



# LENTEN DEVOTIONAL



February 26 – April 12, 2020



**Village Church**  
FOLLOWING JESUS FOR LIFE



## **The Lenten Season**

Lent is a forty-day period before Easter. It begins on Ash Wednesday and ends with the resurrection on Easter. We skip Sundays when we count the forty days, because Sundays commemorate the Resurrection. This year Lent begins on February 26 and ends on April 12. It is meant as a time for repentance and reflection, for silence and prayer, for listening to God. The season serves as a reminder of our need to humble ourselves and call upon Jesus for forgiveness. When we participate in the devotions and traditions of Lent, we participate personally in Christ's sacrifice, death, and resurrection in a way that allows us to be involved with what He has done for us on many levels, both spiritually and physically, in a very personal and meaningful way. This will not only teach us personal strength and discipline but will bless us as the true meaning of Lent fills our hearts and strengthens our spirits.

## **How to Use This Guide**

This guide is intended to provide families, individuals, or study groups with a devotion to study each day of the Lenten season. This Easter will mark the tenth anniversary of the completion of our Sanctuary, with our first service in the new facility being held on Easter, 2010. As we progress through Lent we will reflect on ways the church influences our congregation personally, and how the worldwide church helps Christians in their discipleship and walk with Jesus. Each day contains a devotion and a story of some part of our church. The church is both the building and the people! And the church extends beyond the borders of our own Sanctuary and out into the world in our daily lives.

Some devotions are written by our friends in The Village Church, others are excerpts from writings of theologians and authors from across the centuries.



## February 26, 2020 Ash Wednesday

**Scripture:** *Genesis 3:19*

*From dust you have come, And to dust you shall return.*

### **Ash Wednesday Reflection**

*Written by: Juan Carlos Acosta*

Our lives here on earth are just a fleeting moment in God's cosmic time. Ash Wednesday is the beginning of Lent, and an invitation for us to embrace our mortality as well as let go of our sin.

In the Fall of 2019, after a series of doctor visits and tests, I was diagnosed with a congenital heart defect; a bicuspid aortic valve, a condition which, without treatment, would lead to heart failure. I firmly believe that modern medicine is a blessing, and that those in the medical field are working modern miracles, whether they know it or not. Luckily, this condition is treatable and ultimately should not impact my life expectancy.

As I wrestled with this diagnosis, and the expectation that my heart in time would deteriorate faster than would otherwise be expected, I was forced to address my own mortality. Would pending surgeries give me enough time to see my kids graduate from college? Start families of their own? See potential grand-children graduate from high school?

Our lives are not our own. I turn 40 this year and am as busy with my career and family as I have ever been, or care to be. What about all of those things that I have been telling myself I would get to later when my career slows down or my kids become independent? What am I waiting for? More importantly, what about myself? What about those parts of my heart and soul that are calcifying and hardening to the world around me because of my own sin? What about those areas of my life that are killing me?

The wages of sin are death. I chose life.

### **Reflection:**



The Music Window, along the north wall just inside the doors, is recovered from stained glass in the original sanctuary building. Music is a very important element of worship in our congregation and the windows include various percussion, string and wind musical instruments. There were separate windows for each instrument in the original chapel; this window combined those individual windows and added background glass to create one large window divided into three cross sections.

**February 27, 2020**

**Scripture:** *Hebrews 2:14-15*

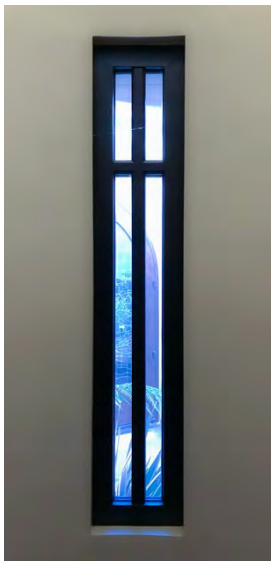
*Since the children are made of flesh and blood, it's logical that the Savior took on flesh and blood in order to rescue them by his death. By embracing death, taking it into himself, he destroyed the Devil's hold on death and freed all who cower through life, scared to death of death.*

### **God's Plan**

*Written by: Billy Graham (1918-2018), American evangelist and minister.*

In ancient times a cross was an instrument of torture and death; condemned criminals would be nailed to a cross and forced to hang from it (usually in public view) until they died an excruciating death. And it was on a cross that Jesus Christ was put to death, apparently bringing an end to His life and ministry. But His death was different from every other death in the history of the human race—because by His death, He made it possible for us to be forgiven of our sins and go to Heaven when we die.

How is this possible? It is possible first of all because of who Jesus was—God Himself in human form. Jesus was not just another great religious teacher; he was God in human flesh! And because of that, death could not hold Him. But it is possible also because it was God's plan. God loves us—and because He loves us, He came to earth in the person of Jesus Christ, and on the cross He became the final sacrifice for our sins. Discover Jesus for yourself as He is found in the pages of the New Testament. Then you'll understand why the cross is at the center of our faith.



### **Reflection:**

Crosses are a theme throughout the church. Most are in the style of a Greek cross. They are on the end of the pews, and on various furnishings throughout the sanctuary, narthex, chapel, and offices. Each stained glass window, with the exception of the central Trinity window, incorporates a cross as lead supports for the glass. The chancel cross is large and prominent. The cross atop the dome is visible too, and beckons the entire community. Most of the crosses are Greek crosses, although there is a special window in the tower, looking out to the prayer garden, that fits a long, slender window. This cross is in the style of Giacometti, known for his artwork with long, slender figures. How many crosses can you find throughout the church?

**February 28, 2020**

**Scripture:** *Matthew 5:14-16*

*“You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.*”

## **The Beacon**

*Written by: Arlene Stamper*

I moved to Rancho Santa Fe in 2003 and the Village Church became very familiar to me as I would drive by it almost daily. But being a “non-church goer” I never stopped to attend church.

I watched as the Village Church underwent sweeping changes in 2010. It was also the year I experienced sweeping change in body and soul when I was diagnosed with breast cancer. Now my journey would take me past the church for surgery, chemo sessions, and daily radiation treatments. God was by my side during those difficult times and the Village Church was a beacon for me. Eventually I healed and I took the step I now knew I needed to take to come and be a part of God’s house...The Village Church.

Thank you Village Church, our pastors and members, for being there for me...and for being that beacon for so many others in need.

## **Reflection:**



It took 15 months for the Village Church to build its campus improvements. The Rancho Santa Fe art jury requested that the building be developed in keeping with Lillian Rice-inspired southwestern architecture, to tie together the two anchors of the village – the Inn and the Village Church. This design flows through both exterior and interior finishes. A desire to retain some key features of the original sanctuary required artistic expressions that could tie the mid-century modern style of the original building with the Southwestern style.

**February 29, 2020**

**Scripture:** *Romans 12:1*

*I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.*

### **Helping One Another With a Tender Hand**

*Written by: Isaac Pennington (1616-1679), a Quaker author and son of the Lord Mayor of London. The devotion is excerpted from his book: Waiting for Breathings from His Spirit.*

Friends, our life is love and peace and tenderness. We are called to bear one another's burdens, forgive one another, and never judge or accuse one another. Instead, we must pray for one another, helping one another up with a tender hand if there has been any slip or fall. O! Wait to feel this spirit. Wait to be guided and to walk in this spirit that you may enjoy the Lord in sweetness and walk meekly, tenderly, peaceably, and lovingly with one another. Then you will be able to praise the Lord, and anything that has hindered you, you will be able to overcome in the Lamb's dominion. That which is contrary shall be trampled upon as His life rises and begins to rule in you.

So, watch your hearts and ways. Watch over one another in gentleness and tenderness. Know that we cannot help one another out of a snare of our own strength, for only the Lord, who must be waited upon, can do this in all and for all. So, attend to the Truth, to the service and enjoyment and possession of it in your hearts. Walk in such a way that you do not bring disgrace upon it, but instead, let the Truth be a good savor to others in the places where you live. May the meek, innocent, tender, righteous life that reigns within you and governs you, shine through you into the eyes of all with whom you speak.

### **Reflection:**



The Village Church goes beyond the perimeter of our campus. Through mission work across the world, as well as within our community, we put our faith into action with hands-on mission projects that share Christ's love and compassion. Volunteers, prayers, and donations help our mission partners flourish and spread Christian love throughout the world.

***Building a home in Tijuana***



**March 1, 2020**

**Scripture:** *Matthew 4:18-20*

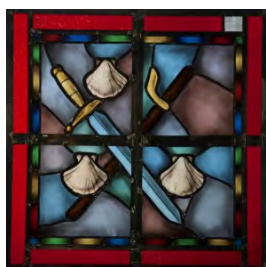
*Going on from there, [Jesus] saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.*

### **Player or Spectator?**

*Written by NT Wright, a contemporary theologian, author, Chair in New Testament and Early Christianity at the University of St. Andrews, and former Bishop of Durham in the Church of England. The devotion is excerpted from his work "Lent for Everyone."*

There's a sense of excitement at the start of the sports season...Everything is ready. So along you go for the first match. But imagine what it would be like if, just before the game was due to start, the coach came onto the pitch and began to point to people in the stands – people who had come as spectators! "All right: you over there, come on; and you in the blue jacket, you too; you there hiding near the back, I want you on the team." You begin to be afraid you might be next. Suddenly the people who've been called are hurrying down to the field of play, and the game begins. Of course no serious sports team today would do it like that. But this is the strange thing. When God came back at last, coming to establish the rule of heaven here on earth, that seems to be exactly how he went about it. Lots of people who thought they were just spectators suddenly found themselves summoned onto the field of play...we find out that they were not as ready, or as fit, as they might have been. But it seems that that's how God wanted to work. There's something going on there which gets near the heart of the challenge of the gospel for us today. It's very easy for people to imagine that they can be "religious" – they can say their prayers, they can go to church, they can read the Bible – but basically they are looking on, spectating, while God does whatever God is going to do. And of course there's a sense in which that's true. God is not weak, helpless, waiting for humans to get their act together before he can do anything. But in another sense part of the point is that God always wanted humans to be part of the action, not just spectators. God made humans to reflect his image – his presence, his love, his plans – into the world. That's why he himself came into the world as a human being. And that's why Jesus called Peter, Andrew, James, and John, and the others. They weren't ready. They weren't expecting it. But that's how Jesus worked then, and that's how he works to this day. Perhaps Jesus is going to point to you and ask you to help him with some of the work. Of course, there were still quite a lot of people who remained spectators. As Jesus went about healing people ... it was natural that great crowds followed him from all over. But here's another challenge. What should the church be doing today that would make people realize that "heaven" is actually in charge here and now? When we find the answer to that question, there will be lots more spectators – and, we may hope, lots more players too.

