

First Sunday in Lent

February 18, 2024

You are the God of my salvation;
for you I wait all day long.

Psalm 25

Sunday, February 18, 2024
Ash Wednesday/First Sunday of Lent

Tolling of the Bells

Prelude *Take My Life and Let It Be* *Held*

Call to Worship *Joel 2:15-16; Psalm 33:6-8, Isaiah 58:9-9*

*Opening Hymn *In the Cross of Christ I Glory*

Welcome & Announcements

Unison Prayer of Confession

God of desert times and holy contemplation, confront us again with your word. Jesus, we want to follow you. Forgive us when we turn away. Jesus, we want to love God with our whole being. Forgive us when we choose the comfort of our sin and neglect. Jesus, we want to love our neighbor, also. Forgive us when we choose anger and suspicion over humble curiosity.

Assurance of Grace

Choir Anthem *Open Thou Mine Eyes* *Harlan*

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

Blessing

Homily

Prayers of the People & The Lord's Prayer

One: The call of the Holy One goes out.

Let all who yearn for the love of Christ gather together.

**All: Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love;
I know my transgressions and my sin is ever before me.**

One: Your sin is known to God, yet still the word is sent out.

Jesus prepares a place for you here.

**All: Let me have joy; let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.
Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.**

One: God does not crush your bones; God labors for your healing.

God does not need you to hide; God loves the whole of your being.

* As the Spirit guides you, we encourage you to rise in body or spirit.

**All: Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and put a new and right spirit within me.**

One: O Holy One, give us the language and we will declare your praise.
You have no delight in sacrifice;
if we were to give a burnt-offering, you would not be pleased.
The sacrifice acceptable to you is an honest spirit;
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.
Receive now our prayer, as your beloved child taught us to pray:

***All: 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.
Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not
into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power,
and the glory, forever. Amen.***

*Hymn *Just as I Am*

Imposition of Ashes

Musical Interlude *Ash Wednesday*

Once you have come forward to receive ashes, please make your way to the Parish Hall to continue worship at Prayer Stations. There are five stations to explore. Receiving Ashes is optional. If you would prefer, you may head directly to the Parish Hall.

*Closing Hymn *There's a Spirit in the Air*

Benediction



All are invited to the Parish Hall for coffee, tea, and snacks. We understand it can be difficult to step into a room of strangers. We hope, with every cup and cookie, we can deepen our connections and learn a little more about each other each week.

In the Cross of Christ I Glory

*John Bowring, 1792-1872*RATHBUN 8.7.8.7.
Ithamar Conkey, 1815-1867

1 In the cross of Christ I glo - ry, Tower-ing o'er the wrecks of time;
 2 When the woes of life o'er-take me, Hopes de-ceive, and fears an- noy,
 3 When the sun of bliss is beam-ing Light and love up - on my way,
 4 Bane and bless-ing, pain and pleas-ure, By the cross are sanc - ti - fied;
 5 In the cross of Christ I glo - ry, Tower-ing o'er the wrecks of time;



All the light of sa - cred sto - ry Gath-ers round its head sub-lime.
 Nev - er shall the cross for-sake me: Lo! it glows with peace and joy.
 From the cross the ra-diance stream-ing Adds more lus - ter to the day.
 Peace is there that knows no meas-ure, Joys that through all time a-bide.
 All the light of sa - cred sto - ry Gath-ers round its head sub-lime. A-men.



Just as I Am

207

Charlotte Elliott, 1836; alt.

John 6:37; Eph. 2:14

1 Just as I am, with - out one plea but that your
2 Just as I am, though tossed a - bout with man - y a
3 Just as I am, you will re - ceive, will wel - come,
4 Just as I am, your love un - known has bro - ken

blood was shed for me, And that you called in -
con - flict, many a doubt, Fight - ings and fears with -
par - don, cleanse, re - lieve; Be - cause your prom - ise
ev - ery bar - rier down; Now to be yours, and

vit - ing me, O Lamb of God, I come, I come!
in, with - out, O Lamb of God, I come, I come!
I be - lieve, O Lamb of God, I come, I come!
yours a - lone, O Lamb of God, I come, I come!

This text appeared in Charlotte Elliott's Invalid's Hymn Book, published in England in 1836. Disabled at age thirty, she continued a career of writing and editing. This hymn has been translated into many languages.

