

# Praying through Lent

Daily reflections on the Psalms and  
Way of the Cross for  
Lent, Holy Week and Easter Day



St. Stephen's, Rochester Row, London  
The Church of the Holy Trinity, New York

## Introduction

Alisdair MacIntyre wrote in 1984 of our living in an age in which the “new dark ages ... are already upon us,” when values, institutions, and morals seem to be thrown out or trampled beyond recognition. Rather than give up, MacIntyre urges, “What matters at this stage is the construction of local forms of community within which civility and the intellectual and moral life can be sustained . . . .” (*After Virtue*, p. 286). Though we are making the global local, in our small way, our two parishes are constructing this new form of community. Government leaders, ecclesiastical leaders, and cultural forces all spend enormous energy pushing and pulling us in other ways, but we follow the Spirit as we build friendships, pray for one another, and ever so slowly grow into Christ together. Thank you to all those who have contributed to this devotional and thank you to all those who will read and pray along with us. May this Lent bring us into deeper community with one another and with God.



The Rev. John Beddingfield, Rector  
The Church of the Holy Trinity  
New York



The Rev. Graham Buckle, Vicar  
The Church of St. Stephen with St. John  
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The Rev. Catherine Duce, Assistant Curate  
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The psalms in this booklet are taken from the Eucharistic Lectionary, Year 1 (*Common Worship*) and the *Common Worship Psalter*. The exception is the psalm chosen for Ash Wednesday, a shortened version of the psalm appointed for Evening. The Way of the Cross is the *Common Worship* text.

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## Ash Wednesday

March 6

Psalm 102.1-5, 25-29

- 1 O Lord, hear my prayer  
and let my crying come before you.
- 2 Hide not your face from me  
in the day of my distress.
- 3 Incline your ear to me;  
when I call, make haste to answer me,
- 4 For my days are consumed in smoke  
and my bones burn away as in a furnace.
- 5 My heart is smitten down and withered like grass,  
so that I forget to eat my bread.
- 25 I pray, 'O my God, do not take me in the midst of my days;  
your years endure throughout all generations.
- 26 'In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth,  
and the heavens are the work of your hands;
- 27 'They shall perish, but you will endure;  
they all shall wear out like a garment.
- 28 'You change them like clothing, and they shall be changed;  
but you are the same, and your years will not fail.
- 29 'The children of your servants shall continue,  
and their descendants shall be established in your sight.'



We are invited to identify with vulnerable feelings of pain, aloneness, despair; with aggressive feelings of anger, impatience and reprimand. I so value the presence of these ugly emotions. These varied ways the psalmist talks, tell us that we can expect to have a real relationship with God – this seems more interesting to me and more three dimensional than the core parts of the liturgy which represent our need to thank God, to affirm God, but tell so little of our struggles.

It also works for me that further on in the psalm the mood changes: there is recognition of the vastness of God, of the ongoing nature of God. The end seems to show an acceptance: I may not live much longer but human beings will continue to be blessed. In our time of global warming and nuclear power and nuclear weapons, we may not feel so sure.

Annie Power, Choir Member and Facilitator of Questions Group, St. Stephen's, Rochester Row

**Thursday, March 7**

**Psalm 1**

- 1 Blessed are they who have not walked  
in the counsel of the wicked,  
nor lingered in the way of sinners,  
nor sat in the assembly of the scornful.
- 2 Their delight is in the law of the Lord  
and they meditate on his law day and night.
- 3 Like a tree planted by streams of water  
bearing fruit in due season, with leaves that do not wither,  
whatever they do, it shall prosper.
- 4 As for the wicked, it is not so with them;  
they are like chaff which the wind blows away.
- 5 Therefore the wicked shall not be able to stand in the judgement,  
nor the sinner in the congregation of the righteous.
- 6 For the Lord knows the way of the righteous,  
but the way of the wicked shall perish.

It is a sure bet that there is no one who has not sat, talked or walked with the wicked, and an even surer thing that each of us has been the wicked one among the righteous. Rather than despair at the psalmist's words that would seem thus to predict doom for all of us, we can in fact hope in the ultimate message of the triumph of good over evil -- in this world and the next. God knows that in each of us there is the ability to gravitate to the good, and as the psalm instructs, God gives us a path to do so by studying his word and the manifestations of his presence on earth.

