

Lent 2021

For such a time as *this*



Lent is the season between Ash Wednesday and Easter Sunday.
It is a season of repentance and reflection as we move towards Holy Week to follow Jesus on his journey to the cross and resurrection.

Lent Worship Schedule



If you have a candle available in your home, bring it with you to worship as we share a candle lighting moment as part of our Lenten liturgy.

Ash Wednesday Worship

Wednesday, February 17 at 7:00 pm ET

The First Sunday of Lent

Sunday, February 21 at 10:45 am ET | Preacher: Dr. Amy-Jill Levine

The Second Sunday of Lent

Sunday, February 28 at 10:45 am ET | Preacher: Rev. Jim Keat

The Third Sunday of Lent

Sunday, March 7 at 10:45 am ET | Preacher: Rev. Dr. Michael Eric Dyson

The Fourth Sunday of Lent

Sunday, March 14 at 10:45 am ET | Preacher: Rev. Dr. Jacqui Lewis

The Fifth Sunday of Lent

Sunday, March 21 at 10:45 am ET | Preacher: V

Palm Sunday

Sunday, March 28 at 10:45 am ET | Preacher: Rev. Debra Northern

Maundy Thursday Worship

Thursday, April 1 at 7:00 pm ET

Good Friday Worship: Seven Last Words

Friday, April 2 at 12:00 pm ET

Easter Sunday Worship

Sunday, April 4 at 10:45 am ET | Preacher: Rev. Michael Livingston

Visit trcnyc.org/Lent for the link to join each service online.



Visit trcnyc.org/BeStillAndGo to hear daily reflections during the season of Lent on our devotional podcast, *Be Still and Go: Meditations for the Movement*. You can hear a new reflection every day from Riverside clergy, congregants, and faith leaders across the country.

This devotional is designed to provide a shared Lenten experience for our Riverside community. Even though we cannot gather in person, we can still deepen our connection with one another and with God.

Each day offers a short devotional or scripture for you to read and reflect on. Visit trcnyc.org/BeStillAndGo or open the Riverside app to listen to an audio reflection inspired by the daily scripture reading.

Light a candle, pour a cup of tea, create a space where you can center yourself, and engage these daily devotional readings as we journey through the season of Lent together.

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Wednesday, February 17

A reflection for Ash Wednesday by Rev. Jim Keat

“From dust you came and to dust you will return.”

Growing up in a small town in rural Iowa, my family had a large garden on the far side of our back yard. Every winter the snow would blanket whatever was left from the previous season, and every spring it would melt, the ground would compost, and we would begin planting vegetables and flowers that would soon be planted beneath the soil.

Somewhere towards the beginning of May our whole family – my mom, dad, two sisters, and I, would spend the weekend with spades, shovels, stakes, twine, and what seemed to my eight year old mind to be hundreds of packets of seeds.

And when the weekend was over, the garden had begun anew for the season. Our backs ached from kneeling over to plant row after row of carrots, asparagus, tomatoes, and more, and dirt stained the knees of our jeans. Being the eight year old in the family, I typically ended up especially dirty, from digging up rocks or whatever I imagined might be buried beneath the soil and any other backyard task I had been assigned.

We would go inside for the night, leave our dirty clothes in a pile in the basement, and do our best to wash ourselves clean, but there always seemed to be some dirt that refused to be evicted from beneath my fingernails.

Looking back on these memories, three decades later, I realize that this was a very Lenten experience, or more specifically, a very Ash Wednesday experience.

“From dust you came and to dust you will return.”

This is the refrain we often hear on Ash Wednesday, the first day in the season of Lent. These words come from Genesis 3:19 and the story where sin and death have fractured God’s “very good” creation. But more than a threat to the first humans, it is simply a reminder: “From dust you came and to dust you will return.”

In the creation story the first human is named Adam, or in Hebrew, adamah, which means dirt, dust. Because that’s how God made him, formed from the ground and filled with the breath of God. In this way “Adam” is less of a name and more of a description, reminding us who we are and where we are from.