### **Reflection:**



In the upper walls of the Sanctuary, around the chancel, are 12 small windows, each representing one of the apostles. One represents James the Greater, who walked much in his preaching and teaching. The staff, evident on his emblem, was used in his pilgrimages. The scallop shell that may be seen was a simple dish with many uses. King Herod had James put to death with a sword, which appears as crossing the staff. James was so active and so courageous that even at his death, his accuser became a Christian.

**March 2, 2020**

**Scripture:** *Genesis 28:15*

*I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go.*

### **Life on the Run**

*Written by: Dr. Robert Heerspink (1944-2011), a pastor and author.*

Jacob had messed up and was running for his life. It's not surprising that he'd be exiled from his home. Jacob's name means "deceiver," and he had lived up to it--swindling his brother and hoodwinking his father. Now he was on the run to Haran, where he would later learn to deal with the deceptions of his Uncle Laban. Jacob spent the night in no-man's land. Even God seemed to have forsaken this place. But here Jacob saw a vision of heaven's gate. God showed him a ladder, or stairway, that reached from earth to heaven. Jacob also saw the Lord, who promised to give him this land and to bless all the world's peoples through him. Out in the middle of nowhere Jacob was promised a full life and a future with God. So, he called the place Bethel--"house of God"--and, as we might expect, Jacob made a vow that sounded more like a deal than a promise. But that didn't nullify God's gracious promise to Jacob. It's disturbing the way God can catch us on the run--and keep on loving us. Some of us are on the lam from our past, even today. We're in a tight place, trying to slip out from under some major mistakes. But at this moment God is showing us the way out. Did you know that Jesus describes himself as Jacob's ladder, the gateway to heaven? (See John 1:51; 10:9; 14:6.) He is the bridge by which we can enter into the presence of God.

### **Reflection:**



The Jacob's Ladder stained glass window depicts angels moving up and down the steps of heaven, and represents the connection between heaven and earth. The ladder is comprised of the Greek letter Alpha and the Omega symbol encircles the angels. Alpha and Omega, the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, are also used to refer to Christ and God in the Book of Revelation. The stars represent the stars of heaven.

**March 3, 2020**

**Scripture:** *1 Timothy 4:11-16*

*These are the things you must insist on and teach. Let no one despise your youth but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. Until I arrive, give attention to the public reading of scripture, to exhorting, to teaching. Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you through prophecy with the laying on of hands by the council of elders. Put these things into practice, devote yourself to them, so that all may see your progress. Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; continue in these things, for in doing this you will save both yourself and your hearers.*

**Grace the Forerunner of Glory**

*Written by: John Bunyan (1628-1688), an English writer and Puritan preacher best remembered for writing the Christian allegory, The Pilgrim's Progress. The devotion is an excerpt from his work Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners.*

I perceived that although gifts are good to accomplish the task they are designed for – the edification of others—yet they are empty and without power to save the soul unless God is using them. And having gifts is no sign of a person's relationship to God. This also made me see that gifts are dangerous things, not in themselves, but because of those evils of pride and vainglory that attend them. Blown up with the applause of ill-advised Christians, the poor creatures who possess these gifts can easily fall into the condemnation of the Devil. Gifts are desirable, but great grace and small gifts are better than great gifts and no grace. The Bible does not say that the Lord gives gifts and glory, but that he gives grace and glory. Blessed is everyone to whom the Lord gives true grace, for that is a certain forerunner of glory.

**Reflection:**



In the Reformed Christian tradition, the pulpit is in the center of the front of the church, with the communion table off to one side. In other Christian traditions, the communion table is placed in the center of the church with the pulpit off to the side. In Presbyterian tradition, teaching the Word is the primary role of the pastor. The pulpit is designed to highlight neither the preacher nor his personality. Unlike a stage or platform, the pulpit is a single-use piece of furniture designed

specifically for preaching the Word of God. Likewise, the black robes (modified by Luther in the 1520s from the academic robe) serve not only to signify the pastor's office but also to obscure his personality.

**March 4, 2020**

**Scripture:** *Romans 9: 1-5*

*I speak the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience confirms it through the Holy Spirit—I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my people, those of my own race, the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption to sonship; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of the Messiah, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen.*

### **Spiritual Ancestry**

*Written by: Betty Brown Simm and Cathy Simm, editor*

Ancestry is an intriguing subject. People seem to want to know about their physical heritage. Where did we come from? Who are our ancestors? We search for a physical connection to humans from the beginning of time. Today's scientific research brings knowledge about ancestry through the discovery of unique bloodlines physically connecting us to people living in centuries past—the process called DNA. But what about spiritual ancestry? How do I relate to God, the creator of heaven, earth, sun, moon and mankind...the forever forces that control my life? We learn that a loving God introduced Jesus Christ to live among us as a human. Jesus was an understandable person who forever taught, healed, served, and inspired individuals to want to know his way of life. Jesus sacrificed his life to take away every wrongdoing barrier between us and a perfect God. His loving gift of blood provided a transfusion of life-giving spiritual heritage. I accepted the holy life and death of Jesus Christ and the promises of God. I am now a member of God's family with eternal spiritual ancestry and have joined The Village Community Presbyterian Church to help carry out its Christian mission. Perceiving and practicing the words and deeds of an earth-living Jesus and passing them on with inspired minds, muscles, and money is the holy mission of The Village Church. Individuals working together to the glory of God help create our continuing eternal spiritual ancestry. The Village Church is a physical gathering place for us, the seekers and followers of the way of our Lord, Jesus. In this building gather fellow believers who use their individual time, talent, and treasure to learn and strengthen their Christian faith. Given by Jesus to accepting people, the Holy Spirit is the guiding force of both physical and spiritual ancestry...my Christian DNA.

### **Reflection:**



Teaching all generations so they can grow in their spiritual walk is the church's main mission...Following Jesus for Life across all ages and fellowships! Staff, volunteers, and friends work together to learn through Sunday teaching, study groups, mission work, and service within our community and across the world. Our facilities provide physical space for worship, teaching, and fellowship so our people, acting as the body of Christ, can engage, continually grow, and accept the commission to be disciples and spread the Good News in all we do.

**March 5, 2020**

**Scripture:** *Psalm 31:20*

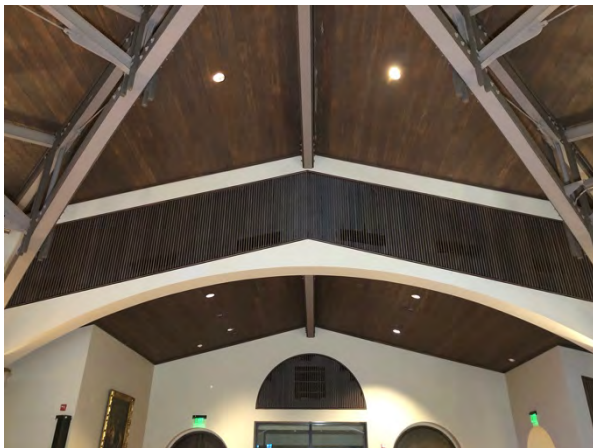
*In the shelter of your presence you hide them from the intrigues of men; in your dwelling you keep them safe from accusing tongues.*

### **Hiding in the Shelter of God's Presence**

*Written by: A.W. Tozer (1897-1963), pastor and author known for his emphasis on the deeper life movement. Devotion is excerpted from his work, Jesus, Our Man in Glory.*

Christian believers have another privilege. We have seen that we have a moral right to come to God—into His presence. We are accepted by Him because of Christ Jesus. But we also have the right to hide in God and be safe. That, too, is our privilege because Jesus, our great High Priest, perfectly represents us at God's right hand. When we are united to Christ, no one can take this right and privilege away from us. We are safe! Someone was quoted as saying, "I do not want to hide from life. I want to face up to life every day." Knowing the nature of humankind, I would call such talk bold and brave. When the winter temperature is 50 degrees below zero, it is brave, bold talk to say, "I do not want to hide from the cold. I want to face it, whether I have the proper clothing or not!" When we face the abrasive storms of life, it is ridiculous to say, "I do not want a hiding place. I will face the storms." What we are hiding from is not life. We are hiding from a sinful world, from a sinister devil, from vicious temptation. We are hiding in the only place there is to hide—in God. It is our right and our privilege to know the perfect safety He has promised.

### **Reflection:**



There is a lot of infrastructure (heating, cooling, speakers, wiring) that needs to be hidden, yet with open beam ceilings where does it go? 9-wood is used throughout the sanctuary, parlor, and narthex to hide necessary infrastructure, while maintaining the look and feel of the overall architecture.

**March 6, 2020**

**Scripture:** *Colossians 3:14*

*And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.*

### **How Virtue Drives out Vice**

*Written by: Francis of Assisi (c1181-1226), an Italian Catholic friar, deacon, and preacher who founded several monastic orders. Francis is one of the most venerated religious figures in Christianity.*

Where there is charity and wisdom, there is neither fear nor ignorance.

Where there is patience and humility, there is neither anger nor disturbance.

Where there is poverty with joy, there is neither covetousness nor avarice.

Where there is inner peace and meditation, there is neither anxiousness nor dissipation.

Where there is fear of the Lord to guard the house, there the enemy cannot gain entry.

Where there is mercy and discernment, there is neither excess nor hardness of heart.

### **Reflection:**



The century-old, stained-glass window in the church narthex once sat dusty and broken amid potted plants in a local nursery. Now lovingly restored, it pays tribute to a man who “Followed Jesus for Life.” Francis of Assisi put aside all his possessions to preach the word of God, starting an order of Christian brothers to spread the Gospel. As a biographer of this Catholic saint reminds us “...in a secular age when talk of God is awkward, stands the deeply pious Francis.” Indeed, he stands ready to greet us every Sunday!

**March 7, 2020**

**Scripture:** *Matthew 9:35-38*

*Then Jesus made a circuit of all the towns and villages. He taught in their meeting places, reported kingdom news, and healed their diseased bodies, healed their bruised and hurt lives. When he looked out over the crowds, his heart broke. So confused and aimless they were, like sheep with no shepherd. "What a huge harvest!" he said to his disciples. "How few workers! On your knees and pray for harvest hands!"*

### **Denying the World**

*Written by: Henri J.M. Nouwen (1932-1996), a Dutch Catholic priest, professor, writer and theologian. Excerpted from his work, Reaching Out.*

Not too long ago a priest told me that he cancelled his subscription to the *New York Times* because he felt that the endless stories about war, crime, power games, and political manipulation only disturbed his mind and heart and prevented him from meditation and prayer.

That is a sad story because it suggests that only by denying the world can you live in it, that only by surrounding yourself by an artificial, self-induced quietude can you live a spiritual life. A real spiritual life does exactly the opposite; it makes us so alert and aware of the world around us that all that is and happens becomes part of our contemplation and meditation and invites us to a free and fearless response.