Tune: WOODWORTH L.M.
William B. Bradbury, 1849

John 6:24–35, 51–58; 1 Cor. 2:9–16; 1 John 4

Brian Wren, 1969; rev. 1987

1 There's a spir - it in the air, tell - ing Chris-tians ev - ery-where:
 2 Lose your shy - ness, find your tongue; tell the world what God has done:
 3 When be - liev - ers break the bread, when a hun - gry child is fed:
 4 Still the Spir - it gives us light, see - ing wrong and set - ting right:
 5 When a strang-er's not a - lone, where the home-less find a home:

"Praise the love that Christ re-vealed, liv - ing, work - ing in our world."
 God in Christ has come to stay. Live to - mor - row's life to - day.
 Praise the love that Christ re-vealed, liv - ing, work - ing in our world.
 God in Christ has come to stay. Live to - mor - row's life to - day.
 Praise the love that Christ re-vealed, liv - ing, work - ing in our world.

6 May the Spir-it fill our praise,
 guide our thoughts and change our ways.
 God in Christ has come to stay.
 Live to-mor-row's life to-day.

7 There's a Spir-it in the air,
 call-ing peo-ple ev-ery-where:
 Praise the love that Christ re-vealed,
 liv-ing, work-ing in our world.

Brian Wren celebrates the Spirit's work in the world in this text written for Pentecost at Hockley, England. In it, Wren borrows a poetic device from the Isaac Watts hymn "Give to Our God Immortal Praise" with the alternating repetition of two choruses.

Tune: ORIENTIS PARTIBUS 7.7.7.7.
 Medieval French melody
 Harm. Richard Redhead, 1853

Bulletin Reminders

Each week, after worship, Rev. Morisse is available in the Parish Hall for conversation

OPEN THOU MINE EYES

Harlan

Open Thou mine eyes and I shall see.

Open Thou mine ears and I shall hear.

Incline my heart, I shall desire,

*Order my steps and I shall walk the ways of Thy
commandments.*

*O Lord my God, be Thou to me a God
that I may love You,*

That I may serve You,

that I may worship You, and adore You,

That I may follow You, that I may look to You.



PRAYER DISCUSSION GROUP

TODAY

The prayer discussion group will meet in the Parlor *TODAY*, starting 20 minutes after the service. In previous meetings, we've talked about our prayer traditions, the Lord's Prayer, and prayer as a way to bring our needs and concerns to God. This week, we'll explore how we listen to God as we pray. All are welcome!

SCRIPTURE STUDY

Sunday, February 25

We meet on the 2nd and 4th Sundays each month. Our next date is **February 25**. We gather in the parlor roughly 30 minutes after the close of Sunday service. All are welcome!

WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP

Gettin' the band back together!

With COVID mostly in the rearview mirror, now feels like the right time to get Women's Fellowship started again. Please join us after worship, on **February 25**, for a meeting to discuss the vision for Women's Fellowship, to make some decisions about the large sum of money in the account, and, perhaps, to get an event or two planned and on the calendar. All are invited to attend. For questions, contact **Shel Tscherne** or **Cher Hamilton**.

EASTER CASCARONES ARE BACK...

This beloved tradition involves filled eggs with colorful confetti, smashed open on Easter Sunday! We could use any tissue paper you use for gift-wrapping, in white or pastel colors. And those little circles left over from your hole puncher. Please drop them off in the bin in the Parish Hall.



Prayer

Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise the words of prophets, but test everything. Hold fast to what is good. Abstain from every form of evil.

(1 Thessalonians 5:16-22)

Jesus assured the disciples: “Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you.” (Mt. 7:7) Jesus wanted the disciples prepared to be bold. He knew one day he would pass the mantle of leadership to them – to us! He wants us to be ready not just to enter into prayer, but also to lead prayer. How comfortable are you praying out loud? Do you know how to be bold?

