The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth and for evermore*”
3. When changing schools, jobs or homes, etc., I might ask that *Jesus keep me near the cross* or reflect upon Daniel 2:21, which states “*And he changeth the times and the seasons; he removeth Kings and setteth upon Kings; He giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding*”, or reflect upon Psalm 9:10, which states “*And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, Lord, has not forsaken them that seek thee.*”
4. When facing an unexpected illness within a generally fit and healthy body, I might ask that *Jesus keep me near the cross* or reflect upon James 5:15, which states “*And the prayer of FAITH shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up.*” or reflect upon Psalm 105:4, which states “*Seek the Lord, and his strength; seek his face evermore.*”

I may, also, pray “*Dear God, thank you for each challenging or cross- bearing experience of my life, which gives me an opportunity to restore my faith and to trust you completely.*”

**SISTER PEARL ANN ALLEN  
CHURCH SCHOOL TEACHER**

**POWER AND AGONY IN WAITING – KEEPING FAITH**

*(James 5:7-15)*

Waiting, whether in a pessimistic or optimistic frame of mind, often results in impatience/ comfort, doubt/belief, anxiety/assurance, or the loss/strengthening of personal faith. We wait for things to happen, time to pass, and for the delivery of things hoped for. In this era of instant gratification we, more often than not, have little tolerance for waiting – everything is expected immediately, if not sooner. Even so, we know there will be many times when we must wait for the promise to be fulfilled.

Be faithful and hopeful in your waiting for as stated in Hebrews 11:1, *“faith is the substance of things hoped for.”* Evidence of such faith has been seen in the personal survivors’ stories of the earthquake in Haiti. Since the earth in Haiti shook, opened up, and basically everything was toppled and destroyed, we have seen recurring examples of individuals in waiting – waiting to be rescued; waiting to hear about the safety and welfare of family and friends; waiting for basic human needs to be met, e.g. water, food, medical aid, shelter; waiting for some sense of normalcy.

The Haitians, in their waiting, though surely experiencing fear and anxiety, have shown patience, neighborly assistance, and faithfulness. Additionally, some survivors, when pulled from the ruins, responded with joyful praise.

During this Lenten season, as we once again realize the fulfillment of Resurrection Sunday, take time and focus on life’s everyday treasures. In reflection, we should have a truer appreciation of things so easily taken for granted. Just bear in mind the challenges faced by the people of Haiti. Find thankfulness in the blessings that God grants daily. Wait, and be of good cheer.

**Prayer:** *Thank you, Heavenly Father, for the blessings you send daily. In our waiting, give us strength to be a testimony of your goodness as we continue to live by faithful meditation and earnest prayer, attempting to be of service as you so require. Amen.*

**TRUSTEE CAROLYN MCCLAIN  
MISSIONARY SOCIETY**

**WHY ARE WE HERE?**

As I look out of my windows and enjoy the beautiful snow, I am reminded of the scriptures in Genesis 1:31 *“God saw all that he had made, and it was very good”*. God is the maker of heaven and earth and all that is in them. So is the beautiful snow that has paralyzed the east coast of the United States of America. God has provided a time when families can bond, something that has gone missing for many years. He has caused families to be without power and they have learned to improvise and neighbors have been helping other neighbors who are less fortunate. Isn’t that what we are to be about on a daily basis? Why does God have to bring us to our knees in order to get our attention?

During the season of Lent, we are expected to refocus our attention on all that God has done for us. We are to humble ourselves and pray, study the bible more and focus our attention on the goodness of God. He sent his son who gave his life so that we too could have life; Not things, not sunshine all of the time. Yes, the snow is one of the wonders of winter and it offers to the earth healing for the coming spring and summer. The farmers are very aware of the benefits of snow.

God is so good that he placed us in His beautiful world and gave us dominion over it. That means we must take care of the things He has put in our charge. We praise God for the seasons.

Yes, we are all aware of the hot topic that our current president, Barack Obama, has made one of his agenda items, global warming which is harming our world. We all have a part to play in working to save the earth from environment abuses. God had deemed it so.

Now for the snow, enjoy it, count it as a blessing. Don’t focus on the inconveniences but count your blessing as you read the bible and pray each day until Easter comes.

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord, thank you for the sun, rain, snow and the four seasons. Thank you that you have made us to be caretaker of your magnificent earth. Help us to be good stewards and to show others your love and care. We bless your name and ask you to continue to give our president and all of us the strength to do your will. In the precious name of Jesus we pray. Amen.*

**STEWART JOAN W. OXENDINE  
SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF ALLEN**

**FROM WINTER’S WEARINESS TO SPRING’S SALVATION**

*“Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Sprit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.” Psalm 51:10-12*

There can be no dispute that this has been a hard winter. From economic instability, severely high rates of unemployment, the heartbreaking devastation of Haiti and record breaking snowfall in the Nation’s capital, there seems to be no end to bad news and challenging circumstances. Winter days, often cold, damp and bereft of sunshine, can leave us feeling weary to our very bones. Even at Metropolitan, we have had our difficult days and tough decisions as our congregation, has grappled with the daunting responsibility of restoring our beloved historic edifice. There are those who could consider throwing in the towel because too often the weariness of winter weighs like a coat that is just too heavy.

Yet, in our most difficult circumstances, we still can see the hand of God moving and providing for us in our time of need – a few modest signs of economic improvement, the outpouring of international aid for Haiti, and the thoughtfulness of neighbors during snowbound stretches, to name just a few. No matter how difficult the road we travel during winter’s gloomy days, we know that He is with us. If we just hold on, spring will come and provide us a chance to reflect anew on the beauty and awesome power of Christ’s incomparable love for us. Through prayer and sacrifice, let us move through the Lenten season and emerge with purer hearts ready to embrace the blessings of Easter.