### **Reflection:**



The church is a visible and audible sign to Rancho Santa Fe of God's presence. The bell tower and dome stand out and make known the presence of a Christian community. The church is hard to ignore as one drives along the main thoroughfare.

As beautiful as the facility is, we are also called to live in our world and live in a way that exemplifies our all-powerful and loving God. We use our facility as a way to learn and recharge ourselves for the coming week, where we will be disciples of Christ, living among our family, friends, and co-workers; living a life with troubles; living a life that is intended to show the wonderful love and grace of our savior, Jesus.

**March 8, 2020**

**Scripture:** *Psalm 84:1-4*

*How lovely is your dwelling place, LORD Almighty! My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. Even the sparrow has found a home and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may have her young—a place near your altar, LORD Almighty, my King and my God. Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they are ever praising you.*

**Homecoming**

*Written by: Nina Pope*

I have had many opportunities to travel over the years, to experience the opportunity travel brings for seeing new things, people, and cultures, and getting a chance to view life through different lenses.

A joyful part of travel for me, though, is always that delicious moment of returning home and sinking into the comfort of my own bed. It is a welcoming embrace of familiarity and peaceful rest...just the right place to be at just the right moment.

The first time I entered the sanctuary of The Village Church I was swallowed up in the same sort of comfort. It was clearly an emotional moment of homecoming for me after leaving my old church home. As with travel, I was in a tension of the unfamiliar, yet I was strangely compelled and comforted by my surroundings that brought tears to my heart and my eyes. The unmistakable message of the Holy Spirit told me, “Here is a safe place; this is where I want you to be.” Here I have been welcomed, made friends, learned, and hopefully continue to grow spiritually.

There will be a day when I will transfer to yet another home...my eternal home. For now, I am grateful to think of all these homes in one short phrase: Home Sweet Home.

**Reflection:**



The Sanctuary was designed to be highly configurable to support both contemporary and traditional worship services, as well as concerts, weddings, and other spiritual gatherings. Special design consideration was given to ensure good acoustics. An architectural ambition was to keep material in its natural state. The tile floors are handmade, hand installed, and hand finished. The eight columns that hold up the building are steel reinforced poured concrete. Steel beams are evident across the ceiling with only a minimum amount of wood used. This retention of the natural materials is consistent with the style used by Lillian Rice in her Rancho Santa Fe buildings.



**March 9, 2020**

**Scripture:** *Matthew 28:18-20*

*Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

### **Sharing the Good News with Delight**

*Written by: Gerard Long, contemporary author and Executive Director of Alpha USA. The devotion is excerpted from his work, Sharing the Good News with Delight.*

When we have good news—whether it’s about an amazing person we’ve met, a new job, a new home, or an incredible vacation we’ve just had, we don’t have to be encouraged to tell our family and friends. We all like to share good news, and, if it’s well received, it encourages our hearers. Throughout the Gospels, when people met Jesus Christ, they told other people about Him. Think of the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4. We’re told many people believed because the woman shared what she’d seen, heard, and experienced—the transforming power of Jesus...News of Jesus Christ...Relative to eternity, our lives on earth are but a breath or a vapor (Psalm 39:5), but, while we are on earth, God has called us to complete a specific mission. When asked what God requires, Jesus replied, “The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent” (John 6:29). Do we believe enough in the things we have seen and heard that we would die in order to tell them to other people? Mohammed was an Iraqi Muslim who came to faith in Christ. The gospel so impacted his life that he felt compelled to share the Good News with his family. “I have happiness; I cannot stop myself,” he told his wife, Liyla. “I must share this truth with my family.” But his words were not received well, and a family member murdered him for leaving the Islamic faith. Widowed and with a young child to care for, his young wife was encouraged to flee Iraq along with other Christians. But Liyla decided to stay and witness about Jesus Christ for whom her husband had given his life. As a result of her faith and courage, other Muslim women are coming to faith in Christ!...To obey God’s Great Commission to evangelize requires courage and involves sacrifice as priorities shift and we focus our time and energy on following Christ and becoming fishers of men... It’s so easy to hear the message and then do nothing about it. I love the film *Schindler’s List*, in particular, the powerful ending, when Schindler—who has risked his life to save so many Jews in the Holocaust—realizes after the war that he could have done more. He could have saved more victims from the gas chambers. Will there be a time, I wonder, at the end of this age, when we realize we could have done more to evangelize the lost?

### **Reflection:**



Founded by Village Church members in 2006, the Harbrecht Foundation brings hot meals to San Diego’s homeless on the fourth Saturday of every month at Mariners Point along Mission Bay. Serving more than 100 men, women, and children, dedicated volunteers bake homemade desserts and serve a multi-course meal. This is one of many opportunities to help share the Gospel and help others. Do all you can to share the love of Christ with others by giving of your time, talent, and treasure?

**March 10, 2020**

**Scripture:** *Psalm 92:1*

*It is good to praise the LORD and make music to your name, O Most High*

**Music**

*Written by: Martin Luther (1483-1546), a German professor of theology, composer, priest, monk, and seminal figure in the Protestant Reformation.*

I would certainly like to praise music with all my heart as the excellent gift of God which it is and to commend it to everyone...Next to the Word of God, music deserves the highest praise. She is a mistress and governess of those human emotions—to pass over the animals—which as masters govern men or more often overwhelm them. No greater commendation than this can be found—at least not by us. Whether you wish to comfort the sad, to terrify the happy, to encourage the despairing, to humble the proud, to calm the passionate, or to appease those full of hate—and who could number all these masters of the human heart, namely, the emotions, inclinations, and affections that impel men to evil or good?—what more effective means than music could you find?

It was not without reason that the fathers and prophets wanted nothing else to be associated as closely with the Word of God as music. Therefore, we have so many hymns and Psalms where message and music join to move the listener's soul. After all, the gift of language combined with the gift of song was only given to humans to let them know that they should praise God with both word and music, namely, by proclaiming [the Word of God] through music and by providing sweet melodies with words.

**Reflection:**



Music is a very important part of worship at our church. We offer both contemporary and traditional services, and although the style differs, worship music is an important element in both services. Our Austin-Allen pipe organ is one of the country's finest examples of an electronic pipe organ. The Village Church organ draws dedicated organists from across the world thrilled to experience its unique sound. Created by combining 2,223 old and new pipes with the Allen Q-465C digital organ, the tonal diversity of our organ supports various

styles of worship, choral accompaniment, and organ literature. As the cornerstone of our traditional Christian worship, The Village Church organ elevates our traditional worship to a level rarely experienced.

**March 11, 2020**

**Scripture:** 2 Corinthians 13:14

*May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.*

### **A Balm in Gilead**

*Written by: Bobbi Capin*

Recently my mind went to the old African American hymn, “There is a Balm in Gilead,” and I found myself mouthing the words...

*There is a balm in Gilead to make the wounded whole  
There is a balm in Gilead to heal the sin sick soul  
Sometimes I get discouraged and I think my work's in vain  
But then the Holy Spirit revives my soul again*

And then I found myself looking to the church, my church, our church, The Village Church, which is a balm for our family and for us all. Our association with The Village Church goes back to the 70s, 80s, and 90s when my parents were active members. Our eldest daughter was married in the chapel by Dr. Dan Meyers and my father’s memorial service was conducted there in 2000. Rev. Dr. Baca officiated over my mother’s memorial service in the sanctuary almost two years ago when she passed away at the age of 100, leaving us with her beautiful legacy of positive outlook on life and moving on with joy and gratitude. Jack once said of her, “if you want to meet someone young, meet Helen Downey.” All three pastors have given us solace, fellowship, and prayer when a member has been hospitalized. Friendships have been made at church, Bible Study lessons have been taken, and worship and praise opportunities are plentiful. When we first enter the church, we are met by friendly greeters and ushers and upon entering the sanctuary we look up at the Trinity in the stained glass window and we know we are welcomed and that we are in the presence of the Savior. We choose to be in this place of balm where we can be encouraged among faith-filled followers of Jesus and where we can be made whole again.

### **Reflection:**



The Village Church formed in 1957 and met at the Garden Club for several years. The original sanctuary, developed in a mid-century style, was completed in 1959. The sanctuary was considered an interim space – there were plans from the beginning to later build a larger sanctuary. The Briggs Chapel, adjacent to our new sanctuary, incorporates the front and side walls and windows of the original chapel. Stained glass from the windows that looked over the patio have been saved and incorporated into the doors of the new chapel. That which could not be reused in

the new chapel (the pews, doors, and other fixtures of the sanctuary) were donated to churches in Mexico.

**March 12, 2020**

**Scripture:** *Ephesians 4:22-25*

*You were taught to put away your former way of life, your old self, corrupt and deluded by its lusts, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to clothe yourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbors, for we are members of one another.*

### **Emotionally Healthy**

*Written by: Geri Scazzero, Contemporary Christian author, excerpted from her work, The Emotionally Healthy Woman.*

Following Jesus means summoning the courage to quit anything that does not belong to His kingdom or fall under His rule. Traditionally, the Christian community hasn't placed much value on quitting. In fact, just the opposite is true; it is endurance and perseverance we most esteem. For many of us, the notion of quitting is completely foreign. Quitting is not a quality we admire – in ourselves or in others. The kind of quitting I'm talking about isn't about weakness or giving up in despair. It is about strength and choosing to live in the truth. This requires the death of illusions. It means ceasing to pretend that everything is fine when it is not. Perpetuating illusions is a universal problem in marriages, families, friendships, and workplaces...Biblical quitting goes hand in hand with choosing. Where we quit those things that are damaging to our souls or the souls of others, we are freed up to choose other ways of being and relating that are rooted in love and lead to life. For example, when we quit fear of what others think, we choose freedom. When we quit lies, we choose truth. When we quit blaming, we choose to take responsibility. When we quit faulty thinking, we choose to live in reality. Quitting is a way of putting off what Scripture calls falsehood and the old self. Biblical quitting goes hand in hand with choosing.

### **Reflection:**



In 1958, land was purchased and construction of a Sanctuary and Upper Education building began. Later, additional land was purchased and a Sunday School and Nursery School program were established. The Lower Education building (today's Kids Village) was completed in May, 1973. The church office building was built in 1982 and an expansion to the sanctuary, construction of a bell tower, and addition of a magnificent pipe organ was accomplished in 1985. When demolishing many of these buildings to construct our new sanctuary, the belltower proved to be difficult to tear down. There was extensive rebar and it took much more time and effort to bring down than expected!

**March 13, 2020**

**Scripture:** *Psalm 89:13*

*Happy are the people who know the festal shout, who walk, O Lord, in the light of your countenance*

### **Music of the Universe**

*Written By: Valerie E. Hess, a contemporary Christian author. The devotion is excerpted from her work, Spiritual Disciplines Devotional.*

What does the music of God's kingdom sound like? If you had to describe it or play it or sing it, would you be able to? I would say that joy is the music of God's kingdom; any time I encounter true joy, I am in the midst of the harmony the morning stars sang together at creation (Job 38:7). So, the next question is: do you know that music, that festal shout that the psalmist talks about? And what does that sound like in your life? Can other people hear it through your way of living?