Beth Thomas Kleinbart, Vestry Member, Holy Trinity

**Friday, March 8**

**Psalm 51:1-5, 17-18**

- 1 Have mercy on me, O God, in your great goodness;  
according to the abundance of your compassion  
blot out my offences.
- 2 Wash me thoroughly from my wickedness  
and cleanse me from my sin.
- 3 For I acknowledge my faults  
and my sin is ever before me.
- 4 Against you only have I sinned  
and done what is evil in your sight,
- 5 So that you are justified in your sentence  
and righteous in your judgement.
- 17 For you desire no sacrifice, else I would give it;  
you take no delight in burnt offerings.



- 18 The sacrifice of God is a broken spirit;  
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

On reading Psalm 51, it is obvious that the writer is weighed down before God by his sin. He seeks God's forgiveness in God's infinite mercy, while being aware of his own faults and shortcomings. I was immediately reminded of that wonderful prayer written by Thomas Cranmer in the Book of Common prayer; The General Confession. It is worthwhile to remember that while beautiful and eloquent in its sixteenth century form, the use of everyday language has changed in the almost five centuries since Cranmer penned that particular prayer of confession. He uses the word 'miserable' to mean "deserving of mercy."

Almighty and most merciful Father,  
We have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep,  
We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts,  
We have offended against thy holy laws,  
We have left undone those things which we ought to have done,  
And we have done those things which we ought not to have done,  
And there is no health in us:  
But thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable offenders;  
Spare thou them, O God, which confess their faults,  
Restore thou them that are penitent,  
According to thy promises declared unto mankind in Christ Jesu our Lord:  
And grant, O most merciful Father, for his sake,  
That we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life,  
To the glory of thy holy Name. Amen.

Andrew Crawford, Weekday Verger, St. Stephen's Rochester Row

**Saturday, March 9**

**Psalm 86:1-7**

- 1 Incline your ear, O Lord, and answer me,  
for I am poor and in misery.
- 2 Preserve my soul, for I am faithful;  
save your servant, for I put my trust in you.
- 3 Be merciful to me, O Lord, for you are my God;  
I call upon you all the day long.
- 4 Gladden the soul of your servant,  
for to you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.
- 5 For you, Lord, are good and forgiving,  
abounding in steadfast love to all who call upon you.
- 6 Give ear, O Lord, to my prayer  
and listen to the voice of my supplication.
- 7 In the day of my distress I will call upon you,  
for you will answer me.

Have you ever worked for/something(someone) so dear to you, then watch all crumble before your eyes? The court officer stated: "I believe she suffers from 'religiosity.'" I had simply revealed in truth that Jesus the Christ is my Lord and Savior. I am a survivor, still alive despite abuse and cancers to find God's will for me. Still alive in the healing power of Jesus's Love working directly and through others with prayer in action! Hold fast to your faith and purpose!

David's psalm(song) offers words of comfort, encouragement, soul-searching, and above all, hope! May it serve each of us in our darkest hours as prayer when our own words fail: – a plea of release from oppression, affliction, and yes, injustice! Hear me: "...I lift up my soul!... In the day of my distress I will call upon you, for you will answer me!"

Victoria Jeanne Rollins, Chaplain and Interfaith Minister, Holy Trinity

### **The First Sunday in Lent**

**March 10**

**Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16**

- 1 Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High  
and abides under the shadow of the Almighty,
- 2 Shall say to the Lord, 'My refuge and my stronghold,  
my God, in whom I put my trust.'
- 9 Because you have made the Lord your refuge  
and the Most High your stronghold,
- 10 There shall no evil happen to you,  
neither shall any plague come near your tent.
- 11 For he shall give his angels charge over you,  
to keep you in all your ways.
- 12 They shall bear you in their hands,  
lest you dash your foot against a stone.
- 13 You shall tread upon the lion and adder;  
the young lion and the serpent you shall trample underfoot.
- 14 Because they have set their love upon me,  
therefore will I deliver them;  
I will lift them up, because they know my name.
- 15 They will call upon me and I will answer them;  
I am with them in trouble,  
I will deliver them and bring them to honour.
- 16 With long life will I satisfy them  
and show them my salvation.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer's readings of the Psalms led him to understand that these were the prayers of Jesus Christ: 'Who prays the Psalms? ...David prays ... Christ prays ... we pray. Whenever we consider all these things together we become aware of the wonderful path that God follows in order to teach us to pray. The Psalms are the prayer book of Jesus Christ in the truest sense

of the word.’ This psalm is an excellent example of this, as the tempter used it to confront Him in the wilderness. (Mark 4)