**PRAYER:** *Dear Lord: Thank you for the warmth of your Holy Spirit and the blessing of renewal that you provide each day. May I be a reflection of your light in cold and weary places. Amen.*

**STEWART MARIE JOHNS  
SENIOR STEWARD**

**GOD WILL BRING YOU THROUGH**

*“Then we cried out to the Lord, the God of our fathers, and the Lord heard our voice and saw our misery, toil and oppression. So the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great terror and with miraculous signs and wonders.”Deuteronomy 26:7-8*

In recent weeks we have been bombarded with horrific images of the earthquake that has devastated Haiti. The people of Haiti, families, and communities have been crippled by the effects of the earthquake. People are still waiting to hear whether loved ones are alive or dead. People are awaiting food and water from relief workers who are struggling to travel on difficult roads. In looking at the situation we can only look to God for hope in such dire circumstances. Yet as we approach the season of Lent, we are all reminded that the same way that God brought the Israelites out of Egypt, God will bring us through.

We may not be survivors of an earthquake but some of us feel as though there are seasons in our lives when we are living in Egypt. Our spiritual Egypt can lead us to feeling spiritually tired, fatigued, embattled, frustrated, and restless. We just need some spiritual breathing room and to know that God hears our prayers. Lent reminds us that because of the sacrifice of Christ we have a close relationship with God who daily blesses us with grace, mercy, love, and forgiveness. It is because of our faith in God that we can trust in God to bring us through some rough times. No matter what we go through in life, God will bring us through.

**Prayer:** *God help us to know that you will bring us through. Amen*

**REVEREND KIMBERLY BROWN BARNES  
ASSISTANT PASTOR**

MARCH 9

## GOD NEVER FAILS

*“IF YOU BELIEVE, YOU WILL RECEIVE WHATEVER YOU ASK  
FOR IN PRAYER”*

Matthew 21:22

My Mother used to sing a little song when she was having a hard time – she’d sing, *God Never Fails*

*God Never Fails – Oh God Never Fails  
He abides in me He gives me victory  
Oh God Never Fails.*

*Just keep the faith and never cease to pray  
Just walk upright call him noonday or night  
He’ll be there, He’ll be there, there’s no need to worry  
For God Never Fails.*

My Mother would always say that if we went to God in prayer, he’d never fail to answer. The answer might not come when we wanted, or be the answer we wanted, but God would never fail to answer or honest prayer. To this day, when I need to have an intervention, I sing my Mother’s song and ask God for guidance and help and God never fails to provide me with a path forward. So I offer God to you with the faith of my Mother and the knowledge that if we go to God in prayer, we’ll receive what we ask. God loves us all, we must love one another.

**Prayer:** *God our Father, grant us the ability to love one another as we say we love you. Give us your peace, guide our spirits and give us harmony in our efforts to serve your kingdom. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen*

STEWARD THEDFORD COLLINS

MARCH 10

## “BLESSINGS WE CAN’T SEE”

“Sowing Generously”

GOD has A WAY; GOD is Our FAVOR, Turn off the Reasoning and Listen to the Sensing God has New Dreams, God has the Solutions, God is at Work. We must get in Agreement with God.

Some of us are losing sleep at night worrying that we’re not going to make it through our “Restoration Season”. It was God’s goodness that gave us this Great Cathedral. It is God who will make sure we come through this Season, so we can restore this House of Worship.

Deep down in my heart, I can feel the sensor; God is still on the throne. God has already lined up Our Favor; We just need to do our part and praise and thank Him for what has already been done by saying, “I know the abundance and increase is coming Our Way.”

God has doors He’s going to open for Metropolitan. We have to stay faithful. He will release the favor, He’s already promised. We just have to do what we can and God will do the rest.

Remember this: *“Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to us, so that in all things at all times, having all that we need, we will abound in every good work.” As it is written: “He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever”.*  
2 Corinthians: 6-9

**Prayer:** *Thank you God, Praise you God, God you are Love, God thank you for catching “Our Souls”. God thank you for loving a cheerful “Giver”. God thank you for a joyful heart. God never let anything so fill me with sorrow as to make me forget the job of Christ risen. In Your Name Jesus. AMEN.*

TRUSTEE LINDA JEFFERSON  
SISTERS OF THE COVENANT/GLOBAL MINISTRY

MARCH 11

**GIVE YOUR BEST WHERE YOU ARE**

*“Where I am going you cannot follow me; but shall follow afterward”. John 13:16*

With the right attitude freedom can mean being in the right place at the right time. There is something for you to do right where you are, it is all in how you look and accept the situation at hand.

Today, thank God for allowing you to be aware of the opportunities He has allowed you to experience. Don't waste time wishing you were somewhere else or that the conditions of your life were somehow different. It is your responsibility to give your best, and in so doing God's Spirit will move you to your greatest good.

*Prayer: Dear Father God, thank you for allowing the Holy Spirit to guide me to freely give my best today and every day in every situation whether or not I understand the reasons why. Amen*

**TRUSTEE MARIE DAY  
HEALTH MINISTRY/SOC**

MARCH 12

**COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS**

*“I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth.” Psalm 121:1-2*

*“When I think of the Goodness of Jesus, and all He's done for me, my soul cries out Hallelujah, thank God for saving me.”*

I know that God has been good to me and that He blesses me over and over. It is now income tax time and I do taxes for my neighbors and my family. This past year was really tight economically and I thought my family was struggling. But, when I looked at my 1099R and what my total yearly pension was, I was shocked at the amount that I had made. I then compared my income to that of my neighbors and family members and realized that truly God had blessed me. It made me wonder just how my neighbors made ends meet on the income that they received compared to mine. Sometimes we don't realize how well off we are until you look at someone else's situation.

During this season of Lent I won't be giving up anything such as chocolate or smoking or coffee; but I will be praying more for others who are less fortunate than me. I know God answers prayer, so, I will increase my charitable giving during Lent and initiate a family devotional period. This way I will use my blessings from God to be a blessing to others.