A woman I know went through a difficult time and in the midst of it she ended up surrounded by a lot of "downer" personality types for friends. These were people for whom the glass was always half empty, and it affected her mood, even the tone of her voice. Through a series of events that only God could have orchestrated, she began to seek out other friends, people who loved God and loved life. I began to notice the lift in her voice; her laughter came back, and life became easier despite the heavy demands of a full schedule.

So back to my question: if you don't know the sound of the festal shout of the people of God, maybe you need to consider finding a way to spend more time with people who do – people who hear that melody deep in their hearts even when they are facing difficulties; people who know that in Christ the glass is overflowing with fullness and goodness; people who live in that reality of joy and light.

### **Reflection:**



The belltower, highly visible from the road, not only adds architectural interest to the church, but it contains the speakers for an electronic carillon that chimes bells on the hour and half-hour. The carillon, which imitates the sound of actual bells, is housed in the Sacristy, which is located between the choir room and the choir loft in the Sanctuary. The carillon was also used in the original campus belltower.

**March 14, 2020**

**Scripture:** *Acts 18:23*

*After spending some time in Antioch, Paul set out from there and traveled from place to place throughout the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.*

**We are the Church**

*Written by: Vickie Stone*

The year was 2004. A notice was in the church bulletin about a trip to Turkey and Greece "following in the footsteps of Paul." I was captivated. I got a brochure from the church office but quickly realized it was not in my means. Still, it was a trip I couldn't stop thinking about. I talked to Pastor Jack and he knew of my desire to join the groups going. Then it was sold out. So I did my best to put it out of my mind. Then three days prior to departure I received a phone call. A cancellation! They needed to fill a cabin. Could it be!?! Amazingly, all the pieces fell into place and I found myself sitting alone on a jet to Istanbul, wondering if I would see anyone I know. Once airborne, the flight attendant made an announcement on my behalf and lo and behold from another part of the plane came a familiar face - Jeffrey Brown, our organist! On an international flight to Turkey I was never so happy to see someone I knew, sharing the same flight! I breathed a sigh of relief. Cruising the Mediterranean on the *Sea Cloud*, a vintage 1931 four-mast sailing vessel, turned out to be a trip filled with wonder. At every turn my fellow passengers (parishioners from two churches – ours and a church from Sun Valley, Idaho) were lovely. Learning together; sharing the biblical/historical significance of each ruin. These places were enhanced by the daily messages from the Pastors when we arrived at Ephesus, Corinth, Athens, Thessalonica, and the Dardanelle's. My own faith journey grew significantly on this "first century voyage." Following three New Testament authors: The Revelation of St. John, the letters of Paul, and the book of Acts (written by Luke) made what I had previously only read about, come alive! Especially Paul's letters to the churches, became so real, so very vivid! During Lenten season, I recall this trip where Paul was used by God to establish churches that would ultimately triumph over the most powerful empire the world had known - Rome. These ancient churches only survived and even thrived because of the believers and their faith in their God. Just as today our church is much more than a building, a fellowship hall, or a beautiful patio where we gather with one another. ***Our church is us*** - the very congregation that by following Jesus, we continue to spread His light into the world.

**Reflection:**



The church is its people. It is comprised of the unique individuals, each with unique talents, personalities and backgrounds who work together in fellowship to proclaim the Kingdom of God. We work not only within our facility, but across the community, the country, and the world to serve others, proclaim the good news of the Gospel, and follow Jesus – for life.

**March 15, 2020**

**Scripture:** *Romans 12:2*

*Do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

**Judging By Results**

*Written by: C.S. Lewis (1898-1963), a British writer, professor, and lay theologian. The devotion is excerpted from his work, Mere Christianity.*

If Christianity is true why are not all Christians obviously nicer than all non-Christians? What lies behind that question is partly something very reasonable and partly something that is not reasonable at all. The reasonable part is this. If conversion to Christianity makes no improvements in a man's outward actions – if he continues to be just as snobbish or spiteful or envious or ambitious as he was before – then I think we must suspect that his "conversion" was largely imaginary; and after one's original conversion, every time one thinks one has made an advance, that is the test to apply. Fine feelings, new insights, greater interest in "religion" mean nothing unless they make our actual behavior better; just as in an illness "feeling better" is not much good if the thermometer shows that your temperature is still going up. In that sense the outer world is quite right to judge Christianity by its results. Christ told us to judge by results. A tree is known by its fruit; or, as we say, the proof of the pudding is in the eating. When we Christians behave badly, or fail to behave well, we are making Christianity unbelievable to the outside world. The war-time posters told us that "Careless Talk costs Lives." It is equally true that "Careless Lives cost Talk." Our careless lives set the outer world talking and we give them grounds for talking in a way that throws doubt on the truth of Christianity itself.

**Reflection:**



The patio outside the Sanctuary serves a vital church function – it promotes fellowship. Gathering together after worship, or celebrating special events as a community – the patio encourages people to linger, talk, and catch up with one another. It provides an opportunity to welcome newcomers, to share about upcoming activities, and to talk with visitors. Christian Fellowship is a key component of our faith. Our patio helps us begin to get to

know one another so we can engage in true Christian fellowship, where we share what a life with Jesus means, help one another, and share living for the purpose of "Following Jesus for Life." The church helps us congregate with people who share the common bond of our love of Christ so we can go out in the world and make a difference.

**March 16, 2020**

**Scripture:** *Romans 15:13*

*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*

### **A Spirit-Filled Life**

*Written by: Lynn Lilyquist*

Several years ago, during a women's Bible Study meeting, I was taught a lesson which has affected my life. You CAN live a spirit-filled life.

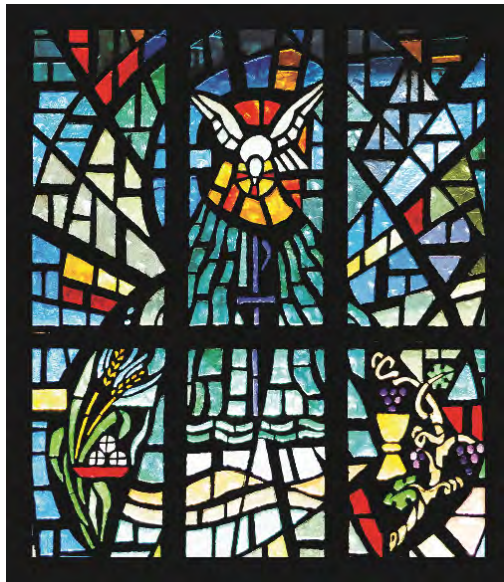
As usual, our assembly had broken up into small groups to discuss the teaching of the message we had heard. It directed us to put our trust in the Lord rather than in ourselves. We all knew this concept, and all accepted it as a guiding principle for successful Christian living. However, one woman spoke these words: "I just can't do it!" Silence ensued.

Then came the voice of an older woman who said, "Of course you can't do it - you're human." But she didn't stop there, she went on to say, "you need to live in the Holy Spirit." It was quiet as she explained how she 'lived in the Spirit' on a daily basis.

Since that time my older friend suffered through an extremely difficult illness and has passed on to the Lord. But I'm assured of one thing, she got through it triumphantly because she 'lived in the Spirit!'

Thank you, Lord for putting me in that Bible Study group to witness such great faith and love.

### **Reflection:**



The Holy Spirit window in Briggs Chapel was one of the windows preserved from the original sanctuary. The window shows the dove, representing the Holy Spirit, the cross, and the bread and wine of holy communion. The Holy Spirit is often depicted as a dove, based on the account of the Holy Spirit descending like a dove on Jesus at his baptism.



**March 17, 2020**

**Scripture:** *Psalm 39:12-13*

*Hear my prayer, LORD, listen to my cry for help; do not be deaf to my weeping. I dwell with you as a foreigner, a stranger, as all my ancestors were. Look away from me, that I may enjoy life again before I depart and am no more."*

**Firmly Rooted in Life**

*Written by: Thomas Merton(1915-1968), an American Trappist monk, writer, theologian, mystic, poet, social activist, and scholar of comparative religion. The devotion is excerpted from his work, Ways of Meditation.*

Under the pretext that what is “within” is in fact real, spiritual, supernatural, etc., one cultivates neglect and contempt for the “external” as worldly, sensual, material, and opposed to grace. This is bad theology and bad asceticism. In fact, it is bad in every respect because instead of accepting reality as it is, we reject it in order to explore some perfect realm of abstract ideals which in fact has no reality at all. Very often the inertia and repugnance which characterize the so-called “spiritual life” of many Christians could perhaps be cured by a simple respect for the concrete realities of every-day life, for nature, for the body, for one’s work, one’s friends, one’s surroundings, etc. A false supernaturalism which imagines that “the supernatural” is a kind of realm of abstract essences (as Plato imagined) that is totally apart from and opposed to the concrete world of nature offers no real support to a genuine life of meditation and prayer. Meditation has no point unless it is firmly rooted in life.

**Reflection:**



The prayer garden, accessible from both the Sanctuary and the chapel, provides a quiet outdoor space for quiet prayer and contemplation. It can provide a moment of solitude from our often bustling world. It is a quiet space that can be a place of consolation and peace. There are long term plans in the design to include a columbarium within the space.

**March 18, 2020**

**Scripture:** *Isaiah 32:16-18*

*The LORD's justice will dwell in the desert, his righteousness lives in the fertile field. The fruit of that righteousness will be peace; its effect will be quietness and confidence forever. My people will live in peaceful dwelling places, in secure homes, in undisturbed places of rest.*

**My Church Home**

*Written by: Griffin Edwards*

The Village Church has always been my home.

My parents, Keith and Lori, moved into Rancho Santa Fe just before they had me, the first of three (myself, Graham, and Avery). Some of my earliest memories have the backdrop of VCPC, before its facelift: riding a tricycle around the preschool playground; playing an angel in the Christmas pageant; dinners in the Fellowship Center for Thursday Nights Together (we called them "TNT"- I'm not sure if anyone else did).

My first-ever paid job was working sound and PowerPoint in the sanctuary on Sundays, 7am to noon, with Drew and Jason. Gustavo was my first boss! I always loved coming to Wednesday-night *Bibles and Burritos*, and, when Margie Wood was first getting the drama ministry up and running, I was glad to put my theatrical high-school interests to work, both on-stage and behind the soundboard. There are too many meaningful memories to list them all.