It is easy to live in your head, building mind palaces with echo chambers that always affirm our implicit biases. It is easy to believe that the universe revolves around the almighty “me,”

everything existing for my enjoyment and entertainment. It is easy to see anyone who looks different, believes different, prays different, and ascribe the label “them,” eternally distant and opposite from “us.” It is easy to grow numb to the wind whistling around a corner and the dirt buried somewhere below our feet.

But Ash Wednesday is not easy. Ash Wednesday is an invitation to enter the season of Lent, a season that will comfort and confront us, reminding us that we are human, we are mortal, we do not exist for ourselves, we are a part of the created world around us, we are dust.

“From dust you came and to dust you will return.”

Ash Wednesday is the beginning of the work, the tilling of the soil, the planting of the seeds. We find ourselves covered with a layer of dust, dirt, ash as this season begins with the hope of something new growing in us and in spite of us.

And for such a time as this, when last year’s Lent never seems to have ended, with mortality and suffering ever-present in our lives and our world, we find ourselves experiencing Ash Wednesday differently. While we may not feel the weight of ashes imposed upon our forehead due to safety restrictions from gathering together in person, we feel the weight of our shared mortality, with a death toll rising to staggering numbers, both around the world, in our own country, and likely impacting you, your family, or someone you know. We are all impacted by this ongoing Lent. And as we enter this season again, we see hope on the horizon, the promise of fresh produce from the garden, vaccines being distributed to front line workers and those most at risk, a glimpse of resurrection that will someday arrive in our present.

But for now, the garden has been planted, the dirt remains beneath our fingernails, and the season of Lent begins again.

Lent is an invitation to be here now, to be in this world as it truly is, to be with yourself as you truly are. Lent is an invitation to take seriously these words that you may have heard dozens or even hundreds of times. Lent is an invitation to reflect on what needs to be planted within us, what needs to be restored in our shared humanity, and what needs to be cultivated in order to be the people we are called to be today, tomorrow, and every day to come. And it all begins with ash, dirt, dust.



Visit trcnyc.org/BeStillAndGo to hear Rev. Keat read this reflection on our devotional podcast, *Be Still and Go: Meditations for the Movement*. You can hear a new devotional reflection every day from Riverside clergy, congregants, and faith leaders across the country throughout the season of Lent.

“From dust you came and to dust you will return.”

Thursday, February 18

Psalm 51:1-2, 10-12

Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy
blot out my transgressions.

Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin.

Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and put a new and right spirit within me.
Do not cast me away from your presence,
and do not take your holy spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and sustain in me a willing spirit.

Friday, February 19

Joel 2:12-13

Yet even now, says the Lord,
return to me with all your heart,
with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;
rend your hearts and not your clothing.
Return to the Lord, your God,
for he is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love,
and relents from punishing.

Saturday, February 20

“When you’re weary, feeling small.”

What does this phrase mean to you today? Take a few moments to reflect and journal and then visit trcnyc.org/BeStillAndGo to listen to today’s episode of Be Still and Go.

Sunday, February 21

A reflection for the First Sunday of Lent by Rev. Lynn Casteel Harper

The pandemic has disrupted, among so many other things, our sense of time. If you are like me, sometimes time seems to whiz by (where did the day go?), and at other times it seems to creep painfully along (will this season ever end?). Strange, surreal, skewed – the impact of this period on our experience of time is undeniable. In a *Wired* article about why life in the pandemic feels so surreal, psychologist Susan Clayton says that “when you take people away from the things that are familiar to them, it’s surprisingly easy for people to lose track of themselves—their identity, the things that are important to them.” With our usual rhythms and routines so profoundly altered—and, in some cases, totally upended due to illness and death—I think it is easy to “lose track” of time, direction, and even ourselves. Especially as weeks turned into months, and months now have turned into a year and counting.

Yes, we need Lent for such a time as this.

Lent firmly anchors us in time, tethering us to the time-tested traditions of our faith. Lent keeps the familiar stories, values, and practices of our faith ever before us, helping us not to “lose track” of ourselves and what is most important. We don’t have to perform spiritual gymnastics or attempt any religious heroics at Lent; we need only be present and open, trusting God’s grace. The lectionary provides daily scripture readings. The church provides ongoing opportunities to learn, worship, protest, and pray together. And every day, whether alone or with those in our homes, we can observe holy silence, sign a petition, listen to music, write a card, make a donation, light a candle, laugh, rest—offering little acts of attention with great love.