*Prayer: Father God I thank you for all your blessings, but most of all I thank you for making it possible for me to be a blessing to others.*

**BROTHER ANTHONY HAWKINS  
MIGHTY MEN'S CHOIR**

**THE THANKFUL TENTH**

Luke 17:11 – 19

*“And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?” Luke 17:17 KJV*

One of the struggles of parenthood is instilling in our children a sense of gratitude rather than entitlement. It is human nature to expect everything to come to us at our beck and call. Children will go after a toy without regard to whether it belongs to them or has to be purchased from the store. They want the toy and believe they are supposed to have it.

We, adults are no better. Who hasn't cut in front of someone on the roadway thinking that 20 feet we gained gets us to the destination quicker, without a wave of the hand to acknowledge the other driver?

In the study scripture, Jesus is returning to Jerusalem for Passover. As Jesus passes a village near the border of Samaria and Galilee, He comes upon 10 lepers who cry out for mercy and healing. Jesus instructs them to go show themselves to the priests and as they begin that journey, they are all healed. One of the ten notices the miracle that has occurred and returns to give his thanks and praises for the healing. As the Samaritan is praising the Lord, Jesus asks him a pivotal question: *“Weren't there ten of you? Where are the other nine?”*

Are we like the thankful tenth or more like the ungrateful entitled nine? Jesus died for our sins. Are we at His feet thanking Him for the mercy and grace we have been afforded?

**Prayer:** *Lord, help us to be like the thankful tenth for the mercy and grace granted us on Calvary. Amen*

**STEWARD WADE DUGGER  
TREASURER**

**OUR RICHES**

*“Moreover, when God gives any man wealth and possessions, and enables him to enjoy them-to accept his lot and be happy in his work-this is a gift of God.” Ecclesiastes 5:19*

At the school where I work, fruit is often provided to the students for an afternoon snack. A few days ago, I was passing out pears. My students began to complain, “Pears again, we don't want them.” Here were students complaining because they were tired of getting the same fruit. I thought about how, even in our underserved communities, we still are much richer than millions of people in the world. Many children and adults would do anything to have a piece of fruit, a morsel of bread, a school to attend and someone to show they cared.

As we enter this Lent season, let us take the time to appreciate all the things we take for granted. Let us look at the “riches” we have through the eyes of those who have nothing. This is the lesson I will teach my students.

**Prayer:** *Dear God, thank you for all the blessings you give us daily. May we always be mindful that no matter the amount of our possessions, there are others less fortunate than we are.*

**SISTER TERESA DRIVER  
STEWARDESS/CHURCH SCHOOL TEACHER**

**LIVING IN THE OVERFLOW**

“...A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.” Luke 6:38 NIV

A few months ago a visitor to my home, there to offer advice on paring down, reducing and reorganizing, said something to me that I have not forgotten. While walking through the house, listening to me complain about “all the stuff”, she stopped and said to me, "sister do you realize how blessed you are and do you know that you **“are really living in the overflow!”**”

I have been thinking about that phrase, **“living in the overflow”**, which to me simply acknowledges how God has filled and supplied my life with a surplus of blessings. What comes to my mind is the scripture text in Luke, "good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over.” And the more I think about it, the more my perspective about life in general is changing. While the phrase **“living in the overflow”** came as a result of a walk through my house with an eye towards cutting back, it is actually more than about the stuff in my house, it is really about the sum total of my being. Each and every day when I consider just how far God has brought me, when I think about just how much God continues to bless me, I am reminded that had it not been for the Lord on my side, where would I be?

As we journey through this Lenten season, I am personally taking the time for serious self-examination and renewing my commitment to Jesus Christ. Today, I invite you to consider joining with me in daily prayer and meditation so that together as the body of Christ we will grow stronger in our relationship with the Lord. Together we should count our many blessings as we praise the Lord for **“life in the overflow”**.

**Prayer:** *God, I thank you for blessings beyond measure. Blessings, oh Lord, that are undeserved. Enable me to always praise You and always thank You for all that I am and for everything that I have. This is my prayer in Jesus name, amen.*

**REVEREND AISHA KARIMAH  
NEW MEMBERS AND ANCHORS**

**MONEY AND/OR PROSPERITY?**

Psalm 36: 8 *They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures.*

Psalm 37: 11 *But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.*

Psalm 37: 18 *The LORD knoweth the days of the upright: and their inheritance shall be for ever.*

Psalm 75:10 *All the horns of the wicked also will I cut off; but the horns of the righteous shall be exalted.*

Psalm 84:11 *Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven.*

Psalm 92:12 *The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.*

Proverbs 3:2 *for length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee.*

Ecclesiastes 8:12 *Though a sinner do evil a hundred times, and his days be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him:*

During Advent 2009 I wrote about “These Economic Times”. It occurred to me that when the economic times get better, would I know what prosperity look like? Of course I equated prosperity with money. My overall prayer is to prosper..... so what is prosperity according to God’s definition? I found the passages above that spoke to this topic. What I found was:

“They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house”	sounds like being first satisfied with the existing blessings;
“shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace”	cut out the drama
“their inheritance shall be forever.”	our inheritance is in the Lord not in thing of this earth
“Truth shall spring out of the earth”	prosperity can’t be based on a foundation of untruth
“The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree”	the righteous shall flourish
“length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee”	a long life is equated with prosperity

Even if you pray that your economic situation (\$\$\$\$) will improve, pray for “Prosperity”; It has a better outcome!

**TERRY A. JOHNSON  
VICE CHAIR, PRO TEM, BOARD OF  
TRUSTEES**

MARCH 17

## **BEING PERSUADED BY THE CROWD**

*“But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the multitude to ask for Barabbas, and to put Jesus to death.” Matthew 27:20*

We live in a society where major decisions within most organizations are based on the principle that the majority rules. Provided that it is a vote by a show of hands, one usually surveys their peers and is often persuaded by the vote of others to make sure that they cast their vote with the majority.