I graduated high school in 2013, and left San Diego for college, then got a job, got married, left the job and started an MA program, and adopted a dog. But whenever I visit my parents back in California, I always look forward to catching up with all the people that were "grown-ups" when I was a kid and are "mentors" now; sometimes I even run into someone who I went to preschool with at the Village Church more than 20 years ago. As I start thinking about a family of my own, my hope is that I will be able to do for my children what my parents were able to do for me: raise them in a church home that *feels* like a true home.

**Reflection:**



At the back of the church, in every worship service, a team ensures that the sound system is working properly, manages any video that is used in the service, and records the service. The recorded services are posted on the church website so that those who were not able to attend can replay and view the service. The Sanctuary was designed with audio/video in mind, but so many advancements have been made in this field that updates are being considered.

**March 19, 2020**

**Scripture:** *John 8:12*

*When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life."*

### **Everyday Things**

*Written by: Carlo Carretto (1910-1988), an Italian Christian author and member of the Little Brothers of the Gospel. Excerpted from his work, Letters from the Desert.*

Joy or sadness, war or peace, love or hate, purity or impurity, charity or greed, all are tremendous realities that are the hinges of our interior life. Everyday things, relationships with other people, daily work, love of our family – all these may breed saints.

Jesus of Nazareth taught us to live every hour of the day as saints. Every hour of the day is useful and may lead to divine inspiration, the will of the Father, the prayer of contemplation – holiness. Every hour of the day is holy. What matters is to live it as Jesus taught us.

And for this one does not have to shut oneself in a monastery or fix strange and inhuman regimes for one's life. It is enough to accept the realities of life. Work is one of these realities; motherhood, the rearing of children, family life with all its obligations are others.



### **Reflection:**

The Following Jesus window is a beautiful representation of our church mission: *Following Jesus for Life*. The path is not straight, but Jesus leads our way. Our life with Jesus is one of movement through time.

The eucalyptus trees bring Jesus into our own community. His walking stick provides both an ancient and modern connection. A remarkable piece of this window is the nimbus (halo) around Jesus – the crown of rays emanating from his holiness. It employs the same stained glass used in the Trinity Window – visually connecting Jesus into the Trinity.

**March 20, 2020**

**Scripture:** *Romans 12:1*

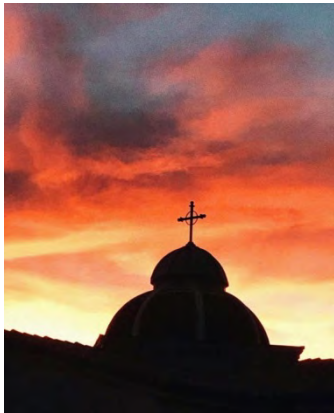
*Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship.*

### **Biblical Worship**

*Written by: Randy Cordell, a contemporary American pastor from Tennessee.*

I believe that the greatest challenge facing the Christian community today is to correct our misunderstanding and misrepresentation of Biblical worship. We have made people believe that worship consists only of what we do for an hour or so on Sunday mornings at the place we call the church. We have made it something we “go to” and “leave from” at the appropriate times. In doing so, we have reduced to an hour what God said must be our entire lives. True worship is the offering to God of one's body, one's entire life. Worship is a life given in obedience to God. When we meet together to encourage, teach, and equip for service, we are being obedient and therefore, worshiping, but no more than when we obey Him anywhere else at any other time. A man may say he is going to the assembly to worship God, but he should also say he is at the factory, the office, the school, the ball field, or the restaurant to worship God. Real worship is offering every moment and every action of every day to God.

### **Reflection:**



Pete Conrad, the American astronaut and second man on the moon, was a very active member of our church. During a dinner at the church the night he had been selected for the mission, Pete confided the news to Rev. Tolson (the second pastor at The Village Church), but it was a secret that could not be told for a few days. After dinner, Rev. Tolson was outside talking to the group. He looked up at the moon and asked whether Pete thought a man would ever go to the moon, and Pete responded that he was certain there would be a man on the moon someday. That's the most that could be said that evening. Rev. Tolson went to see launches twice as a guest of Pete Conrad [from an interview with Rev. Tolson in 2005].

**March 21, 2020**

**Scripture:** *Revelation 22:1-2*

*The angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb...also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month*

### **Yielding Its Fruit**

*Written by:* R.C. Sproul (1939-2017), an American theologian, radio broadcaster, and ordained Presbyterian pastor. He was the founder and Chairman of Ligonier Ministries.

When Adam sinned against God by eating from the forbidden tree in Genesis, the Lord punished him, sending him and Eve into exile from the garden and the tree of life. At that moment, Adam and all of those in him lost eternal life in a good land. However, this curse was not pronounced without any hint of blessing. God promised that the seed of the woman would defeat the serpent, providing hope that paradise would one day be regained. The rest of Scripture simply narrates how the Lord restores Eden.

John's apocalyptic vision as recorded in the book of Revelation offers a glimpse of the consummation of our salvation. The final destiny of all those in Christ is not merely an ethereal existence in heaven; rather, the people of God will dwell forever in a new heaven and a new earth, as promised in Isaiah. There will be a cosmic renewal of the physical universe, and we will live in a new Jerusalem that will descend from heaven to earth after the final judgment (Revelation 21:9–27). This new Jerusalem will be like Eden, only much better. No unclean thing will ever enter the city, telling us there will be no temptation or desire for evil. Trees of life will also be present, and we will have free access to them. The abundance of both trees and fruit indicates life in the restored creation will be far more bountiful than what Adam enjoyed in Eden. Our worship of the Lord will be face-to-face in the brilliance of everlasting day. Nothing will obscure God's glory or distract from our worshipful enjoyment of Him. Finally, the river of life will flow from the throne of the Father and the Son. John here alludes to Ezekiel 47:1–12 where the river flows from the eschatological, or final, temple. The apostle is telling us that we must not look for a physical building to be rebuilt in an earthly Jerusalem; instead, the true Temple of God is in Christ. All who approach the Father by this Temple will be granted the right to dwell in the new heavens and the new earth (Revelation 3:20–22).

### **Reflection:**



The Tree of Life symbolizes immortality. A tree grows old, yet it bears seeds that contain its very essence. Before their sin, our ancestors, Adam and Eve, had free access to the Tree of Life. However, after their act of rebellion, Adam and Eve were subject to death and dying. As Christians, we await the coming of Jesus Christ, the second Adam, who offers eternal life to all who believe in Him. Look carefully at stained glass. Can you find the 12 fruits (displayed over 5 windows)? How many animals (foxes, bears, beavers, turtles, others) can you find?

**March 22, 2020**

**Scripture:** *Romans 12:11*

*Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.*

**Jesus: A Portrait of Zeal**

*Written by: Jeanne Kun, a contemporary American Christian author*

Jesus, the servant-king foretold by Zechariah, rode humbly into Jerusalem on a donkey in a spirit of peace. But in cleansing the temple, he exhibited a bold and forceful zeal for his Father's house. Jesus was moved not by a fit of temper but by righteous indignation and godly fervor. Zeal is more than burning ardor or emotion-based enthusiasm. Rather, true zeal consists of a determined, unflagging dedication to something or to someone; a zealous spirit seeks to advance a cause, defend the truth, or render service. Godly zeal is a characteristic of great men and women of faith. David slew the Philistine aggressor, Goliath. Deborah roused the faltering Barak into action to defeat the enemies of Israel. Paul first zealously persecuted those who believed in Jesus and then even more zealously proclaimed the good news of the gospel when he had become a believer. Just as Jesus and these heroes of the Bible spent themselves zealously for God and his service, we, too, are to be zealous for God himself, zealous for the gospel, zealous in good works, and zealous in defense of the faith.



**Reflection:**

Former Village Church member Margie Wood saw the largely unused stage in the Fellowship Center and jumped at the chance to develop a Christian drama ministry. Based on her vision, and building on her past experience in theater administration, a ministry was born in 2005. The ministry offers the community family entertainment focused on morally inspired messages. When Margie moved from the area, Twyla Arant took over management of the ministry and the community is blessed with several presentations a year, performed by members of the community of all ages!

**March 23, 2020**

**Scripture:** *Ephesians 3:14-19*

*For this reason, I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.*

**Family**

*Written by: Connie McCoy*

My family has been Lutheran for many generations. But I was unhappy with the new minister at the Lutheran Church I attended, and in the direction the congregation had gone. I decided to visit the Village Church. It was November, 2008, before they broke ground for the new church. I walked into the Fellowship Center for the 10:30 service and looked around for a seat. There was a couple whom I did not know that got my attention and asked me to sit with them. That was Peggy and Tom Taylor. They became immediate friends. I went to the Session meeting that Tuesday and joined the church. I instantly felt like I belonged. I started to usher and found greeting people at the front door was a great way to get to know everyone. I became Tom Taylor's ushering partner and became very close to them.

I became a Deacon and prayed for my flock and others and helped with the Funeral committee. Then Peggy became ill with a brain tumor and died. Then Tom became ill and died. When you have dear friends in a congregation that you feel are like family and then experience the grief of loss over those friends, you realize you are like family. It matters not if you are Lutheran or Presbyterian, or Methodist, etc., but how you relate to the people of the congregation. So I'd say the Village Church means FAMILY to me and Jack is the Father. I am blessed to have such a great church family!

**Reflection:**



There are many ways to get to know the people in the church, from joining various groups, studying together, interacting together in missions and service, or just talking with your neighbor in the pew! Our facility provides an ability to bring groups together in either small or large configuration. Get to know people by taking part in one or more of the many activities the church offers.

**March 24, 2020**

**Scripture:** 2 Samuel 6:14-15

*David, wearing a linen ephod, danced before the Lord with all his might, while he and the entire house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouts and the sound of trumpets.*

### **Dancing for God**

*Written by: Valerie E. Hess, contemporary Christian author. The devotion is excerpted from her work, Spiritual Disciplines Devotional.*

The theologies of some of our churches would consider dancing spontaneously before the Lord to be shameful and heretical. In fact, Michal, David's wife, was watching David from the window and thought the same way; she despised David in her heart ... David explains to her that he was celebrating before the Lord because of all the blessing God had bestowed on him. In fact, this was such an act of pure worship that David tells Michal he would even be willing to become more undignified and humiliated if that would express more praise to the Lord. And to add insult to injury of our pious notions of what is proper in church, God sides with David and renders Michal barren for the rest of her life.

The discipline of celebration is a wild and risky discipline. It means that we are to rejoice in God and that rejoicing can be expressed in ways that can be seen by the others in our faith community. Using an accountability group and the discipline of guidance, we must make sure that we really are focused on praising the Lord and not showing off. But on the other hand, we must be careful not to judge someone we think is too physically expressive in worship. We may end up "barren" like Michal.

### **Reflection:**

Our drama and music ministries draw talent from the congregation to find meaningful ways to bring Scripture to life and praise God in our worship. The Village Church Dance Ministry includes professional and amateur dancers that present worshipful performances to enhance music experiences in church several times per year, sharing the love of Christ through another of God's gifts in the performing arts. The dancers are highly committed to excellence in presentations that inspire and move the congregation to a more intimate and transforming worship experience.