We often talk about “killing” time or “wasting” time, as if time is an enemy rather than a friend, a curse rather than a blessing. Lent invites us to reclaim time as a gift—a gift to enjoy, to use wisely, and to share. Especially in this period of time’s disruption and distortions, Lent helps to ground us in our timeless faith. Thanks be to our good and gracious God, who never loses track of us.



Visit trcnyc.org/BeStillAndGo to hear Rev. Casteel Harper read this reflection on our devotional podcast, *Be Still and Go: Meditations for the Movement*. You can hear a new devotional reflection every day from Riverside clergy, congregants, and faith leaders across the country throughout the season of Lent.

Monday, February 22

Genesis 9:12-15

God said, "This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh.

Tuesday, February 23

Psalms 25:4-5

Make me to know your ways, O Lord;
teach me your paths.
Lead me in your truth, and teach me,
for you are the God of my salvation;
for you I wait all day long.

Wednesday, February 24

For Lent by Madeline L'Engle

It is my Lent to break my Lent,
To eat when I would fast,
To know when slender strength is spent,
Take shelter from the blast
When I would run with wind and rain,
To sleep when I would watch.
It is my Lent to smile at pain
But not ignore its touch.
It is my Lent to listen well
When I would be alone,
To talk when I would rather dwell
In silence, turn from none
Who call on me, to try to see
That what is truly meant
Is not my choice. If Christ's I'd be
It's thus I'll keep my Lent

Thursday, February 25

1 Peter 3:21-22

And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you—not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him.

Friday, February 26

Mark 1:9-15

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.”

And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.”

Saturday, February 27

“When tears are in your eyes, I will dry them all.”

What does this phrase mean to you today? Take a few moments to reflect and journal and then visit trcnyc.org/BeStillAndGo to listen to today’s episode of Be Still and Go.

Sunday, February 28

A reflection for the Second Sunday of Lent by Rev. Kevin VanHook

In 1970, renowned author and Civil Rights activist, Pauli Murray, penned these now infamous words, “Hope is a song in a weary throat.” Having been rejected by the University of North Carolina in 1938 because of her race, and again by Harvard because of her gender, Murray certainly knew what it meant to be frustrated by life’s difficult seasons. Despite becoming both a well-respected attorney and the first Black woman ordained priest in the Episcopal Church, when someone once asked what had been her greatest achievement, her honest answer was simply, “I survived.” Her story is a song not easy to sing. How does one sing a song of victory when defeat almost seems inevitable?

As we prepare ourselves for the journey towards the cross, it’s in the 118th Chapter of David’s hymnbook that we encounter a song that tells of the Lord’s doing and it is marvelous in our own sight. This psalm, passed from generation to generation, served as the processional liturgy at various festivals throughout Israel’s history. It recalls God’s deliverance in times past and offers thanks for God’s faithful love through the ages. This text provided hope for those awaiting good news and later served as the literary backdrop of the triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Yet, this psalm was not always easy to sing. There was no talk of the stones the builders rejected when Jesus was marched from judgment hall to judgment hall. I shall not die, but I shall live was not one of the last sayings uttered from Calvary’s cross. Mary and Martha did not arrive at the graveyard declaring, this is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it. Unfortunately, life sometimes has a way of stealing your song.

Like David, there are seasons when we, too, must ask, “How do we sing the songs of Zion in a strange land?” How dare we sing a song of victory when we continually experience unnecessary defeats in the ongoing battles against COVID, racism, and misinformation? How do we sing when gun violence claimed the lives of more Americans in 2020 than any other year in the past two decades? How do we sing when, in this country alone, the pandemic produced forty-four new billionaires while sending eight million new families into poverty since May of last year? How do we sing this song?

Interestingly, when David penned Psalm 118, he was in the heat of battle. Though his language is certain and sure, forces surrounded him and were seeking to claim his life. Yet, even in conflict, there was one piece of evidence that had not been affected by the fog of war. David was sure of his God and trusted God enough to keep on singing. Even in life's most difficult circumstances, are we willing to trust God? Are we willing to keep singing our songs of victory before the battle is won, knowing God will guide us through our trouble? We must continue singing, even with weary throats. It is with that great hope that we, too, can join with the saints of old:

*Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us
Sing a song full of the hope that the present has brought us
Facing the rising sun of our new day begun
Let us march on till victory is won.*



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Monday, March 1

Genesis 17:15-16

God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall give rise to nations; kings of peoples shall come from her."