Let us rewind (look) back to the time when Jesus was brought before Pilate. Pilate was confronted with making a decision as to whether Jesus was guilty of the accusations presented by the Jews, as to Jesus committing any crime. The accusations were regarding Jewish (not Roman) laws. However, the Jews attempted to persuade Pilate that Jesus had broken some Roman laws. Thus, Jesus was accused of forbidding the Jews to pay taxes, and inciting the people from Judea to Galilee. Pilate, after hearing their accusations and learning that He was a Galilean, which was Herod’s jurisdiction, referred Jesus to Herod. Herod refused to hear the case and referred Him back to Pilate. Since Jesus had not broken any Roman laws, it is my belief that neither Herod nor Pilate was seriously interested in the Jews and their issues with Jesus.

At the governor’s feast, it was customary to release to the people a prisoner of their choice. In lieu of requesting Jesus, the people requested that their hero (Barabbas) be released. Because Jesus had not broken any laws, Pilate’s decision was to release Him. However, by the persuasion of the elders and priests, the people requested Barabbas as the person of their choice. Here we have the ruling governor (Pilate) vs. the multitude (the majority) and it would be the multitude’s decision as to who should be set free. They cast their votes for Barabbas. Pilate washed his hands saying, “I find no fault in this man.” Pilate wanted to have clean hands concerning the death of Jesus. Thus, Barabbas was set free at the request of the people, and Jesus was crucified.

During our lifetime, all of us must make decisions before we cast our vote. Do you survey the crowd and cast a popular vote? As can be seen from the above biblical illustration, you should not be persuaded by the crowd and cast a popular votes with the majority which may lead to making wrong decisions. Your decision, however, should be based on the principle of what is right and/or just, because the majority is not always right, and the right is not always the majority. Therefore, one should endeavor to “Do the right thing and vote your own conviction. After witnessing the miracles of Jesus, how could one vote to free Barabbas?

**Prayer:** *Lord, guide my thoughts so that I will make the proper decisions during my life. Help me to stand for what is right and/or just so that I will have clean hands with regard to the decisions that I will make in my life. Amen*

**BROTHER HENRY A. ALLEN  
LAY ORGANIZATION**

MARCH 18

## **PRAYER FOR THE DISCIPLES**

John 17: 6-19

We often think of Jesus praying before His capture and during His time on the cross, but in the Gospel of John, Jesus prays for His disciples. John describes for us the extent of Jesus’ love and concern for those the Holy Father entrusted in his care:

*“I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me. I pray for them, I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me for they are yours. All I have is yours, and all you have is mine, And glory has come to me through them. I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name- the name you gave me-so that they may be one as we are one. While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled.”*

*“I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth: your word is truth.” John 17: 6-17*

How comforting to know that Jesus prayed for his disciples. We have an example to follow in praying for our friends and workers in Christ: for the work that God has put us here to do.

**DR. YVONNE L. BOLLING  
COMMISSION FOR CHRISTIAN EDUCATION**

**A LIGHT IN THE STORM**

*For the Lord will be your everlasting light. Genesis 28:15*

At the writing of this testimony, the metropolitan area is barely recovering from the Blizzard of 2010 and weather forecasters are predicting more snow in days to come. I, like most in the local area, was held captive and hostage in my home for days due to the sheer amount of snow and impassable streets and highways. I prepared for unforeseen events by purchasing adequate food and water for several days in the event that the worse case scenario presented itself. What neither I nor thousands of others could have prevented was the loss of electrical power due to the storm.

My home and community were only without heat, lights, and electricity for approximately 12 hours, and I knew it was just a matter of time before the power resumed. With the aid of candles, I was able to eliminate the darkness of the house and calm those unfamiliar sounds and creaks you never notice when everything is normal.

It was at that moment that I was reminded that Jesus Christ is that candle, that bright shining light and guiding star in the midst of our storms. Whether they are personal crises, financial, or conflicts within our hearts and souls, *He* is our redeemer, the light that guides us out of the darkness, and leads to shores of safety and comfort.

**Prayer:** *Jesus remind us daily that You have always been with us and will forever be our light in a world of darkness.*

**SISTER BARBARA F. THOMPSON  
SISTERS OF THE COVENANT (SOC)**

**MY FAITH LOOKS UP TO THEE**

As we celebrate this Season of Lent my faith, in the mist of a storm, grows even stronger. I'm reminded that in:

The book of Hebrews we find a definition of Faith:

Hebrews 11:1 *Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*

*2 For by it the elders obtained a good report.*

*3 Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear*

The book of Mark tells us to have faith in God:

Mark 11:23 *For verily I say unto you, that whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith*

*24 Therefore I say unto you. What things so ever you desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them and ye shall have them*

So I continue to Praise God from whom all my blessings flow

My faith looks up to thee  
Thou Lamb of Calvary  
Savior divine  
Now hear me while I pray.....

May thy rich grace impart  
Strength to my fainting heart  
My zeal inspire  
As Thou has died for me  
O may my love to Thee  
Pure warm, and changeless be  
A living fire

**STEWARDS FREDERICK M. PRICE  
BOARD OF STEWARDS**

**GOD’S GRACE**

*“Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love.” Ephesians 6:24*

Grace is always tied to the heart and character of God. God longs to demonstrate His grace to a disobedient nation. Grace is God’s character demonstrated in undeserved love. In fact, grace is God. It is His character illustrated in our lives and is the signature of the cross. Words like favor, beauty, thankfulness, gratitude, delight, kindness are all benefits derived from God’s grace.

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord, may we know your grace by experience. May we see grace as you offer acceptance in place of rejection, favor in place of judgment, and forgiveness where condemnation is deserved. Amen.*

**SISTER LEILA KENDRICK  
SAMS/CATHERINE C. HEMINGWAY AREA  
MISSIONARY SOCIETY**

**GRACE AND MERCY**

*“Give thanks to the Lord for he is good; his love endures forever.”  
Psalm 118:1*

Recently, I was with a group of church members serving dinner to women at a homeless shelter. A member of our team asked that each woman in the room introduce themselves and say one thing for which they were thankful. It was so moving to hear these homeless people give thanks for many things we take for granted.