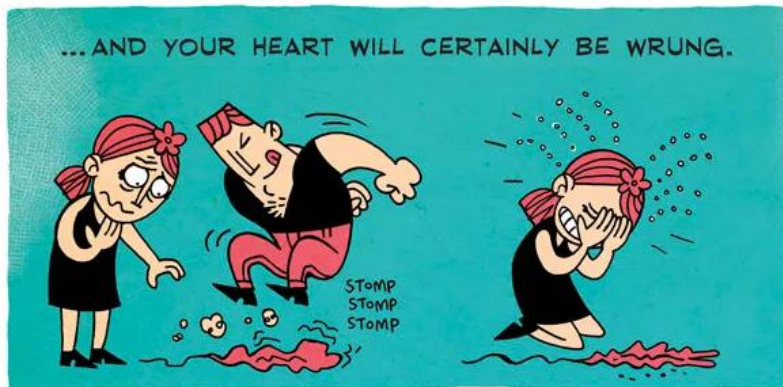
Al Rapoza recently challenged Church Council members to be prepared with a prayer. The prayer resource binders are on the table. There are a few bibles also. Find a prayer and write it down on one of the index cards available. Keep it with you at all times. The next time someone asks you to pray, you’ll be ready!

*Dear Lord, three things I pray;
to see thee more clearly,
to love thee more dearly,
to follow thee more nearly,
day by day.*



The prayer book is now available digitally. Bookmark this link on your computer and phone!

Healing

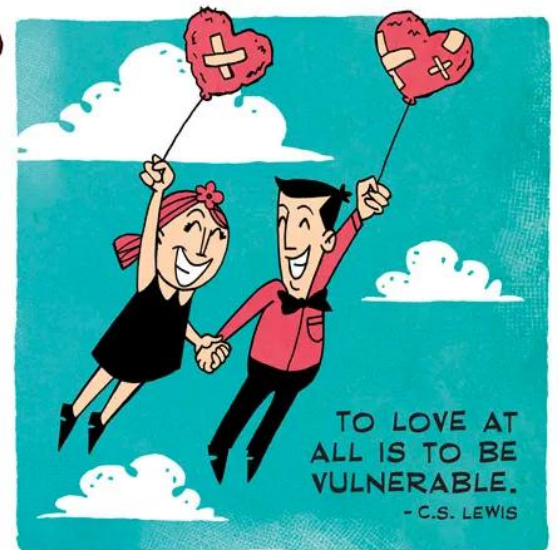
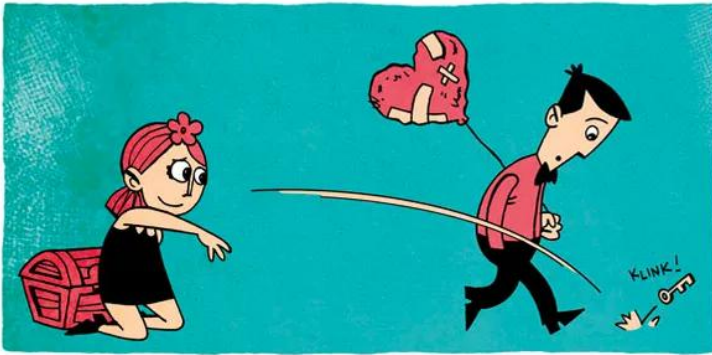


This comic is illustrated by Gavin Aung of Zen Pencils, and is an adaptation of a quote from C.S. Lewis' book *The Four Loves*.

LOCK IT UP SAFE IN THE CASKET OR COFFIN OF YOUR SELFISHNESS.
BUT IN THAT CASKET - SAFE, DARK, MOTIONLESS, AIRLESS - IT WILL CHANGE.
IT WILL NOT BE BROKEN. IT WILL BECOME UNBREAKABLE, IMPENETRABLE ...

... IRREDEEMABLE ...