Following a near drowning accident to a two year old child, I spent three weeks 24/7 with her family in a paediatric intensive care unit. It was a terrible time of confusion, fear, guilt and uncertainty and someone wisely recommended that I read the Psalms. Psalm 91 would have been difficult and challenging to read in the circumstances; where were the angels at the time of the accident? It is easy to be angry with God and not to have the wisdom to see that He was not in the event, but with us in our response and our care for each other. In reading very familiar psalms like ‘The Lord is my shepherd’ and ‘I will lift up my eyes to the hills’ I gained strength and comfort and found the courage to ‘stay awake’ in this Garden of Gethsemane and eventually to believe that in praying the prayer of Christ, I could trust in verses 1 – 2, not loose heart over verses 9 – 13 and arrive securely in due course at verses 14 – 16.

Sue Wates, Congregational Member, St. Stephen’s, Rochester Row

**Monday, March 11**

**Psalm 19:7-end**

- 7 The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul;  
the testimony of the Lord is sure  
and gives wisdom to the simple.
- 8 The statutes of the Lord are right and rejoice the heart;  
the commandment of the Lord is pure  
and gives light to the eyes.
- 9 The fear of the Lord is clean and endures for ever;  
the judgements of the Lord are true  
and righteous altogether.
- 10 More to be desired are they than gold,  
more than much fine gold,  
sweeter also than honey, dripping from the honeycomb.
- 11 By them also is your servant taught  
and in keeping them there is great reward.
- 12 Who can tell how often they offend?  
O cleanse me from my secret faults!
- 13 Keep your servant also from presumptuous sins  
lest they get dominion over me;  
so shall I be undefiled,  
and innocent of great offence.

14 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart  
be acceptable in your sight,  
O Lord, my strength and my redeemer.

We need more wisdom in the world. Don't you agree? Each day it seems wisdom attenuates while various dogmatisms proliferate. At any moment, one suspects the welter of voicing opinions might squash wisdom's whisper. Not so, for wisdom is not a thing or an opinion but a way of being. One which invites us to re-sensitize ourselves to God's way of life.

Psalm 19 is just such an invitation to enter the training ground of wisdom again. For the psalmist, wisdom is an attentive exposure not only to the world's information and one's own experiences but also to God's way of life. Not that it is easy to remain within wisdom for it demands we must remain humble and loving rather than angry and opinionated. Wisdom has always been the quiet insistence that listening, seeing, and doing outlasts shouting, ostracizing, and posturing. May God help us grow a little wiser each day.

Calvyn du Toit, Musician and Theologian, Holy Trinity

**Tuesday, March 12**

**Psalm 34:4-6,21-22**

4 I sought the Lord and he answered me  
and delivered me from all my fears.  
5 Look upon him and be radiant  
and your faces shall not be ashamed.  
6 This poor soul cried, and the Lord heard me  
and saved me from all my troubles.  
21 But evil shall slay the wicked  
and those who hate the righteous will be condemned.  
22 The Lord ransoms the life of his servants  
and will condemn none who seek refuge in him.

My name is Tamara. I am a lay minister and have some training in spiritual direction. My greatest love and ministry, however, is spirituality, and giving people signposts to seeking and finding God in ordinary places and environments. I have found God to surprise me in all kinds of people, places, and activities. In the silence on top of a hill, someone smiling back at me in the middle of a bustling marketplace. Very often I didn't even realize I was crying to God until after the encounter was over.

Crying to God seems to be something we rarely do when we are happy. I wonder if we would live better with God if we cried to Him/Her also in happiness for thanksgiving.