During the introductions and all the thanks, a particular one resonated throughout the room when a resident said, “I thank God for grace and mercy.” Even in what could be a distressing situation, here was a woman who still knew that God loved her and felt His grace and mercy were with her.

I left there feeling thankful to witness how God’s love keeps us all. Let us be thankful for God’s grace and mercy not only at Lent but through all the seasons of our lives.

We can all sing:

*Your Grace and Mercy brought me through  
I’m living this moment because of You.  
I want to thank You and praise You too  
Your Grace and Mercy brought me through.*

**Prayer:** *Heavenly Father, thank you for your love which knows no limit. Help us to remember that, in all situations and all that we experience, it is Your grace and mercy that protect us. Amen*

**SISTER YVONNE BOLLING  
STEWARDESS**

**THINGS THAT WERE DONE**

*“Now when the centurion and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, ‘Truly this was the Son of God’”* Matthew 27:54

We are consumed by the news reports of the tremendous suffering in Haiti due to the recent earthquake. It is difficult to comprehend the depth of pain inflicted by this natural disaster. How does one respond to infrastructure disappearing? How can one exist daily surrounded by dead bodies littering the streets? The challenge for all of us would be daunting.

My faith tells me that belief and trust in God is the only way to manage any crisis that confronts us. We are not equipped to go it alone. Often, as with the centurion and those with him, it takes an earthquake for us to know that God is the only way.

My “things that were done” may be different from your “things that were done.” For me, it was my first wife’s battle with breast cancer. Yours may be your own health challenge or the loss of a job in these difficult times. Attending church and participating in the rituals of our denomination (AME) is one thing, but knowing that “Truly this was the Son of God” is another.

As a steward and on some Sundays an usher, I am truly amazed at those I see who appear to come to church Sunday after Sunday with the same dour expression and leave with that same expression. Just being in the presence of God for a few minutes should be enough to bring a smile to your heart. O Thou, in Whose Presence my soul takes delight. Thou art my all and in Thee I will ever Rejoice.

**Prayer:** *Heavenly Father, allow me a closer walk with thee. In your name I pray. Amen*

**STEWARD JAMES F. ROBINSON  
USHER BOARD**

**GOD FORGIVES US ALL**

*“For all have sinned and fall short for the glory of God. “*  
Romans 3:23

As I reflect on my walk with the Lord, I know that with every new day, God gives me a fresh new start!! How wonderful is that!! Just the thought when I lie down to bed, I get this feeling of peace as I pray and fall asleep. Then to wake in the new morning, I give God the glory for I know that all my yesterdays are gone. I have asked God for His forgiveness and mercy on the sins I have done. I know that God will give me another chance.

Sometimes, what I do not understand is how easy God gives us his mercy and forgiveness, yet we are quick to judge and slow to forgive others. Just image what you can do with all that energy that you put into not forgiving your brothers and sisters. God gives us mercy, a new start and forgiveness. What an example God gave us in Jesus, on how we should extend that same mercy to our brothers and sisters.

**Prayer:** *Dear God, I pray that as you forgive me of all my sins, you make in me a clean heart with a new start. I pray that I extend that same forgiveness to others. Lord make in me that same mercy so that I am quick to forgive and easy to love others.  
In Jesus name, Amen.*

**SISTER AJA HOLMES  
SOC, ANCHOR, AND YARN**

**“GOD IS ALREADY ON THE WAY”**

*“Before they call, I will answer;  
while they are still speaking, I will hear.” Isaiah 65:24*

After Friday night Women’s Bible Study, our Rev Marie (Braxton) called me aside and said, “I got your prayer request that you sent on the website; I want you to know that I have been praying for you.”

I confess that I don’t remember my prayer request; all I recall is that I reached out of feeling overwhelmed from what seemed like a double portion of trouble touching my family - joblessness, home foreclosure, depression, divorce. No doubt, my prayer included a petition for my little brother, who has been boxing with God for a long, long time; with the rest of the family members in his ring, propping him up for another round. At long last, we let go, allowing him to surrender.

Miraculously in the few weeks after I released my prayer, my little brother seems to have experienced a transformation; in the midst of his pain, his own relationship with God seems to have grown stronger. Just today, *he* comforted *me* about the earthquake tragedy in Haiti, assuring me not to worry, because “God is on the way”.

It is possible that, magically, my Internet prayer reached God’s ears at nano-speed, or Rev. Marie’s intercessory prayers helped to move my petition to the top of the list. But more than likely, God was already on the way. He has already heard our petitions before we even ask; and He is already working on our prayer requests while we are still on our knees.

As for Haiti, tens of thousands of people text-messaged donations exceeding \$3 million in one day, and thousands of others are en route to lend a helping hand. Perhaps Haiti is helping US; taking our eyes off our own pain to help a tiny nation whose struggles eclipse our own.

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord, thank you for always hearing our plea and planning our deliverance. Amen*

**SISTER MAURITA K. COLEY,  
WOMEN’S BIBLE STUDY/DANIEL ALEXANDER PAYNE CDC**

**ARE YOU A FAITHFUL SERVANT?**

*For the LORD loves the just, and will not forsake his faithful ones. They will be protected forever. Psalm 37:28 a-b*

During these hectic economic times, we must always remember to – *“Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, and faithful in prayer.”* (Rom 12:12) Trouble does not last always. Jesus endured the pain and died on the cross that we might have eternal life. We are required to take up the cross and follow in the footsteps of Jesus. We are charged to keep His covenant and be a faithful servant. *“All the ways of the Lord are loving and faithful for those who keep the demands of his covenant.”* (Ps 25:10) We are urged to offer our bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, which is our spiritual act of worship. (Rom 12:1)

*“Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.”* (Rom 12:3) We should pray daily, *“Lord, teach me to do your will, for you are my God; may your good Spirit lead me on level ground.”* (Ps 143:10)