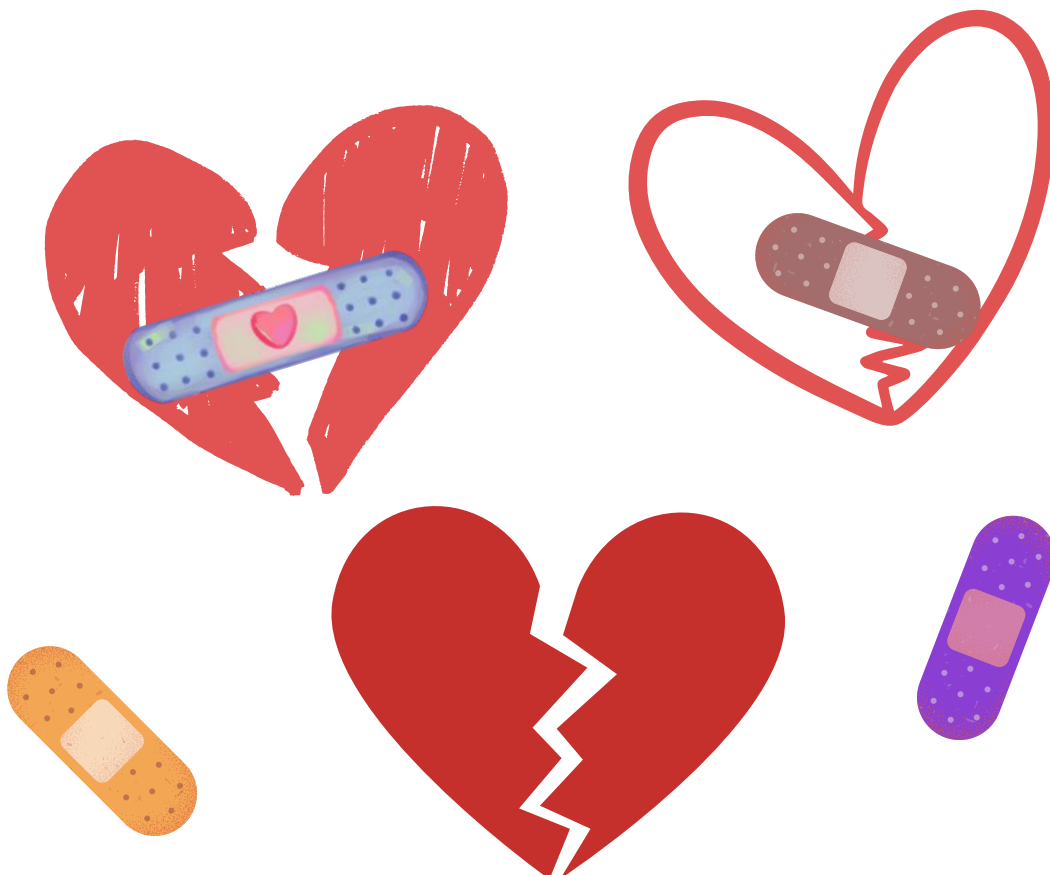




When the righteous cry for help, God notices,
and rescues them from all their troubles.
The Holy One is near to the broken-hearted,
and saves the crushed in spirit.
Many are the afflictions of the righteous,
but the Most High rescues them from them all.
(Psalm 34:17-19)

To love is to have your heart broken, bruised, and banged up. This is true in romance and every human relationship! In God's house, we create a sanctuary where it is safe to unlock our chests, find language for our suffering, and share in the mending of each other's hearts. We both forgive and are forgiven.

At this station, take a moment to write your pain, your injury, your suffering on a paper heart. Hold it. Pray with it. Then, rip it in half. Now, remember that God is close at hand. With the tape, put your heart back together. It is not the same. It's wholeness has changed.



Grace

A song to the Holy One on the day when God delivered me
from the hand of all my enemies:

I love you, O God, my strength.

The Holy One is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer,
my God, my rock in whom I take refuge,
my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.













(Psalm 18:1-2)

Jesus does not promise us a life without controversy or conflict. Discipleship is not about avoiding difficult conversations; it prepares us to enter them with love. Jesus taught: “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, ‘Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.’” (Mt. 5:43-44)

Take a moment to consider those who you have a hard time loving. This is the season of repentance. Step One: Identify four adversaries (or people who really get under your skin!). Step Two: For each, identify a redeeming quality; what good thing do you hold in common? Step Three: Identify a clear action you plan to take in the next 40 days to repair or improve that relationship? If nothing else, pray for them. Ask God to help you love them as Jesus does.

**Who is your
adversary?**

**What is good
about them?**

Fasting

Then Jesus told the disciples, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life?

(Matthew 16:24-26)

People expected Jesus to lead with force and domination. Yet, he came as a child. Jesus resisted the temptation of power, choosing instead to be a servant of those he loved. When God had finished creating, humanity was enlisted to be its steward and caretaker. (Gen. 1:26) Our great power and capacity was always meant to be in service of what is most beautiful. Jesus invites us to follow his way, leading with compassion and humility.