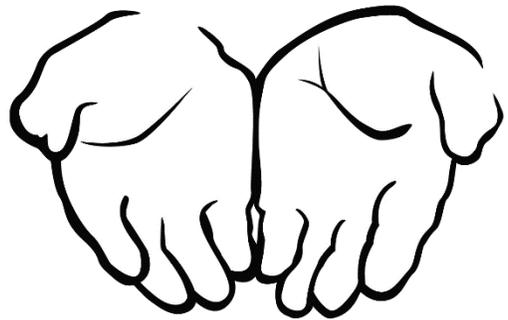
How do we / I need to cry to God? Do we ask for a particular outcome? Do we ask for mercy and grace? Or do we ask for God Him/Herself?

So, let us poor souls cry, and the Lord will hear us, and save us from all our troubles.

Tamara Kachzenbach, Lay Worker, St. Stephen's Rochester Row

**Wednesday, March 13    Psalm 51:1-5,17-18**

- 1    Have mercy on me, O God, in your great goodness;  
     according to the abundance of your compassion  
     blot out my offences.
- 2    Wash me thoroughly from my wickedness  
     and cleanse me from my sin.
- 3    For I acknowledge my faults  
     and my sin is ever before me.
- 4    Against you only have I sinned  
     and done what is evil in your sight,
- 5    So that you are justified in your sentence  
     and righteous in your judgement.
- 17   For you desire no sacrifice, else I would give it;  
     you take no delight in burnt offerings.
- 18   The sacrifice of God is a broken spirit;"  
     a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.



I think this psalm is about relationship. A tide of love flows between us and God is in the heart of each of us holding our love in his hands. If I dam that flow with what I say or do, I sin against you and God in you. My only hope is that remorseful words from my broken heart will bring forgiveness and restore that gentle flow of God between us.

Patsy Weille, Social Worker and Coordinator of Trinity Cares, Holy Trinity

**Thursday, March 14**

**Psalm 138**

- 1    I will give thanks to you, O Lord, with my whole heart;  
     before the gods will I sing praise to you.
- 2    I will bow down towards your holy temple and praise your name,  
     because of your love and faithfulness;  
     for you have glorified your name  
     and your word above all things.

- 3 In the day that I called to you, you answered me;  
you put new strength in my soul.
- 4 All the kings of the earth shall praise you, O Lord,  
for they have heard the words of your mouth.
- 5 They shall sing of the ways of the Lord,  
that great is the glory of the Lord.
- 6 Though the Lord be high, he watches over the lowly;  
as for the proud, he regards them from afar.
- 7 Though I walk in the midst of trouble,  
you will preserve me;  
you will stretch forth your hand against the fury of my enemies;  
your right hand will save me.
- 8 The Lord shall make good his purpose for me;  
your loving-kindness, O Lord, endures for ever;  
forsake not the work of your hands.

I am Liz Szewczyk, mother, teacher, gardener, cook and daughter. And to my parents that I owe my allegiance to the church, where I first heard the Psalms and where I learnt to give thanks with my whole heart.

When I was younger I was too stiff to bow down, too purblind to see what was offered but, a little more grown up, I looked again and sang - along with the kings of the psalmist and with my children - of the ways of the Lord. Alongside the many joys of the last 70 years there have been the inevitable troubles of human life, but indeed I have been preserved.

So this Lent I offer my gratitude for that enduring loving kindness, hoping that the purpose set for me is being fulfilled, and thankful for much loving kindness, both human and spiritual.

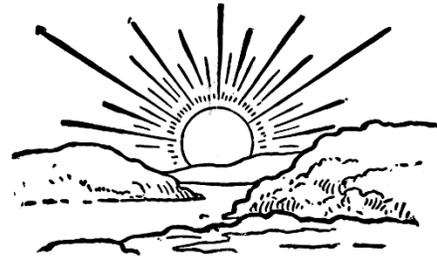
Liz Szewczyk, Church Warden, St. Stephen's Rochester Row

**Friday, March 15**

**Psalm 130**

- 1 Out of the depths have I cried to you, O Lord;  
Lord, hear my voice;  
let your ears consider well the voice of my supplication.
- 2 If you, Lord, were to mark what is done amiss,  
O Lord, who could stand?
- 3 But there is forgiveness with you,  
so that you shall be feared.
- 4 I wait for the Lord; my soul waits for him;  
in his word is my hope.

- 5 My soul waits for the Lord,  
more than the night watch for the morning,  
more than the night watch for the morning.
- 6 O Israel, wait for the Lord,  
for with the Lord there is mercy;
- 7 With him is plenteous redemption  
and he shall redeem Israel from all their sins.



