

LENT DEVOTIONS 2022

Southwood United Church

Sharing the Journey

2022 - Lectionary Year C

Lent is the period of forty days, not including Sundays, before Easter that is traditionally a time of contemplation and preparation. During Lent this year, our worship services will have a theme of sharing a journey as a congregation and becoming more active as individuals in expressing our faith through service. In the ancient church, adherents to the Christian faith would forgo some ordinary tasks such as the preparation of meals to provide more time to study and explore their faith to become ready to become full members of the church on Easter Sunday. There is no requirement for you to give up anything to follow this Lenten Guide. Instead, consider this an opportunity to take time to deepen your faith and to contemplate how you might better serve God and our congregation. This guide follows the theme of being on a journey by providing a Bible reference, a reflection starter, and a prayer. If you only have a few minutes, simply read the reference and carry the thought with you during your day. If you have more time, you may want to open the Bible translation of your choice and prayerfully read more of the reference passage. Allow the prayer to be a starting point for your own prayer time.

If you miss a day or more, don't feel guilty or think that you need to catch up. You can if you want, but if you don't have time or energy, simply carry on from the current day. Winter, as well as these pandemic days are difficult. If you need of help of any kind, please contact our church office.

Readings, Thoughts and Prayers

Wednesday, March 2 – Ash Wednesday

Reading: Proverbs 3:6 *In all your ways acknowledge God, and God will make your paths straight.*

Thought: Faith is often compared to being on a journey and during this season of Lent, we are encouraged to contemplate our faith journey as individuals and as a congregation. Our lead pastor is currently doing a Strategic Internal Review (StIR for short) to identify the leadership and volunteer needs of our congregation. Many needs have already been identified and there are more to come. I urge you to ask God in your prayer time to guide you to what your purpose at Southwood is to be. As Christians, we all want to follow God and that straight path. Today, God may be calling you to a new path on your journey. Make a point this week of looking at the needs of your congregation and ask God if one of those is right for you. Which one of the current needs attracts you most?

Prayer: Creator God, Friend Jesus, Holy Spirit – I acknowledge your presence in all aspects of my life. Guide me to the straight paths and help me to discern your ways.

Thursday, March 3

Reading: Psalm 99:9 *Exalt the Lord our God and worship at his holy mountain, for the Lord our God is holy.*

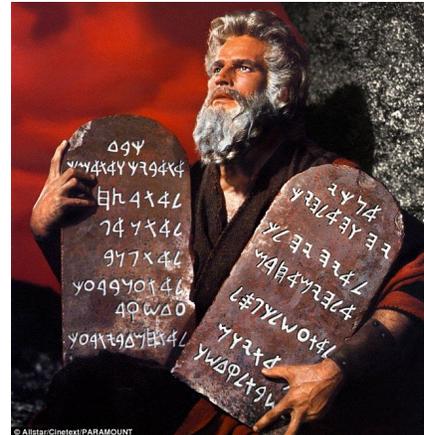
Thought: To exalt something is to elevate it, to praise, revere and pay tribute to it. One important part of our congregational life is our worship time. Our Sunday services are more than just an opportunity to listen to music, pray and learn from a sermon. Worship services are also an opportunity to join with fellow Christians to express our love for God. As I write this devotion, we are planning to begin to worship in person again this week. I am unable to attend because I am on holiday, but I know it will be exciting and joyous occasion that I will be watching online and looking forward to experiencing when we return. Will you be attending worship in person if it is offered?

Prayer: Great and glorious God – I worship and adore you. You are holy and worthy of all praise. I join with the congregation of Southwood to exalt and praise you.

Friday, March 4

Reading: Exodus 34:29 *“When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the Testimony in his hands, he was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with God.”*

Thought: I don't know about you, but this scripture verse gives me a visual image of a man with a long white beard and light beams radiating out from his face. Of course, this is a very literal interpretation, most likely inspired by the 1956 movie “The Ten Commandments”. Once I thought about this verse a little more, I realized that our faces can radiate with more than light. If you have seen a parent gazing on their newborn or a couple exchanging wedding vows, you have probably seen a face radiant with love. I have seen the face of our grandson radiate with joy when he has discovered or understood something new. Faith can do that as well. Have you ever seen someone whose face was radiant with faith?



Prayer: Holy Spirit – you dwell within me. Help me to let you shine out through my eyes. Make my whole body radiate with faith and the love and joy that comes only from you.

Saturday, March 5

Reading: 2 Corinthians 3:18 *“and we, who with unveiled faces all reflect God's glory, are being transformed into God's likeness.”*

Thought: Yesterday we contemplated a face radiant with love and joy and faith. This is what it means to have an “unveiled face”. So often we get distracted with dealing with the day-to-day challenges of life and forget to look up and let our faith shine out. We may even be tempted to hide our faith. The book of Genesis tells us we are all made in the image of God. This verse tells us that we are to reflect God's glory and be transformed to be like God. Today I urge you to look up and away from earthly worries, open your heart, and let your face show the love of God. Will people notice something different about you today?

Prayer: Heavenly Father – I want to reflect your glory and show my faith. Transform me into your likeness.

Sunday, March 6

Reading: Luke 4:1-3 *"Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days and at the end of this he was hungry."*

Thought: Some passages in the Bible make me laugh aloud at their simplicity. I think we would all be hungry after fasting for forty days! Looking past this diversion, it may be that Luke was using this detail to emphasize the temptations Jesus overcame, as the next passage indicates Satan tempted him to make bread from a stone. However, I feel a need to remind you that the Bible is not always meant to be read literally and numbers often have a symbolic meaning. There are many references to the number 40, which is generally used to symbolize a period of testing or probation. The flood in the story of Noah lasted 40 days. Moses lived 40 years in Egypt and 40 years in the desert before God selected him to lead his people out of slavery. He was also on Mount Sinai for 40 days and nights and sent spies to investigate the Promised Land for 40 days. The Israelites spent 40 years in the desert before entering the Promised Land. The number forty figures in the stories of Abraham, Jonah, Ezekiel, and Elijah to name a few more. There is so much we can learn by studying the Bible and so much we may miss out on by reading it on our own. Perhaps this is the time to consider joining one of the learning circles offered at Southwood.

Prayer: Jesus – I love reading about you and hearing about your life. I want to know more about what your Holy Book contains and means.