*“We must know that in all things God works for good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. (Rom 8:28) “If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all – how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?” (Rom 8:31b-32) “Christ Jesus, who died and was raised to life – is at the right hand of God, and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? We are considered as sheep to be slaughtered. We are more than conquerors through him who loved us. (Rom 8:34b – 38)*

At times we may feel persecuted, knocked down, and trampled over, but we must continue to do the work of the Lord. *“ God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful.”* (1 Cor 1:9) *“He guards the course of the just, and protects the way of his faithful ones.”* (Prov 2:8) *“The Lord redeems his servants; no one will be condemned who takes refuge in him.”* (Ps 34:22) As we go through these hectic economic times, we should always be reminded that: *Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures through all generations. The Lord is faithful to all his promises and loving toward all he has made.* (Ps 145:13) When we have done our best, seeking to be faithful servants carrying out God’s will, and close our eyes in eternal rest, we should look forward to hearing the Lord say, *“Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things.* (Mat 25:21b-d)

**Prayer:** *Help us to be faithful servants and stay focused on You during these hectic economic times. Give us the strength to take up the cross, keep your covenant, and not grow weary as we faithfully seek to follow in your footsteps and do your will. Lead and guide us on a path of righteousness, remembering that You are faithful to all Your promises, and shall give us Eternal Life. Amen*

**TRUSTEE JOCELYN Y. HARRIS**

**DON'T IGNORE GOD**

*"And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart."  
Jeremiah 29:13*

My Lenten reflection is a thank you note to God for blessing my 5 siblings and me with godly parents who knew how to give good gifts to their children. Family life was built around praising and serving God. A picture of Jesus at prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane the evening before his crucifixion dominated the sofa wall of our living room. Observing the Season of Lent was a well established tradition in my home. Concerning our spiritual development, our parent's instructions were clear, "Don't ignore God." Over the years, that instruction would come to mind and has impacted significantly my spiritual growth.

The Lenten Season became that pivotal time on the Christian Calendar when I would actively work at disconnecting myself from external distractions to focus on seeking and increasing my understanding of God and His plan for my life. For 40 days I commit to exploring and practicing a variety of spiritual resources, with the goal of achieving a closer relationship with God. They include but are not limited to; setting aside uninterrupted quiet time with God, researching God's promises in the Bible, reading books on Godly Living, memorizing scripture, different forms of meditation and prayer; and for the last several years viewing the DVD *THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST*.

Looking at the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus from the perspective of Eternity, I lack words to express the enormity of my gratitude to God for the gift of Jesus to Believers. Being in right relationship with God opens our eyes and hearts to God's gifts that are all around us; even those unexpected gifts that come wrapped in challenges.

Psalm 91: 1, 14-16

*"Those who live in the shelter of the Most High will find rest in the shadow of the Almighty.  
The Lord says, I will rescue those who love me.  
I will protect those who trust in my name.  
When they call on me, I will answer;  
I will be with them in trouble.  
I will rescue them and honor them.  
I will satisfy them with long life and give them my salvation."*

**Prayer:** *Father God, thank you for deciding to save us through our Lord Jesus Christ. Thank you for your Word that gives comfort, which empowers, and gives us the confidence of our salvation. Amen*

**SISTER JANICE C. EVANS  
SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHER, CLASS LEADER**

**IN YOUR WILL**

*".....for the Father knows what you need before you ask Him..."  
Matthew 6: 8*

Rev. Thomas L. Walker sings "Keep Me in Your Will." No doubt the song has been on the playlist for dozens of gospel radio stations for quite a while, but it became especially meaningful for me just recently. In the past month I have attended Women's Bible Study where the lesson focused on recognizing the presence of the Holy Spirit and the Pastor's Bible Study where for several sessions we learned about prayer by dissecting Matthew 6: 9-13.

The song has five verses; each verse ends with same two lines "...Lord, keep me in your will; So I won't be in your way..." Those few words have become such a powerful mantra for me. With the observance of Lent, living within God's will is an especially timely topic. It requires me to be still, to be patient, to study scripture so that I recognize God's will vs. secular influences. And when in my prayers I utter words of adoration, thanksgiving, petition, forgiveness, and praise; ultimately I must be accepting that it is God's will that prevails.

In Jesus' humanness, he would have traded crucifixion and tossed our redemption to the wind. But Jesus' divinity gave him the courage to suffer and die for our salvation. Thanks be to God for the perfected three-in-one design. In these times, I find my greatest comfort in the Holy Spirit who neither leaves nor forsakes. While I may not be pleased with the answer to every prayer, I know that every prayer is answered.

**Prayer:** *Bless the Lord, O my soul. Even when there's dissent between your way and my preference, I will still bless you, O Lord. Thank you for grace and mercy to tolerate my transgressions. Thank you for forgiveness and a second chance. Amen.*

**SISTER MARSHA TURNER BOTTS  
LOVE AND PEACE UNIT**

**EXPEDIENCY**

*"...that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth." Isaiah 49:6*

During the Lenten season twenty years ago, a Maundy Thursday worship service was held at Turner Memorial A.M.E. Church. This congregant, distraught from news received less than an hour before the start of the service, could not focus on the words of the preacher. Nevertheless, the sermon was so powerful that its central point filtered through the mental block created by the unpleasant news. The preacher was Presiding Elder Walter Hildebrand, and the title of his sermon was "Expediency."

The sermon was based on events recorded in the eleventh chapter of the Gospel of John. A review of the chapter allows one to summarize it as follows. Caiaphas and his fellow Pharisees were thoroughly disgusted with Jesus. Caiaphas expressed concern that Jesus' growing popularity would eventually harm the fragile relationship that existed between the Jewish nation and Rome. Speaking to his fellow comrades at a council meeting, he said, "Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not" (John 11:50 KJV).