Two years ago, my brother suffered a brain hemorrhage. He was unconscious for 2 days then woke up unable to speak or move half of his body. There was a lot of despair during the period of his illness and ongoing recovery. And so, the words of the psalmist really resonate here, the desperation in the first verse is palpable, and I am struck by the boldness with which the author demands God’s attention...it confirms my suspicion that God understands that situations are at times too desperate for calm, genteel prayers.

In the midst of the messy, desperate situations that our lives sometimes reveal, may we remember to “keep it real” and cry out to God, and find like the psalmist did, the strength to wait, and receive hope for the path ahead.

Oluyemisi Ariyibi, Physician, Instructor and Sunday School Teacher, Holy Trinity

**Saturday, March 16**

**Psalm 119:1-8**

- 1 Blessed are those whose way is pure,  
who walk in the law of the Lord.
- 2 Blessed are those who keep his testimonies  
and seek him with their whole heart,
- 3 Those who do no wickedness,  
but walk in his ways.
- 4 You, O Lord, have charged  
that we should diligently keep your commandments.
- 5 O that my ways were made so direct  
that I might keep your statutes.
- 6 Then should I not be put to shame,  
because I have regard for all your commandments.
- 7 I will thank you with an unfeigned heart,  
when I have learned your righteous judgements.
- 8 I will keep your statutes;  
O forsake me not utterly.

My name is Dainton and I am 12 years old. I study at Westminster Under School and come to St. Stephen’s twice a week: once with school and on Sunday to attend mass with my family.

Psalm 119.1-8 makes me feel like God is telling us that we should follow His commandments, and do what we must to try and find Him. It tells us that we are 'Blessed' if we 'walk in the way of the Lord'. This tells me that we need to obey all of what God tells us to do, and we shall begin to understand new things once we have learned the purpose of God's judgements.

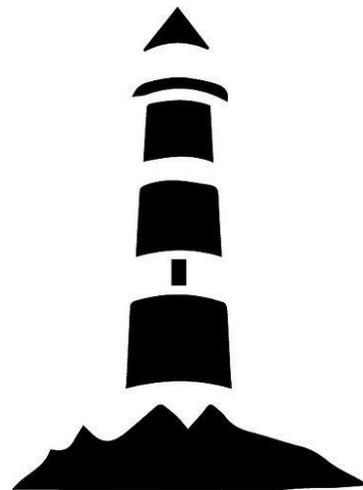
Dainton John, Young Person, St. Stephen's Rochester Row

## The Second Sunday in Lent

March 17

Psalm 27

- 1 The Lord is my light and my salvation;  
whom then shall I fear?  
The Lord is the strength of my life;  
of whom then shall I be afraid?
- 2 When the wicked, even my enemies and my foes,  
came upon me to eat up my flesh,  
they stumbled and fell.
- 3 Though a host encamp against me,  
my heart shall not be afraid,  
and though there rise up war against me,  
yet will I put my trust in him.
- 4 One thing have I asked of the Lord  
and that alone I seek:  
that I may dwell in the house of the Lord  
all the days of my life,
- 5 To behold the fair beauty of the Lord  
and to seek his will in his temple.
- 6 For in the day of trouble  
he shall hide me in his shelter;  
in the secret place of his dwelling shall he hide me  
and set me high upon a rock.
- 7 And now shall he lift up my head  
above my enemies round about me;
- 8 Therefore will I offer in his dwelling an oblation  
with great gladness;  
I will sing and make music to the Lord.
- 9 Hear my voice, O Lord, when I call;  
have mercy upon me and answer me.
- 10 My heart tells of your word, 'Seek my face.'  
Your face, Lord, will I seek.
- 11 Hide not your face from me,  
nor cast your servant away in displeasure.



- 12 You have been my helper;  
leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.
- 13 Though my father and my mother forsake me,  
the Lord will take me up.
- 14 Teach me your way, O Lord;  
lead me on a level path,  
because of those who lie in wait for me.
- 15 Deliver me not into the will of my adversaries,  
for false witnesses have risen up against me,  
and those who breathe out violence.
- 16 I believe that I shall see the goodness of the Lord  
in the land of the living.
- 17 Wait for the Lord;  
be strong and he shall comfort your heart;  
wait patiently for the Lord.