Tuesday, March 2

Psalms 22:27-28

All the ends of the earth shall remember
and turn to the Lord;
and all the families of the nations
shall worship before him.
For dominion belongs to the Lord,
and he rules over the nations.

Wednesday, March 3

The Place Where We Are Right by Yehuda Amichai

From the place where we are right
Flowers will never grow
In the spring.

The place where we are right
Is hard and trampled
Like a yard.

But doubts and loves
Dig up the world
Like a mole, a plow.
And a whisper will be heard in the place
Where the ruined
House once stood.

Thursday, March 4

Romans 4:13-14, 20-25

For the promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith. If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void.

No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, being fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. Therefore his faith “was reckoned to him as righteousness.” Now the words, “it was reckoned to him,” were written not for his sake alone, but for ours also. It will be reckoned to us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification.

Friday, March 5

Mark 8:34-37

He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, “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, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life?”

Saturday, March 6

“When times get tough.”

What does this phrase mean to you today? Take a few moments to reflect and journal and then visit trcnyc.org/BeStillAndGo to listen to today’s episode of Be Still and Go.

Sunday, March 7

A reflection for the Third Sunday of Lent by Amanda Meisenheimer

Philippians 2: 3-8

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,

*who, though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God
as something to be exploited,*

*but emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness.*

*And being found in human form,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to the point of death—
even death on a cross.*

In some parts of the world it is summertime, not wintertime. The Church of the southern hemisphere observes the season of Lent in the sunlight. Churches in South Africa, Australia, Argentina, and others meditate upon the impermanence of life even as their crops are growing and their children play on the beach.

In some places in the northern hemisphere there is no snowy barrenness during Lent. No naked trees or hibernating animals.

But there are sunbaked and scorched places. Dry and arid spaces. Hot places. Desert dunes in New Mexico. Soggy swamps in Louisiana. Humid suburbs in Florida.

We tend to center our home climates, imagining Christmas and Lent in the winter, and Easter in the spring, but our planet offers a diverse Lenten experience.

In this season of contemplation, austerity, and ashes, consider your siblings of faith in other climates.

Is it raining? Is there fire?

Are the waters rising around them?

Do they face their immortality in the waves of the ocean? In the winds that bring famine?

What does a hot and humid Ash Wednesday feel like?

Do they anticipate Easter in the first cold fronts of fall?

How often do we consider the inverted seasons of our neighbors?

The season of Lent invites us to step out of ourselves and examine different perspectives. We slow down and take time to see the pain and suffering of ourselves and others. We open our eyes to those who lack basic necessities and we give from our storehouses of abundance. We notice our smallness and our meager significance.

And as we notice the details that we had overlooked – the neighbor carrying groceries, the child in an underfunded school, the island whose coastlines are submerging – our hearts feel both the coldness of despair and the warmth of hope.

Or maybe it's the warmth of despair and the coldness of hope.

Depends on where you are – the desert or the arctic.

But the precious gift of Lent is that we have 40 days to reorient ourselves from the navel-gazing self-centered, private chambers of our minds to the multi-dimensional, infinite diversity around us. We take our focus off of ourselves and we look around to the people around us we have missed. And when we reorient ourselves to see and love our neighbor, we find ourselves with Jesus.



Visit trcnyc.org/BeStillAndGo to hear Ms. Meisenheimer read this reflection on our devotional podcast, *Be Still and Go: Meditations for the Movement*. You can hear a new devotional reflection every day from Riverside clergy, congregants, and faith leaders across the country throughout the season of Lent.

Monday, March 8

Exodus 20:3-6

You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me, but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.

Tuesday, March 9

Psalm 19:1-4

The heavens are telling the glory of God;
and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.
Day to day pours forth speech,
and night to night declares knowledge.
There is no speech, nor are there words;
their voice is not heard;
yet their voice goes out through all the earth,
and their words to the end of the world.