**Rev. Hildebrand remarked that Caiaphas was speaking politically. It would be expedient, useful and practical to rid the Jewish nation of Jesus in order to protect the interests of Caiaphas and his band. Conversely, God intended Jesus' death to be spiritually expedient as the way to provide salvation for the entire world. Indeed it was expedient, the preacher emphasized, that one man should die for all the people.**

As the Apostle John commented, Caiaphas was only a tool used by God to utter a statement that would shortly thereafter become a spiritual truth. Centuries earlier God told the prophet Isaiah that He intended to offer salvation to the ends of the earth (Isaiah 49:6). Through Jesus, anyone of any nation, race or tribe can have salvation, full and free. If we trust in Jesus, we need not perish.

**Prayer:** *Thank you, God, for the sacrifice made by your Son, Jesus Christ, who is alive and sits on your right hand. He alone can pay for our sins. And thank you for the sermon preached by your servant, who now resides with you. Amen*

**BROTHER JOSEPH COHEN  
ADULT BIBLE CLASS**

**50/50 LOVE**

*1 Corinthians: 13*

On Saturday, January 23, 2010, one of the icons of the music genre known as rhythm and blues was funeralized in his hometown, Philadelphia, PA. Teddy Pendergrass, who died January 13, 2010, was an artist gifted with a melodious velvety-smooth voice that consistently yielded hit record after hit record.

One of my favorite Pendergrass recordings was "When Somebody Loves You Back\*," a beautiful melody with lyrics that urged those who loved one another to each give their all to the relationship, to invest in it. "It's so good lovin' somebody, when somebody loves you back...and that's a fact...Not 70/30, not 60/40, talkin' about 50/50 love," so go the lyrics. A love relationship message with a formula. The implication here, of course, is that each person in a relationship must contribute 50% in order for the relationship to become whole (100%). In Pendergrass' scenario, anything other than 50% from each partner would throw the relationship out of balance. One partner in the relationship can't give "way more" than the other.

As a Christian, I have come to know that there is indeed another relationship message and formula. For those of us who truly believe, His enduring the pain of Calvary and the Cross symbolizes not a 50/50 love, but 100% unconditional love. Our heavenly Father watches over us and loves us no matter our circumstance, no matter the times we repeatedly fail to give 50%, 60%, 70% or any percent!

You don't have to be on the frontlines to demonstrate your love for others, and thus your love for God. And neither do you have to establish an intimate relationship with another to demonstrate a love that conveys you depend on the love of God. How you demonstrate your love for others is revealed through your actions.

There are many biblical passages and songs that convey this extraordinary love. For example, "For God so loved the world, that he gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life," (John 3:16); God's desire for all love relationships is not based on sharing equally, but when we love someone as God loved us, we should be willing to love freely to the point of self sacrifice. "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends," (John 15:13) is God's commandment to us for how we are to love each other as Jesus loved us. "...Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt 22:39) is one of the two greatest commandments. And, songs—religious and secular—also call our attention to love: "Love Lifted Me," "Jesus Loves Me," "A Prayer for Love," and "Jesus is Love" (Lionel Ritchie). Give 50% and get 50% or 100%? No, we are to love each other as Jesus loved us, completely and unselfishly, and unconditionally.

During this Lenten season, let us be reminded of the depth of God's love for us as is symbolized by His son on the cross of Calvary—our souls renewed and faith strengthened

**Prayer:** *Father, help your children to understand the true meaning of love, so that your will is done.*

**SISTER GLADYS GARY VAUGHN, PH.D.,  
DANIEL ALEXANDER PAYNE CDC**

**THE RESURRECTION-REJOICE**

John 3:13-21

“Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up” John 3:14

As Christians the cross symbolizes our hope for life here on earth and life with God after death. Non believers often ask why we celebrate the Resurrection. Our response should emphatically be Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior is alive. As Christians we can boast and celebrate an empty tomb because the One that we love, the One that we follow, and the One that we serve each and everyday is no longer there.

The nails and thorns that Jesus endured on the cross weren't the reasons that held him to the cross, it was his undying love for you and me that he stayed there and died. The word of God tells us that Jesus Christ is now seated at the right hand of God the Father interceding on behalf. Now Rejoice. **Give God the Glory and Rejoice!!!!**

The cross symbolizes God's forgiveness, peace and his desire to experience an intimate relationship with all of us. Now rejoice because Jesus Christ lives. When the son of God died to save us he and God the father knew that we could not and would not live perfect lives. **Rejoice and again I say rejoice.**

The Resurrection gives us the blessed assurance that we as Christians have a purpose for living. We are to live as children of the most high trusting and obeying the word of God.

Jesus paid a debt that he did not owe but one that we could not afford to pay. Three days after he was placed in a tomb he rose again. **REJOICE** and give **THANKS** in the Resurrection of Jesus the Christ.

**Prayer:** *Father we thank you for your unconditional love. We thank you for the life, love, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We rejoice and give you all the praise. In his precious name we pray and say “THANK YOU” Amen.*

**STEWARD GRETA KENDRICK  
USHER BOARD/STEWARDESS**

**LENT**

The Lenten season extends from Ash Wednesday to Easter Sunday. We think of Lent as a time of prayer and renewal. In our world today, amid the hustle and bustle of life, we don't take time to mediate and pray to God. This is a time to pause and be patient with ourselves and with others as God is patient with us.

The L in the word Lent represents the love of God, the E represents the energy of God, the N represents the new life God gives us, and the T represents the cross.

The love of God gives us energy to start a new life at the cross. We pray, we fast, we repent, we sacrifice. We celebrate LENT.

**SISTER JUDITH WATKINS  
STEWARDESS**

**PRAYER**

MATTHEW 6:5-16

In Pastor’s Bible Study we have been learning about prayer. The Lord’s Prayer was our primary focus as we sought to learn just how to pray. Jesus provided the disciples with the example of how to pray. We add to this example by using the following:

**Address God**

“Our Father, who art...”

**Submit to God’s will**

“Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done...”

**Ask for your physical needs**

“Give us this day our daily bread...”