I sometimes hear a phrase that makes me a little uncomfortable. “The opposite of faith is fear,” people say. I think I understand what they mean—that faith can help when one is fearful and that, given the choice, one should aim to move more towards faith than fear. But I disagree that faith and fear are necessarily opposed. I can sometimes be full of faith but still be full of fear. What changes the situation for me as a Christian is that faith in God gives me something to do with my fear. The author of Psalm 27 acknowledges fear, yet places fear in the context of a relationship with God. Even though the enemies might be outside, and they might even seem to be closing in, if we place ourselves in the presence of God, spend time in the house of God, and dance and sing to the music of God, fear begins to fade away. And so, with the psalmist, even in the face of fear, I will wait on the Lord.

John Beddingfield, Rector, Holy Trinity

**Monday, March 18**

**Psalm 79:8-9, 12, 14**

- 8 Remember not against us our former sins;  
let your compassion make haste to meet us,  
for we are brought very low.
- 9 Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of your name;  
deliver us, and wipe away our sins for your name’s sake.
- 12 Let the sorrowful sighing of the prisoners come before you,  
and by your mighty arm  
preserve those who are condemned to die.
- 14 But we that are your people and the sheep of your pasture  
will give you thanks for ever,  
and tell of your praise from generation to generation.

I have been a member of St Stephens for four years and a Christian since I was a teenager growing up in Australia. After many years in the workforce I'm now pushing at the door of ordination, a thrilling yet slightly scary adventure in God.

These are such insightful words that reach across the centuries to me. They are found in the Old Testament, yet surely are echoed time and time again by the New Testament writers as a complete summation of what we have in Christ. How was the psalmist able to write so directly of God's unconditional and compassionate salvation centuries before Christ gifted it to you and me.....unless.....unless we share kinship in Christ with that writer, kinship that will be unveiled at the banquet in Heaven.

I was so struck by the psalmist saying that in reaching for the freedom of salvation we glorify God and this is God's name that He attaches to us as His people, the flock He cares for.

Jeremy Cavanagh, PCC member, St. Stephen's Rochester Row

**Tuesday, March 19**

**Psalm 50:8, 16-end**

- 8 'I will not reprove you for your sacrifices,  
for your burnt offerings are always before me.
- 16 But to the wicked, says God:  
'Why do you recite my statutes  
and take my covenant upon your lips,
- 17 'Since you refuse to be disciplined  
and have cast my words behind you?
- 18 'When you saw a thief, you made friends with him  
and you threw in your lot with adulterers.
- 19 'You have loosed your lips for evil  
and harnessed your tongue to deceit.
- 20 'You sit and speak evil of your brother;  
you slander your own mother's son.
- 21 'These things have you done, and should I keep silence?  
Did you think that I am even such a one as yourself?
- 22 'But no, I must reprove you,  
and set before your eyes the things that you have done.
- 23 'You that forget God, consider this well,  
lest I tear you apart and there is none to deliver you.
- 24 'Whoever offers me the sacrifice of thanksgiving honours me  
and to those who keep my way  
will I show the salvation of God.'

As I read this psalm, the first thing that jumped out at me was verse 20. This reminds me of what is known as PhDs, those people who pull her/him down, something at one time or another we are all guilty of. Yes, we speak unkind words of each other, but God is calling us to do better.

We are not perfect. God called Paul who “was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and a man of violence”.

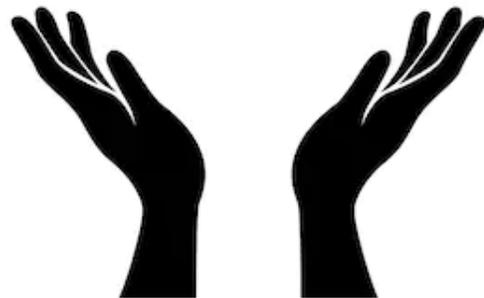
No matter our shortcomings, just like Paul, we can receive mercy and grace in Jesus Christ our Lord who calls us to a new life, loving each other and caring for each other. With Brexit in the UK and the immigration crisis on the Mexican-US border, and all the other ills that surround us, let us pray earnestly and fervently for peace and love to abound.