Wednesday, March 10

Those Who Carry by Anna Kamienska

Those who carry pianos
to the tenth floor wardrobes and coffins
an old man with a bundle of wood limbs beyond the horizon
a woman with a hump of nettles
a madwoman pushing a pram
full of vodka bottles
they will all be lifted
like a gull's feather like a dry leaf
like an eggshell a scrap of newspaper

Blessed are those who carry
for they shall be lifted.

Thursday, March 11

1 Corinthians 1:18-25

For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written,

“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,
and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.”

Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For God’s foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God’s weakness is stronger than human strength.

Friday, March 12

John 2:13-16

The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. He told those who were selling the doves, “Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father’s house a marketplace!”

Saturday, March 13

“When you’re down and out.”

What does this phrase mean to you today? Take a few moments to reflect and journal and then visit trcnyc.org/BeStillAndGo to listen to today’s episode of Be Still and Go.

Sunday, March 14

A reflection for the Fourth Sunday of Lent by Rev. Bruce Lamb

*Come and find the quiet center in the crowded life we lead,
find the room for hope to enter, find the frame where we are freed:
clear the chaos and the clutter, clear our eyes, that we can see
all the things that really matter, be at peace, and simply be.*

*Silence is a friend who claims us, cools the heat and slows the pace,
God it is who speaks and names us, knows our being, touches base,
making space within our thinking, lifting shades to show the sun,
raising courage when we're shrinking, finding scope for faith begun.*

*In the Spirit let us travel, open to each other's pain,
let our loves and fears unravel, celebrate the space we gain:
there's a place for deepest dreaming, there's a time for heart to care,
in the Spirit's lively scheming there is always room to spare!*

-Come and Find The Quiet Center, The Faith We Sing Hymnal

When do you ever find a chance to just breathe? Even during the pandemic I have had to remind myself to, “be still” and find the quiet center. This year, I’m choosing to give up, and add something to my life at the same time. I’m giving up some noise, and adding a practice of stillness and quiet, without distraction and without thought, at some point throughout each day. This is something I do often now, but for Lent I’ll be working to make sure I find time every day.

Practicing “stillness” and “quiet” helps me find center and reminds me of one of my favorite hymns. Since it was first published in 1992 and after its inclusion in The Faith We Sing (FWS) Methodist Hymnal in 2000, Shirley Erena Murray’s popular “Come and Find the Quiet Center” hymn has become a touchstone of peace and spiritual calm for many faith communities. The text of the hymn has found its way into informational pamphlets about labyrinth walks and prayer gardens, chapel dedications and many worship services.

The words of this hymn speak to our deepest desire for peace in the midst of the storm. Finding the quiet center of our being rooted in Jesus Christ is only the beginning of the journey the hymn suggests. God invites us to come and find a quiet center, placing our hope in Jesus journeying inward to find peace and an invitation to simply be and then go out and be beacons of Christ’s light and transformation. Later in the hymn the focus shifts, while still working within ourselves, we are preparing for the work that lies ahead. We are preparing to meet the challenges of faith. This hymn reminds us of the importance of those set apart moments of peace, but also

reminds us of the challenges of life remains and we must prepare to face those challenges with a newfound sense of strength. All the while, we face these challenges with the strength of Christ that is always with us. We are not called to live in isolation with our peace and calm but to share the fullness of life's experiences with others on the journey. By sharing in the pain, joy and fear of life, there is a "place for deepest dreaming" and, with the Spirit, "there is always room to share."

This Lent, how are you intentionally working to "come and find the quiet center"? God is sufficient. We can live in the Kin-dom of God now rather than waiting until some unknown time. Yet, in the quiet sacred center we truly are who we were created to be. We are vessels of the Holy Spirit and in that we are blessed and beloved. And in this confidence we can forgive, we can heal, and we can be part of God's new creation. We need only to return that innocence, the belief of the child, finding the quiet center. Intentional time in silence allows us to be fully present with God without the confines of language. Find a place free from noise or distractions. Practicing silence may be difficult at first. The mind may run wild, and centering in God's presence could take some spiritual effort! Allow yourself grace in this practice and the ability to slowly ease into longer periods of silent reflection. Perhaps you begin in silence for 5–10 minutes and then write in a journal or pray about your experience. Breathe deeply.