**March 25, 2020**

**Scripture:** *1 Thessalonians 5:23-24*

*May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body, be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it.*

### **I'm Home**

*Written by: Joanne Melton*

Walking through the door, home from work, my dad would shout, "I'm home!" My sisters and I would stop what we were doing and run to him, each one of us squealing with delight as he lifted us, one by one, high in the air!

The first time I walked into the sanctuary, the light that shined through the Trinity glass window took my breath away. Each Sunday I stop just inside the sanctuary door and my eyes rest on the Trinity window. It brings me peace, joy and a sense of belonging.

There is something special about The Village Church. The feelings, both spiritual and communal, are difficult to put into words. It's just something you feel in your heart and soul. This feeling speaks to me, and I'm sure many others. It says, "I'm home!"

### **Reflection:**



The rose window above the chancel represents the coexistence of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in the unity of the Godhead. Symbols of the Trinity show how three parts/lines come together to make one shape/being. The window includes several representations of the Trinity. Three large circles and interwoven arcs show the equality of the three persons, as well as the eternity of God in its never ending shape. Two triquetras are in the center of the window. The triquetra, also known as a Trinity Knot, is an ancient Celtic symbol adapted

by early Christians to represent the whole combination of Three Persons and God's love around the Holy Trinity.

**March 26, 2020**

**Scripture:** *Isaiah 42:3*

*A bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench.*

### **Open the Windows of Your Heart**

*Written by: John Piper, a contemporary theologian, pastor, and author. The devotional is excerpted from his work, The Spirit of Encouragement.*

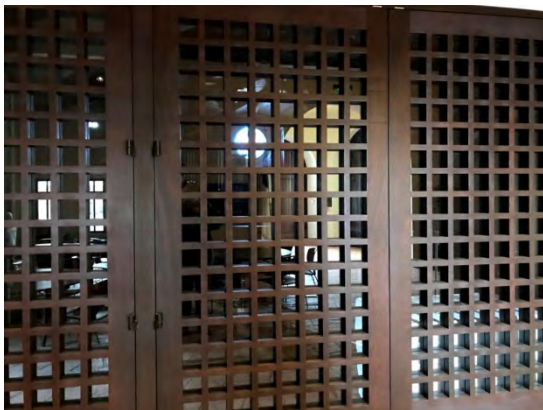
Probably the most encouraging words I have heard in weeks came from a prophecy in Isaiah about how Jesus will use his spiritual power. Do you feel like “a bruised reed” — like one of those big top-heavy Easter lilies whose stem has been squashed so that the flower flops to the ground and gets no sap? Do you ever feel like your faith is just a little spark instead of a flame — like that little red dot at the end of the wick after you blow out the birthday candle?

Take heart! The Spirit of Christ is the Spirit of encouragement: he will not snap off your flower; he will not snuff out your spark.

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me . . . to proclaim good news to the poor” (Luke 4:18). “The sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings” (Malachi 4:2). “[He is] gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls” (Matthew 11:29). “Wait for the Lord; be strong and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!” (Psalm 27:14).

It may be a grief to us that we are only a spark instead of a flaming fire. But listen! And be encouraged: Yes, there is a big difference between a spark and a fire. But there is an infinite difference between a spark and no spark! A mustard seed of faith is infinitely closer to being a mountain of faith than it is to being no faith. Open the window of God’s promises and let the Spirit blow into every room of your heart. The Holy Wind of God will not break or quench. He will lift up your head and fan your spark into a flame. He is the Spirit of encouragement.

### **Reflection:**



On Sunday mornings the doors into the Sanctuary are open and perhaps not particularly noticed, provided you arrive before the service starts! These doors to the Sanctuary are comprised of 1440 windows – unless you are cleaning them, and then there are 2880!

**March 27, 2020**

**Scripture:** *Acts 15:4*

*When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and elders, to whom they reported everything God had done through them.*

### **What Church Means to Me**

*Written by: Michael Dyer*

**C - Community.** A collection of believers who gather regularly to care and support each other through fellowship, worship, study and service

**H - Haven.** My "safe harbor" and refuge when challenging and tumultuous times beset me

**U - Understanding.** People who recognize and accept me "as I am" and help me grow in my Christian life

**R - Resurrection.** God loved us so much he accepted our sins and died on the cross so believers might live in eternity with him. Without the Resurrection, church is just another club.

**C - Charity.** People donating their time, talent and treasure selflessly so that, through their sacrifice, others might experience the love of Jesus

**H - Heaven.** Living in constant community and connection with God

### **Reflection:**



When designing a church, seating is a major design consideration. With average Sunday attendance of over 500 people, the Sanctuary includes flexibility to accommodate a variety of seating configurations for larger than normal gatherings (like Christmas Eve and Easter). The seating in the chapel is totally flexible, with no fixed seating. The Sanctuary has fixed-pew seating, but can also accommodate additional seating by adding chairs in front rows. The pews in the Sanctuary were specially designed to be in a true curve shape to further reflect the overall design style of the sanctuary. This smooth

curve required special craftsmanship. There are crosses engraved on every other row of pews, and there are holders at the end of the center pews to hold candles or flowers for special services.

**March 28, 2020**

**Scripture:** *2 Corinthians 9:13*

*Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, others will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else.*

**Loving God and Neighbor**

*Written by Thomas Tarrants, a contemporary author and Vice President of Ministry at the C.S. Lewis Institute. Excerpted from his work, Loving God and Neighbor.*

Once we come to know God, we experience a fundamental inner change that enables and inspires us to love God. This profound change is produced by the Holy Spirit, who comes to dwell within us and produces a new life (John 3:5–8) and a growing love for God and others (Romans 5:5). This radical change gives us a new outlook along with new desires and life-transforming power. However, this spiritual “new birth” is just the beginning. After our conversion, we are in a state of infancy; we need proper care and feeding to grow in our new relationship with God. The spiritual nurture that helps us mature comes to us, as it did to the first believers, in a community of other believers who are *devoted* to four things: “to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:42). The combination of these four elements creates a sort of “spiritual incubator” for growing in the knowledge and love of God and of Jesus. Belonging to such a community is vital, and *devoting* ourselves to all four means of grace is essential for growing to spiritual maturity. Each one is necessary, and none can be neglected without significant loss. But being in the incubator doesn’t guarantee that we will grow in love for God. A vital but often overlooked aspect of our spiritual growth is how we respond to what we learn about God, especially in Scripture. As we *devote* ourselves to reading, studying, memorizing, and meditating on what the Bible teaches about God’s nature, character, works, and will, we become aware of personal changes we need to make. We are confronted with an unavoidable decision: will we obey or disobey His Word? Will we change or refuse to change? Obedience is fundamental to our life with God, not as a way to earn salvation or make points with God, but as the natural way to express our love for Him.

**Reflection:**



For Presbyterians, baptism, whether of infants or adults, is a sign and seal of the covenant of grace. God claims us as beloved children and members of Christ’s body, the church. In baptism we are called into a new way of life as Christ’s disciples, sharing the good news of the gospel with all the world. It is one of two sacraments practiced by Presbyterians, with communion being the other.

**March 29, 2020**

**Scripture:** *Ecclesiastes 4:9-12*

*Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up. Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.*

### **Extended Family**

*Written by: Cynthia Soltero*

I feel very blessed to be part of our wonderful church family. A year and a half ago I had a serious injury. I took a bad fall and shattered my elbow and needed reconstructive surgery. From the very beginning there were caring people who faithfully came along side me to help me with anything that was needed. At that time, I had no idea the pain I would endure or that a third surgery would be required a year and a half later and that I would still not be recovered. Honestly, I just don't know how I could've made it without the love, encouragement, and support from our church family. I consider friends at the church and fellow choir members to be my extended family. I've heard I've been put on the church prayer list. There are people I've never met lifting me up to Gods throne room petitioning for a pain-free, speedy, and complete recovery. They are part of my family too! My extended family has not only continued to lift me up in prayer, send cards, emails, called and visited me; but now they are helping with my transportation needs to and from my physical therapy sessions. I feel very humbled and grateful to be part of such a loving, caring, and supportive church community of believers. It has been a long, painful journey with faithful church family keeping me company along the way. When you really need help because you feel like you've lost your independence since you cannot drive and are overwhelmed with pain; it means the world to know your church family has you on the prayer list and many people are faithfully holding you up in prayer. Pastors Jack, Jan, and Neal feed our souls, our gorgeous choir feeds our spirits and the love and care we share with one another feeds our hearts.

### **Reflection:**



The Good Samaritan windows remind us that man was created to care for and love each other, not just ignore the weak like the priest and Levite of the Good Samaritan story. To love our neighbor is the greatest commandment. We are to be the hands and feet of Jesus, serving and having compassion for others, as the Good Samaritan did for the injured man along the road. True compassion is not haphazard and superficial; it is built on relationship and caring for others as we care for ourselves.

**March 30, 2020**

**Scripture:** *Ephesians 6:1-3*

*Children, obey your parents the way the Lord wants, because this is the right thing to do. The command says, "You must respect your father and mother." This is the first command that has a promise with it. And this is the promise: "Then all will go well with you, and you will have a long life on the earth."*

**A Parent's Responsibility**

*Written by Berni Dymet, a contemporary Australian author and creator of the Christianityworks website.*

In a world that's becoming ever more materialistic, in a world where both parents and children, more and more, draw their values from what they see on their phones than from their family, what does it mean to actually bless your children? I don't know a single parent who doesn't want their children to be blessed. In fact, my strong suspicion is that somehow, God's hardwired us as parents, to want to bless our children. We can't help ourselves. But we live in a world with a distorted view of blessing. The more affluent a society becomes, the more "*blessing our kids*" seems to mean running them to every possible activity after school and on weekends, making sure they have all the latest gadgets and toys and designer fashions. In fact, when we don't do those things, we start feeling guilty.

I see it happening a lot in the wealthy west and more and more, in so-called "*developing economies*" as well. The reality is though, that in doing all those things, we can be cursing our children by bringing up a spoilt generation. Now there's a scary thought! One of the greatest things that we can do as parents, is to teach our children to honor their father and their mother. Because according to the fifth of the ten commandments, if they learn to do that one thing, they will be blessed by God. Is it going to be hard work? Yes. Is it worth it? Absolutely!

**Reflection:**



The Village Church Pre-School was opened in 1962 by four moms who were members of the church. They wanted to create a safe, nurturing place for their pre-school age children to play. Since then, the preschool has educated thousands of children and has become a pillar in the Rancho Santa Fe community and beyond. Many of the teachers have been with the school for over 25 years. The school provides a high quality childhood education program, emphasizing social, emotional, physical and spiritual foundations. There are a number of people who are currently members of the church who attended preschool here! We embrace a new generation of families and children and continue to build a community of learners rooted in God's story, centered on Christ, and sent to love God!