**Ask for forgiveness**

“Forgive us our debts...”

**To the degree that you yourself are willing to forgive...**

“As we forgive our debtors...”

**Ask for help with temptations**

“Lead us not into temptation...”

**And preservation from evil**

“Deliver us from evil...”

**PASTOR’S BIBLE STUDY**

**A SPIRITUAL JOURNEY THROUGH LENT**

**A. DESIRED GOALS FOR THE LENT SEASON.**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

**B. A PRAYER I WILL PRAY EVERYDAY BEFORE READING THIS JOURNAL.**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**C. HOW SHALL I REACH MY SPIRITUAL GOALS FOR THIS SEASON?**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

**D. SIGNIFICANT SCRIPTURES TO HELP ME ACHIEVE MY GOALS.**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

**E. MEDITATIVE THOUGHTS I MUST REFLECT ON FROM THIS JOURNAL.**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

**F. THINGS I MUST CHANGE IN ORDER TO BE SPIRITUALLY STRONGER.**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

**FOR US**

During this season of Lent we reflect on what has been done FOR US

King James Version

Isaiah 53:4 *Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted*  
5 *But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our Iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed*

New International Version

Isaiah 53:4 *Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him and afflicted.*  
5 *But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed*

And the hymn by Isaac Watts continues to touch our hearts

Alas! and did my Savior bleed  
And did my Sovereign die?  
Would he devote that sacred head  
For sinners such as I?

Was it for sins that I have done  
He suffered on the tree?  
Amazing pity! grace unknown!  
And love beyond degree!

Well might the sun in darkness hide  
And shut His glories in  
When Christ, the great Redeemer died  
For man the creature's sin

Thus might I hide my blushing face  
While His dear cross appears  
Dissolve my heart in thankfulness,  
And melt mine eyes to tears.

But drops of grief can ne'er repay  
The debt of love I owe;  
Here, Lord, I give myself away  
Tis all that I can do

**STEWARD FREDERICK PRICE  
PASTOR'S STEWARD**

**THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD**

Luke 24:1-12

*“Then they remembered his words” (v.8 NIV).*

My beloved husband has a habit of asking me if I remember something he or someone else said or did—maybe 30 or more years ago—and he doesn’t understand when I answer “no.” (Now mind you, it has only been within recent years that he has remembered our wedding anniversary date without having to use a cheat sheet, but he can remember the details of many dated conversations!) I guess you could call that selective memory.

The women who went to the tomb where Jesus was laid had a like experience with their memories. Luke says that when they arrived, they were surprised to find that the stone had been rolled away and it was empty. Two men, whom scholars agree were angels, stood beside them. Here is what they said:

*“Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here: he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: ‘The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again’” ( vv.5-7).*

Luke says, *“Then they remembered his words.”* The Word was in their hearts. It sprang forth in their memories and, in their limited understanding; they understood the miracle that had taken place.

**Prayer:** *Lord, your word says, “Thy word have I hid in my heart...” So may it be with me. Amen.*

**REV. DR. MARIE M. PHILLIPS BRAXTON  
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# Seven Last Words of Jesus

## FOURTH WORD

Jesus cried,  
"My God, my God,  
why hast thou forsaken me?"  
(Matthew 27:46)

## FIFTH WORD

"I thirst."  
(John 19:28)

## THIRD WORD

Jesus saith unto his mother,  
"Woman, behold thy son!"  
Then saith he to the disciple,  
Behold thy mother!  
(John 19:26, 27)

## SIXTH WORD

"It is finished."  
(John 19:30)

## SECOND WORD

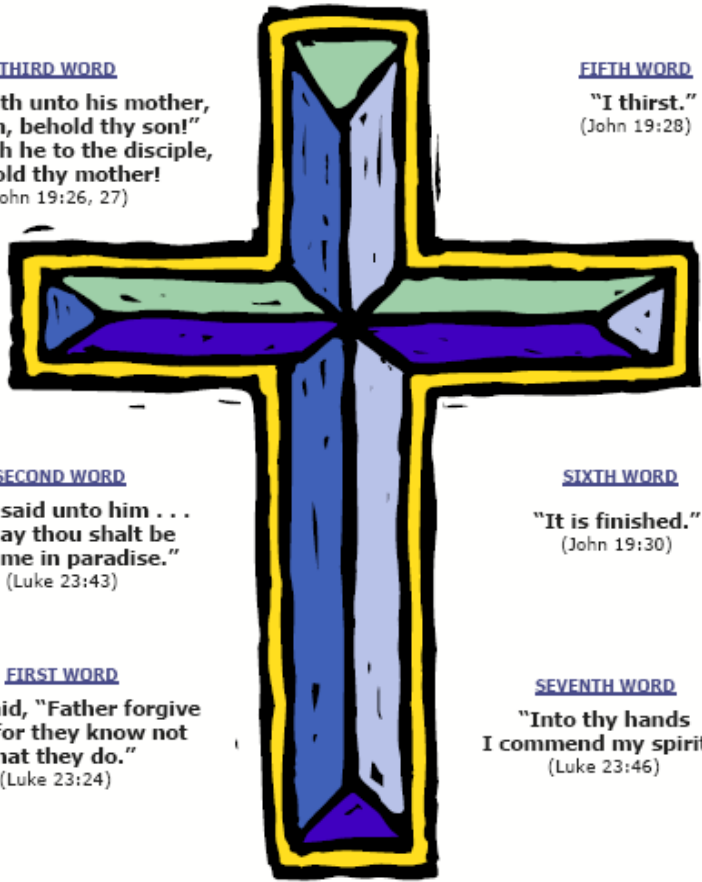
Jesus said unto him . . .  
"Today thou shalt be  
with me in paradise."  
(Luke 23:43)

## SEVENTH WORD

"Into thy hands  
I commend my spirit."  
(Luke 23:46)

## FIRST WORD

Jesus said, "Father forgive  
them; for they know not  
what they do."  
(Luke 23:34)



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