*How are you finding stillness in your life?
What does creating space add to your life?
Are you giving up something for Lent?*

May you come and find a quiet center with God this Lent.

Find a quiet space and allow yourself at least five minutes alone in silence (preferably more). Breathe deeply, paying attention to how your breath feels as it enters your body and as it leaves. Allow your breath to silence your restlessness, activity, and inner noise. Continue to listen to your breath in silence. Breathe in and out and repeat this prayer and sit in silence:

*Be still and know that I am God.
Be still and know that I am.
Be still and know.
Be still.
Be.*



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Monday, March 15

Numbers 21:4-5

From Mount Hor they set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; but the people became impatient on the way. The people spoke against God and against Moses, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we detest this miserable food."

Tuesday, March 16

Psalms 107:1-3

O give thanks to the Lord, for she is good; for her steadfast love endures forever.
Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, those she redeemed from trouble
and gathered in from the lands,
from the east and from the west,
from the north and from the south.

Wednesday, March 17

Longing, Lent by Brett Foster

The walk back, more loss. When I open the door
it's over, so I set to piddling: tidy
end tables, check the mail, draw a bath.
The restless energy finally settles
as I pass the mirror. I peer into it.
My nose touches glass. Not much left,
already effaced, not even a cross
to speak of. A smudge. A few black soot stains
like pin points on the forehead. The rest
of the blessed ash has vanished to a grey
amorphousness, to symbolize... not much.
Except a wish for those hallowed moments
to be followed by sustaining confidence.
Except spirit, which means to shun its listless
weight for yearning, awkward if not more earnest
prayer and fasting in the clear face of dust.

Thursday, March 18

Ephesians 2:1-10

You were dead through the trespasses and sins in which you once lived, following the course of this world, following the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient. All of us once lived among them in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of flesh and senses, and we were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else. But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God— not the result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.

Friday, March 19

John 3:14-21

And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.”

Saturday, March 20

“When evening falls so hard”

What does this phrase mean to you today? Take a few moments to reflect and journal and then visit trcnyc.org/BeStillAndGo to listen to today’s episode of Be Still and Go.

Sunday, March 21

A reflection for the Fifth Sunday of Lent by Rev. Phil Tom

The past year has shaken many people to their core in dealing with the COVID pandemic. We also had to deal with the political and social chaos and insurrection in D.C. and across our nation and the on-going killing of Black bodies. Lives have been turned upside down and shattered as people lost their jobs, businesses, homes, and even hope for the future. These events have forced many to take an in-depth look inside their souls, to examine, if not question, what is essential in their lives. When you see the long lines of people waiting to get food, you see the stark reality that it is not just the people living in poverty or the working poor dealing with hunger issues. Many middle class and professional families struggle with hunger because they are losing their jobs, businesses, and even their homes. What seemed for many to be secure and confident one day vanished overnight, whether it was food security, housing, work, if not life itself.

The season of Lent is a time for reflection, self-examination, and renewal. The numerous crises and fears have pushed many to take a deep breath and go deep in their souls to examine what is essential for their lives. We realize now that we have taken for granted some of the simple joys of life, like seeing our family, going out with our friends, enjoying a great meal in a restaurant, or going to a movie. Tragically, the pandemic has also taught us that we cannot take tomorrow for granted, for tomorrow is not assured. As we watch the COVID death toll continue to rise, we remember how precious the gift of breath and life is.

We need Lent for such a time as this to remind us to thank God for the blessings in our lives, great or small. We need Lent for such a time as this to re-examine and reorder what is most important for our spiritual well-being. We need Lent for such a time as this to remind us that nothing in this world is permanent and lasting; only God is forever. We need Lent for such a time as this to renew our commitment to God and to put our lives back in God's hand to guide us through whatever tribulation that this life may throw at us. We need Lent for such a time as this to recommit ourselves to work for a just and peace-filled world because our world needs God's healing touch.