**March 31, 2020**

**Scripture:** *Philippians 3:8*

*Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.*

### **Christian Life**

*Written by: John Calvin (1509-1564) a French theologian, pastor and reformer in Geneva, Switzerland during the Reformation*

I insist not that the life of the Christian shall breathe nothing but the perfect Gospel, though this is to be desired, and ought to be attempted. I insist not so strictly on evangelical perfection, as to refuse to acknowledge as a Christian any man who has not attained it. In this way all would be excluded from the Church, since there is no man who is not far removed from this perfection, while many, who have made but little progress, would be undeservedly rejected. What then? Let us set this before our eye as the end at which we ought constantly to aim. Let it be regarded as the goal towards which we are to run. For you cannot divide the matter with God, undertaking part of what His Word enjoins, omitting part at pleasure. For, in the first place, God uniformly recommends integrity as the principal part of his worship, meaning by integrity and real singleness of mind, devoid of gloss and fiction, and to this is opposed a double mind; as if it had been said, that the spiritual commencement of a good life is when the internal affections are sincerely devoted to God, in the cultivation of holiness and justice.

### **Reflection:**



Children are the future of our church and it is the tradition of our church to have them attend the beginning part of our service before attending Sunday School. This allows them to participate with the whole church and helps demonstrate that they have a whole church family that supports them. After the children's sermon, the youth are dismissed to their own classes for further learning and fellowship.

**April 1, 2020**

**Scripture:** *John 1:14*

*And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

## **Christian Support**

*Written by: Celeste Bailey*

Although The Village Church has many wonderful attributes, one aspect impacted me most and contributed to my decision to become a member: the church's support of the struggling Church in the Middle East. Jack's trips to Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq and his presentations to us after church demonstrate his commitment to Middle Eastern Christians. In October 2017, Tim and I had the opportunity to go on a mission trip to Egypt. SAT-7, a media ministry which is now a core ministry at The Village Church, carries authentic indigenous Christian broadcasting via satellite in Arabic, Farsi, and Turkish to people unreachable by any other means. Few churches that I have attended have provided such a high level of support to Middle Eastern Christians.

I grew up in the Middle East. As a Christian living in Cairo, I experienced harassment and discrimination. Later, as an adolescent and a teenager living in Beirut, I was confronted with civil war. This conflict escalated into a war between religious factions that forced my family and me to flee. It was during my years in Lebanon that I first owned a Bible when I attended an Evangelical School for girls, even though I grew up a Catholic. I accepted the Lord as my personal Savior through Campus Crusade for Christ when I was 14 and two years later, was discipled by the Navigators. My faith deepened during those years and was an anchor for me during the civil war and later when I had to start a new life in the US. I still have strong connections in Lebanon as all my paternal relatives and many very dear friends live there. Many Muslims and nominal Christians have turned to Christ through the support of these Christian organizations, as well as through dreams and visions. Nevertheless, the future of Christianity will continue to be precarious in this troubled and strategic region of the world where 'the Word was made flesh.' Religious persecution, poverty, and political unrest have forced many Christians to leave the Middle East. Is it not fitting for us to give back by encouraging and supporting our struggling Middle Eastern brothers and sisters in Christ?

## **Reflection:**



This picture of Pastor Jack worshipping with the Presbyterian Church of Malkeih, just a few kilometers from the border with Turkey and Iraq, is representative of his time spent in the Middle East. He has made numerous trips to the Middle East with our mission partner, The Outreach Foundation, to support pastors and congregations who are continuing to worship in the war-torn regions, providing spiritual, moral and monetary support, as needed.



**April 2, 2020**

**Scripture:** *Acts 15:19*

*It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God.*

### **Church Unity**

Excerpted from a devotional published by Newspring Church

As the Gospel spreads and grows in the early church, a diverse group emerged. What was once a small band of Jewish locals now included a large number of non-Jews, or Gentiles. Differences in opinion caused friction in the church body. People hoped church leaders would pick a side. But they didn't realize they were all working toward a shared vision.

Like the early church, we must fight for unity as divisions spring up from our different backgrounds, traditions, and preferences. We are different in many ways, but we are the same in the one way that matters. We have all experienced salvation by grace through faith in Jesus (Ephesians 2:8-9). Our mission to see the Gospel spread throughout the world unites us, despite our differences. Peter says in Acts 15:8 that the same Spirit lives in all of us; God has not made a distinction. Everyone who is in Christ is part of God's family. We are one body, and we each have a role to fill. Embracing our differences and focusing on our united mission helps us reach more people with the good news about Jesus. So, let's be mindful that divisions in the church are cancerous to the body and fight for unity every chance we get.

### **Reflection:**



The cross now hanging in the Fellowship Center was first hung at the back of the original sanctuary, behind the choir loft. It is in the form of a Celtic cross, featuring a nimbus or ring, that emerged in Ireland and Britain in the early Middle Ages. The cross with the circle represents unity and inclusion. The cross in the Fellowship Center is in a mid-century modern format. The crosses in the new Sanctuary are in the Greek style, and much heavier to reflect the Southwest Mission style represented by the overall church architecture.

**April 3, 2020**

**Scripture:** *Exodus 20:9-10*

*Work and get everything done during six days each week, but the seventh day is a day of rest to honor the Lord.*

### **Sabbath**

*Written by: Max Lucado, a contemporary Christian author. Excerpted from his work, And the Angels Were Silent.*

We need one day in which work comes to a screeching halt. We need one twenty-four hour period in which the wheels stop grinding and the motor stops turning. We need to stop...

There is a verse that summarizes many lives: "Man is a mere phantom as he goes to and fro: He bustles about, but only in vain; he heaps up wealth, not knowing who will get it" [Psalms 39:6].

Does that sound like your life? Are you so seldom in one place that your friends regard you as a phantom? Are you so constantly on the move that your family is beginning to question your existence? Do you take pride in your frenzy at the expense of your faith?

Slow down. If God commanded it, you need it. If Jesus modeled it, you need it... Take a day to say no to work and yes to worship.

### **Reflection:**

The Jesus Come Unto Me window in the Briggs Chapel was preserved from the original sanctuary. The window reminds us that in Jesus we find a savior who takes away our burdens and gives us rest. With arms outstretched, Jesus welcomes us into his arms. He is with us. He cares for us. We can rest in Him.



April 4, 2020

**Scripture:** *Colossians 3:23-24*

*Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.*

### **A Holy Calling**

*Written by Jerram Barrs, a contemporary professor of Christian Studies and Contemporary Culture at Covenant Theological Seminary. Excerpted from his work, [A Holy Calling](#).*

Whatever job you do, it is a holy calling, a sacred calling, a responsibility given to you by God to serve Him there. Too often we think of our work, if we are not working specifically for the church, as being secular, second-class, having nothing to do with true spirituality, and little to do with being a faithful Christian. You can think of all the incorrect expressions we use to mark this division between the sacred and the secular: We speak of people who are in “full-time ministry” as if only they are “full-time Christians”...What is it that gives our work value? It is simply that...desires our service in the whole of our lives, and that we are to present everything to Him in order to serve Him...Our work has value because we are to offer it to the Lord. Your work and my work is to be holy...That means we are to set it apart so that we may honor God in what we do...It is not the job itself that is holy, it is offering it to God as service. I may preach the Gospel in a way that is totally unholy, and you may be a person engaged in business in a way that is completely holy. It is a question of whether you dedicate your work to God and whether you serve God righteously in what you do that makes your work holy...Often on Sunday people feel like everything they have done during the week really does not matter. The Bible says we are to worship God in everything, and what we do on Sunday morning when we come to praise Him with our lips is simply bringing the whole of our week to declare His praises together as His people. There should be a seamless robe, if you like, between our workweek and our Sunday service—all of it is the worship of God, and all of it is to be holy. We need to honor that conviction in the way we pray for people in our churches and in the way we commend people. We should praise God for people in business who are righteous in what they do and who serve God in their places of work, or praise God for lawyers who are for widows and orphans. May we really learn to offer our work to God and to honor those who do so. That is the challenge of God’s word to us. As we consider that our work is to be done as unto the Lord, let us be shining lights of integrity, dedication, humility, service, and love.

### **Reflection:**



The construction project was a monumental effort that required the work and expertise of many people. The \$19 million effort required close management to ensure quality and on-time completion. Don MacNeil served as our church project manager. Value engineering principles were used to ensure costs did not skyrocket, yet needs were met. Through the generosity of the congregation, \$20 million was raised in three separate campaigns. Improvements to the Fellowship Center and the Nursery School were made through separate campaigns. Additional raised funds are used to manage maintenance of the campus.

## April 5, 2020 Palm Sunday

### **Scripture:** *Zechariah 9:9*

*Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your King comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey*

### **The Lord Needs It**

*Written by: Palitha Jayasooriya, a contemporary pastor from Sri Lanka.*

After finishing schooling, I found employment as an Executive in a company that sold electronic products and vehicles. I had hopes of building a career in the secular world until the Lord began to place His call upon my life. His call grew over time to the point that I knew my future was not in secular employment, but in full-time Christian Ministry. Therefore, after 6 years of employment, I obeyed His voice, resigned from my job and gave my future into the hands of the One who called me. I have never regretted that decision. In fact, I wonder where my life might have taken me, if I hadn't obeyed His voice.

We are drawing closer to the week that leads up to Palm Sunday. As Jesus was preparing to make His triumphant entry into Jerusalem, a prophecy given by Zechariah many years before would have been on His mind. Jesus therefore asks two of His disciples to go to a nearby village, where they would find a tied colt that no man had ridden. He asks the two disciples to untie the colt and bring it to Him...That colt became a symbol of the Palm Sunday story and became part of the fulfillment of the prophecy given by Zechariah. The Lord had need of it and thankfully, the people released it to the disciples. Thus began Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. What is Jesus asking from you? What does He need from you, to fulfil some part of His great plan in this broken world; in this prophetic age we are living in? Is it a gifting, a special talent, your time, your career, maybe part of your finances? Does He need your knowledge, your wisdom or your work experience? Whatever He needs, as He speaks to you, do not hold it back, but release it freely, just like the village folk released the colt. If *'The Lord needs it,'* and you release it, He will do amazing things through what you offer Him!



### **Reflection:**

When you enter the office area from the outside door, you face an oak cross on the wall. This cross was built by Vic Johnson, our construction superintendant from Roel Construction. He took oak that was salvaged from the casework that housed the pipe organ in the original chapel and crafted this beautiful cross, retaining a bit of history with the new construction. Tim Godinez, from our maintenance staff, worked with Vic during building construction and now maintains a facility that he helped build.