All the plastic that was ever made still exists. What plastic, single-use, disposal thing can you give up this Lent?

All the love that God has for you still exists. What negative talk-track can you fast from - either out in the world or within your soul?

The average American spends 7 hours looking at a screen. What can you do to reduce your consumption? Set a timer on your social media apps. Turn off all notifications (except phone calls from your family).

Write your commitment on the piece of paper in the center of the table. You may help inspire others to join you in this fast for Creation.



Care

So Jesus called them and said to them, “You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant.”

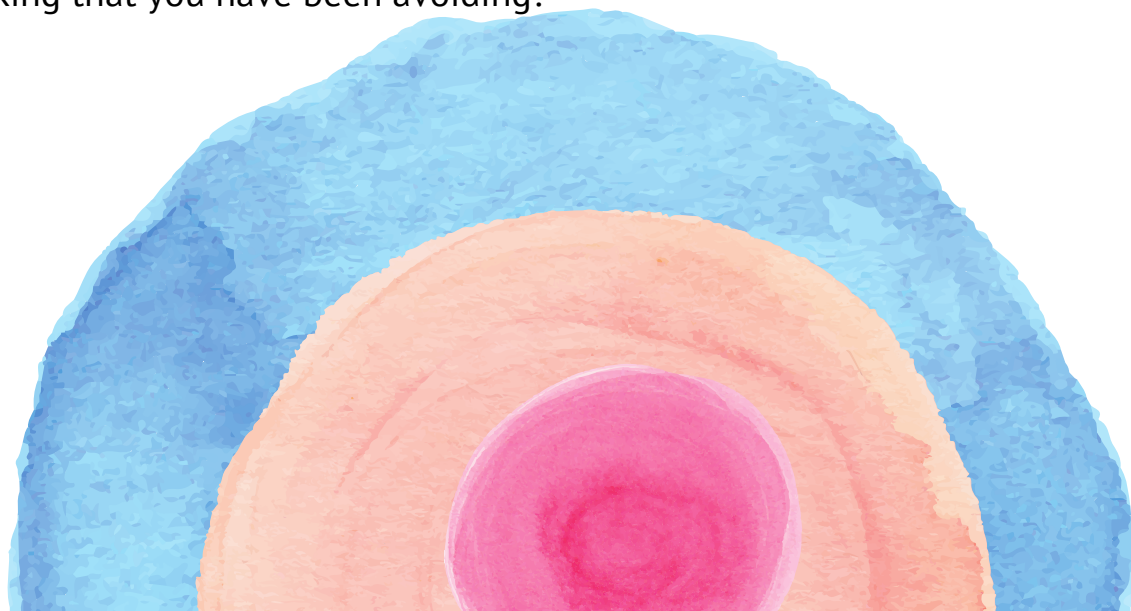
(Mark 10:42-43)

The Greek word *episcopé* is sometimes translated with the English words “supervision” and “oversight.” The root *scopé* means *vision, observing* that which may be hidden. Curiously, in scripture the same root is used for care and concern. “I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited (*episkeptomai*) me.” (Mt. 25:36) Christ calls us to see our neighbor and be so moved to offer extravagantly our love and care.

But there are limits. Have you ever heard of scope creep? The Apostle Paul writes “we will keep within the field that God has assigned to us.” (2 Cor. 10:13)

Psychologist Kurt Lewin (of Newtonville, MA!) was first to identify three “circles of influence.” Use the worksheet provided. First, take a moment to collect your top worries, fears, and questions. Next, study the three spheres. Then, place each of your concerns in the appropriate sphere.

In the Sphere of *Concern*, what do you need to give up? Can you release that to God in prayer? In the Sphere of *Influence*, who might you partner with to make change happen? In the Sphere of *Control*, what actions could you be taking that you have been avoiding?



Spheres of Influence

by Kurt Lewin

Take a moment to list all the concerns and worries you carry.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.



We focus our energy on what we can control or influence.

Sphere of Control

what we can directly control

Sphere of Influence

matters in which we may have an impact, but not unilaterally.

Sphere of Concern

things we care about, even deeply, but cannot directly change.



Things we cannot control or influence we release to God.