Visit trcnyc.org/BeStillAndGo to hear Rev. Tom read this reflection on our devotional podcast, *Be Still and Go: Meditations for the Movement*. You can hear a new devotional reflection every day from Riverside clergy, congregants, and faith leaders across the country throughout the season of Lent.

Monday, March 22

Jeremiah 31:31-34

The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, “Know the Lord,” for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

Tuesday, March 23

Psalms 51:3-9

For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is ever before me.
Against you, you alone, have I sinned,
and done what is evil in your sight,
so that you are justified in your sentence
and blameless when you pass judgment.
Indeed, I was born guilty,
a sinner when my mother conceived me.

You desire truth in the inward being;
therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.
Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.
Hide your face from my sins,
and blot out all my iniquities.

Wednesday, March 24

Beloved Is Where We Begin by Jan Richardson

If you would enter
into the wilderness,
do not begin
without a blessing.

Do not leave
without hearing
who you are:
Beloved,
named by the One
who has traveled this path
before you.

Do not go
without letting it echo
in your ears,
and if you find
it is hard
to let it into your heart,
do not despair.
That is what
this journey is for.

I cannot promise
this blessing will free you
from danger,
from fear,
from hunger
or thirst,
from the scorching
of sun
or the fall
of the night.

But I can tell you
that on this path
there will be help.

I can tell you
that on this way
there will be rest.

I can tell you
that you will know
the strange graces
that come to our aid
only on a road
such as this,
that fly to meet us
bearing comfort
and strength,
that come alongside us
for no other cause
than to lean themselves
toward our ear
and with their
curious insistence
whisper our name:

Beloved.

Beloved.

Beloved.

Thursday, March 25

Hebrews 5:5-10

So also Christ did not glorify himself in becoming a high priest, but was appointed by the one who said to him,

“You are my Son,
today I have begotten you”;

as he says also in another place,

“You are a priest forever,
according to the order of Melchizedek.”

In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him, having been designated by God a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

Friday, March 26

John 12:20-26

Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.

Saturday, March 27

“I Will Comfort You”

What does this phrase mean to you today? Take a few moments to reflect and journal and then visit trcnyc.org/BeStillAndGo to listen to today’s episode of Be Still and Go.

Sunday, March 28

A reflection for the Palm Sunday by Rev. Debra Northern

This Palm Sunday, while many shout victory and wave their palm branches with joy, other voices cry out in a struggle for salvation. These cry “Hosanna!” in the more literal sense of the Hebrew meaning, “Save Us!” In the midst of this pandemic, as some begin to experience relief, a disproportionate number of people still find themselves in difficult if not dire circumstances.

In the Gospel of Mark, Jesus instructs the disciples to “go into the village ahead of you...If anyone says to you, ‘why are you doing this?’ just say this, ‘The Lord needs it...’” Just those four little words: “The Lord needs it” should give us pause, for it’s not often that we think of the Lord as “needing” anything. What does the Lord need from us now? These days, is this even a question that we can answer? Our lives have become so filled with doing things and keeping busy that we have neglected our relationship with our Lord and Savior—so we don’t listen for what the Lord needs. To start listening to the Lord, maybe we are to use this time when life has slowed a bit to focus more intentionally on our relationship with God. Are we so filled with a Martha spirit of “doing” that we are missing out on the opportunity to sit at the feet of our Lord?

How did we get so busy? The noise, crowds, emails, text, Twitter, Facebook, Zoom meetings take up valuable time in our lives. The resulting busyness distracts us from our relationships with loved ones, our relationship with God, and even from ourselves. Sometimes our distractions help us avoid unpleasant things: the fear of being alone, or spending time in self-reflection. But we can filter out the noise by focusing on interior care or self-care. We can cry out to the One who saves: asking God to replace feelings of loneliness or avoidance with solitude and inner fulfillment.

As we continue to live through these unprecedented times, which are scary for many, remember that God’s love does not mean that we won’t suffer challenges, affliction, death, tragedy, conflict or suffering; but it’s God’s matchless love that will help to sustain us through the trials and challenges of our time. The Apostle Paul reminds us in his letter to the Romans that “there is nothing in all of creation that can separate us from God’s Love. No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Eternal God, whose word silences the shouts of the mighty: Quiet within us every voice but your own. Speak to us in these times of unprecedented challenge and remind us that there is no challenge, tragedy or hardship greater than your love. Amen.