April 6, 2020

**Scripture:** *1 Peter 2:9*

*But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*

**We Are All In This Together**

*Written by: Richard Foster, contemporary Christian theologian and author in the Quaker tradition. Excerpted from his work, Life With God.*

In the royal courts of Babylon and Persia, a Hebrew exile, Daniel, maintains unwavering obedience to God despite repeated attempts on his welfare and his life to make him renounce his faith. Yet it is this “Daniel in the lions’ den,” a model of absolute faithfulness, who pleads “Ah, Lord, great and awesome God...we have sinned and done wrong” [Daniel 9:4]. He is visited by the angel Gabriel “while I was speaking and was praying and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel.” The prophet Daniel calls upon the Lord’s love for the people in his great prayer of confession, asking for release from oppression, even though he himself is innocent of the sins of idolatry that led to captivity by the Babylonians. Daniel identifies with his people. He does not stand outside of them, but inside the community, repenting on their behalf.

Daniel’s generosity before the Lord speaks clearly that we are all in this together. Together we are part of holy history, members of a living community. Yes, we may be highly critical of the community, but we are always part of it. There is no “us” and “them” in the way of Christ. God has called us as a people, God is gathering us as a people, and God is forming us as a people. As Peter affirms, we have received God’s mercy in *becoming* a people.

**Reflection:**



Construction was going well, and it was determined that an effort should be made to try to open the Sanctuary on Easter morning – 5 weeks ahead of schedule. Initially the response was “no way.” There were too many roadblocks: windows needed to be completed, shipped, and received from southeast Asia, floors had to be completed before receipt of the pews (there was no room for staging), pews needed to be delivered from the East coast. There were many reasons this just couldn’t happen. Somehow,

however, everything came miraculously together, roadblocks were removed, and the Sanctuary was ready for the Easter worship on April 4, 2010. Praise God!

April 7, 2020

**Scripture:** James 2:22

*You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did.*

### **The Power of Action**

*Written by: Abraham Joshua Herschel (1907-1972), a Polish-born American rabbi and one of the leading Jewish theologians and philosophers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Excerpted from his work, God in Search of Man.*

The world needs more than the secret holiness of individual inwardness. It needs more than sacred sentiments and good intentions. God asks for the heart because He needs the lives. It is by lives that the world will be redeemed, by lives that beat in concordance with God, by deeds that out-beat the finite charity of the human heart.

Man's power of action is less vague than his power of intention. And an action has intrinsic meaning; its value to the world is independent of what it means to the person performing it. The act of giving food to a helpless child is meaningful regardless of whether or not the moral intention is present. God asks for the heart and we must spell our answer in terms of deeds.

### **Reflection:**

The windows in the Briggs Chapel doors leading out to the prayer garden were from the windows of the original sanctuary that looked out over a garden area. The six windows represent events of Jesus' life: birth, baptism, with the children, teaching, the Last Supper, and the crucifixion. In their original configuration they were each individual windows. In the new doors, new glass was added so the original windows were tied together with a flowing stream, red with the blood of Jesus.



**April 8, 2020**

**Scripture:** *Psalm 27:4*

*One thing I ask from the LORD, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple.*

### **A Place Called Home**

*Written by: Julie MacNeil*

When asked to write a Lenten Devotional about what the Village Church has meant to me, I could think of no better expression than a letter I wrote on June 13, 2010 to my granddaughter, which is now in the time capsule in the narthex of the church.

Dear Sophia,

I am writing this letter for the Village Church Time Capsule to you because you were born at the same time our beautiful new sanctuary was completed. In fact, your mother and father brought you to the very first service we ever had there, Easter Sunday, April 4, 2010, when you were just 2 weeks old. You wore a pink satin dress and a sweater your mother had worn when she was a baby. You were beautiful! You were the first baby to use the “Cry Room,” and your grandfather joked that it should be called “The Sophia Marie MacNeil Cry Room,” although I don’t think you made one peep! Your grandfather was the chairman of the building committee and knows every nook and cranny of this church. We hope that by the time this time capsule is opened, you too will know every nook and cranny. We also hope that you will know Jesus the way we have come to know Jesus. It took us a long time to find a church home, but when we began to attend the Village Church, we really did feel we had come home. Dan Meyer was the Pastor then, in 1995, and your daddy really liked him. We were sad when he left, but God knew what he was doing (as God always does) when he sent us Jack Baca. The Reverend Doctor Jack Baca, to be exact. He became our friend, our leader, our teacher, a true man of God. He married your mother and father, your Aunt Kathleen and Uncle Hunter, and next year he will marry your Aunt Jennifer and her Kevin, who will be your uncle. Pastor Baca also baptized your great-grandmother, Luella Seydewitz, when she was 90 years old! She joined the Village Church too. The church has come to mean so much to us, Sophia. Your grandfather and I attend Bible Studies, I sing in the choir, he is an Elder and I am a Deacon. We enjoy the warm fellowship of those who come here seeking to “Follow Jesus for Life.” We thank God that your parents have brought you here and hope that you will go to Sunday School here and one day receive your own Bible, like the children here today. You are a very blessed girl, Sophia. Your parents, Michael and Kathrin, love you so much and will see that you have opportunities for a wonderful life, go to college, and maybe even become a UCLA Bruin like your dad! We hope you know that God will have been with you along the way, and that all you have to do is ask Him into your heart. By the time this capsule is opened, you will be an adult well along on your pathway of life. Please know that your grandparents and your great-grandmother loved you dearly and also, “Jesus loves you, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.” God bless you, Sophia. Love, Gramma and Papa

### **Reflection:**



As you enter the Narthex, through the main entry doors, you walk over a time capsule that contains reminders of The Village Church in 2010. The time capsule in the corner-stone of the original chapel was opened during construction, with one of the founding members of the congregation, Ruth Godley, there to provide memories of the church in that early era. The medallion incorporates the cross symbol in a manner that also represents the Santa Fe railroad, so important to Rancho Santa Fe history and Psalm 27:4 is engraved around the circle.

## April 9, 2020 Maundy Thursday

### **Scripture:** *1 Corinthians 11:23-26*

*For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.*

### **Enjoying His Meal**

*Written by: Keila Ochoa, a contemporary author, for the Our Daily Bread devotional.*

It's not about the table, whether it's square or round. It's not about the chairs—plastic or wooden. It's not about the food, although it helps if it has been cooked with love. A good meal is enjoyed when we turn off the TV and our cell phones and concentrate on those we're with.

I love gathering around the table, enjoying a good chat with friends and family and talking about a multitude of topics. However, instant technology has made it difficult. Sometimes we are more concerned about what others—sometimes miles away—have to say than what the person just across the table is saying.

We have been invited to another meal at the table when we come together in one place to celebrate the Lord's Supper. It's not about the church, if it's big or small. It's not about the type of bread. It's about turning off our thoughts from our worries and concerns and focusing on Jesus. When was the last time we enjoyed being at the Lord's Table? Do we enjoy His presence, or are we more concerned with what's going on somewhere else?

### **Reflection:**



The Presbyterian/Reformed understanding of the Lord's Supper is one of thanksgiving and remembrance for the self-offering of Jesus Christ once and for all time on a cross in Jerusalem. The sacrament that Christ instituted for the remembrance of him takes the form of a simple meal — a sharing of bread and wine. Therefore, it is Presbyterian practice to refer to the Lord's table. Christ's death and resurrection is an integral part of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper and is one of several theological themes implicit in the eucharistic meal. Others include: thanksgiving to God for the gifts and goodness of creation, prayer for the fruitful reception of the sacrament through the Holy Spirit, the communion of the faithful in the presence of Christ and the anticipation or foretaste of the heavenly banquet in the

kingdom of God. Around the symbol of the "table" there is room for this rich feast of sacramental meaning.



## April 10, 2020 Good Friday

**Scripture:** *Psalm 118:105*

*Thy Word is a lamp onto my feet and a light onto my path*

### **Welcome**

*Written by: Ruth Grendell*

Welcoming! As we walked through the door at the back of the sanctuary in 2000, we were very surprised to be greeted by the choir director, Dr. Keith Pagan. He was my former Dean at Point Loma University. We joined the choir before we joined the church!

Meaningful Friendships: Ruth Godley, one of the founding members of the church, shared historical events she thought that I should know. We had wonderful lunch times together. She wanted me to see the Perpetual/Eternal Light that hung from the rafters in the original chapel. It meant so much for her to gaze on it as she spent her “quiet prayer time” when she entered the church. Sometimes, I slip into the Chapel for my quiet time. Even though the light is no longer present, I see it in my mind’s eye, and reflect on the friendships that grew through the years. Of: Ruth Godley, June and Jack Topliffe, Edith Rhatigan, Deen Austin, Tom and Peggy Taylor, Jean and Rex Warden, Helen Downey, Dick Brown, Lee Campbell, Joan Clark, June Cook, Jack & Betty Edman, Gordon Larson, Jim Nelson, Vern & Marilyn Rexroth, Tom Rhatigan, Joyce Sparling, Beverly Stone, Earl and Janice Therrien, Norada Wilkey, Charles Weigand and others who are no longer with us. (I’m looking forward to chatting with them some day!)

Service: The church has become our home where we can serve our Lord, to learn and to share more about His love for us all, and to strengthen our current and future friendships. We are truly blessed!

### **Reflection:**



Briggs Chapel incorporates the walls and stained glass of the original chapel and combines both the mid-century modern brick with the California Spanish Colonial Revival style. The room is used for special services (weddings, funerals, prayer gatherings) and can also be configured to replace seating with tables for community gatherings. It is also connected via audio/video to the main sanctuary for large services that require overflow seating for the Sanctuary.

**April 11, 2020**  
**Holy Saturday**

**Scripture:** *Luke 24:1-8*

*On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "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 over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.'" Then they remembered his words.*

**The Day of Resurrection**

*From the Mozarabic Sacramentary, which is a liturgical rite of the 5<sup>th</sup> century Latin Church once used generally in the Iberian Peninsula (Hispania), in what is now Spain and Portugal.*

The Day of Resurrection has dawned upon us, the day of true light and life, wherein Christ, the life of believers, arose from the dead. Let us give abundant thanks and praise to God, that while we solemnly celebrate the day of our Lord's resurrection, he may be pleased to bestow on us quiet peace and special gladness; so that being protected from morning to night by his favoring mercy, we may rejoice in the gifts of our Redeemer. Amen

**Reflection:**



The windows depicting the Fall and the Resurrection symbolize the theme of God's salvation related in the Bible. The Fall Window depicts Adam and Eve leaving the garden after their sinful disobedience to their loving God. In the Resurrection Window the women find an open tomb and a risen savior, Jesus. The windows were designed by a young artist, Tim Carey, who was just out of art school when he joined Judson Studios (who designed and created our stained glass windows). He has since become a renowned and innovative stained glass artist utilizing cutting-edge techniques.





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