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Monday, March 29

Philippians 2:5-11

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,
who, though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God
as something to be exploited,
but emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness.
And being found in human form,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to the point of death—
even death on a cross.

Therefore God also highly exalted him
and gave him the name
that is above every name,
so that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bend,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue should confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

Tuesday, March 30

Psalms 31:14-16

But I trust in you, O Lord;
I say, "You are my God."
My times are in your hand;
deliver me from the hand of my enemies and persecutors.
Let your face shine upon your servant;
save me in your steadfast love.

Wednesday, March 31

Blessing You Cannot Turn Back by Jan Richardson

As if you could
stop this blessing
from washing
over you.

As if you could
turn it back,
could return it
from your body
to the bowl,
from the bowl
to the pitcher,
from the pitcher
to the hand
that set this blessing
on its way.

As if you could
change the course
by which this blessing
flows.

As if you could
control how it
pours over you—
unbidden,
unsought,
unasked,

yet startling
in the way
it matches the need
you did not know
you had.

As if you could
become undrenched.

As if you could
resist gathering it up
in your two hands
and letting your body
follow the arc
this blessing makes.

Thursday, April 1

John 13:12-17, 31-35

After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

When he had gone out, Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come.’ I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Friday, April 2
Seven Last Words

The First Word

Luke 23:34

“Forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

The Second Word

Luke 23:43

“Today you will be with me in paradise.”

The Third Word

John 19:26–27

“Behold your son; behold your mother.”

The Fourth Word

Matthew 27:46

“My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?”

The Fifth Word

John 19:28

“I thirst.”

The Sixth Word

John 19:30

“It is finished.”

The Seventh Word

Luke 23:46

Into your hands I commit my spirit.

Saturday, April 3

“Your time has come to shine”

What does this phrase mean to you today? Take a few moments to reflect and journal and then visit trcnyc.org/BeStillAndGo to listen to today’s episode of Be Still and Go.

Sunday, April 4

A reflection for Easter Sunday by Rev. Michael Livingston

Christ is Risen! Every day of every year, Christ is Risen. Through every crisis, Christ is Risen. Before, during, and after COVID-19, Christ is Risen. Jesus, one of us, was abandoned and denied, tried and tortured, hung to die. Centuries of misery and struggle, famine and warfare, injustice and inhumanity. Still, Christ is Risen. The sun rises. The sun sets. Blue sky and the blues. Jazz and injustice.

Moments of quiet meditation sit alongside the clash of opposites in cities aflame with rage at systems, and people, that grind people into dust, that kill with impunity. Border walls and bad policies separate families. Rising waters, storm surges, hurricanes and heat waves. Bright morning sun, deep space, endless night—brilliant with blackness and dazzling color. Christ is Risen.

Every day of every year, Christ is Risen. Beyond our sadness and depression, the headache that stays too long, the moment when hope seems frivolous, the anxiety of answers that will not come, questions that cloud our consciousness; just beyond our reach yet true today as two thousand years ago: Christ is Risen!

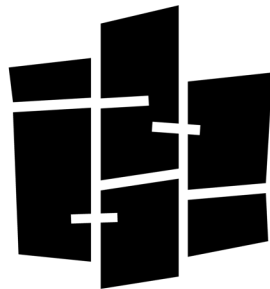
We destroy and we build. We hurt ourselves and others. We help and heal. We are capable of appalling cruelty and our capacity for compassion is a warm, endless river across a continent, into seas that connect us all. Eight years of plenty, four years of famine, a new year comes and history is remade in our image. And our image is of God.

“I’m so glad, trouble don’t last always...” Misery is transitory. Love is eternal. God is infinite. Christ is Risen.

“And all the death there ever was, set next to life would scarcely fill a cup.” Christ is Risen, indeed! Today is a gift. The future we make: one breath, one word, each act of courage and kindness, sacrifice and solidarity—at a time. Love is risen to rule the world. Christ is Risen, O yes. Risen in us, in the communion of saints, in the human family—of all colors, faiths, conditions, on every continent. We have only to see one another, in each other and love, love, love. And from that power comes justice, then peace.



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