Yvonne O’Neal, Social Justice Advocate and Warden of Vestry, Holy Trinity

**Wednesday, March 20**

**Psalm 31:4-5, 14-18**

- 4 Take me out of the net  
that they have laid secretly for me,  
for you are my strength.
- 5 Into your hands I commend my spirit,  
for you have redeemed me, O Lord God of truth.
- 14 But my trust is in you, O Lord.  
I have said, ‘You are my God.
- 15 ‘My times are in your hand;  
deliver me from the hand of my enemies,  
and from those who persecute me.
- 16 ‘Make your face to shine upon your servant,  
and save me for your mercy’s sake.’
- 17 Lord, let me not be confounded  
for I have called upon you;  
but let the wicked be put to shame;  
let them be silent in the grave.
- 18 Let the lying lips be put to silence  
that speak against the righteous  
with arrogance, disdain and contempt.



My name is Katy, I’m 32 and a member of St Stephens. I am also a member of the Community of St Anselm at Lambeth Palace, where twice a week we pray the office of Compline. Sometimes I cantor and this means that I get to sing the line taken from this psalm: “Into your hands O Lord, I commend my spirit”. As I sing this line I am once again reminded of our call to fully surrender to God, at the same time mindful that I am singing Jesus’ last words on the cross, making the call to surrender all the more acute but all the more dangerous. But then I hear the response

sung back to me: “For you have redeemed me, Lord God of truth.” We are led confidently into surrender, knowing that it’s a compassionate, loving and truthful God that we are commending our spirits to.

Katy Hirst, Pastoral Assistant, St. Stephen’s Rochester Row

**Thursday, March 21**

**Psalm 1**

- 1 Blessed are they who have not walked  
in the counsel of the wicked,  
nor lingered in the way of sinners,  
nor sat in the assembly of the scornful.
- 2 Their delight is in the law of the Lord  
and they meditate on his law day and night.
- 3 Like a tree planted by streams of water  
bearing fruit in due season, with leaves that do not wither,  
whatever they do, it shall prosper.
- 4 As for the wicked, it is not so with them;  
they are like chaff which the wind blows away.
- 5 Therefore the wicked shall not be able to stand in the judgement,  
nor the sinner in the congregation of the righteous.
- 6 For the Lord knows the way of the righteous,  
but the way of the wicked shall perish.

A portal to the whole set of 150, this first psalm opens with the potent phrase “Blessed are they...”, reminding us of the Beatitudes. Unlike the latter, which enumerates mostly good virtues (the meek, the pure in heart, etc.), this psalm illustrates moral principles largely via negative example (the wicked, the scornful). Many of the ensuing psalms reinforce this duality between the narrator in need of God’s protection and the perceived enemy.

But... who among us might have (inadvertently) lingered in the way of sinners, or dabbled in a bit of scorn? Or from another angle: don’t even the most radical of fundamentalists also meditate day and night on the law of their chosen god? Aren’t even poisonous plants nourished by streams of water?

The imagery — stark in its painting of opposites — somehow doesn’t reflect the complexity and nuance of life. So what is to be our guidepost for recognizing the “way of the righteous”?

Cleveland Kersh, Organist and Director of Music, Holy Trinity

**Friday, March 22**

**Psalm 105:16-22**

- 16 Then he called down famine over the land  
and broke every staff of bread.
- 17 But he had sent a man before them,  
Joseph, who was sold as a slave.
- 18 They shackled his feet with fetters;  
his neck was ringed with iron.
- 19 Until all he foretold came to pass,  
the word of the Lord tested him.
- 20 The king sent and released him;  
the ruler of peoples set him free.
- 21 He appointed him lord of his household  
and ruler of all he possessed,
- 22 To instruct his princes as he willed  
and to teach his counsellors wisdom.



Some of the psalms of praise are very short, others very long, I suppose to teach us that, in devotions, we should be more observant how our hearts work than how the time passes. This is a short section from a long psalm - 105. The general scope is the same as most psalms: to set forth the glory of God, but the subject-matter is particular: a kind of historical recalling of some of God's mighty acts in Genesis. In our psalm today, the focus is on Joseph. I was particularly struck again by Joseph being given or sold into slavery - a topic for our own considerations and prayer this lent, given the Bishop of London's important Lent Appeal ([www.london.anglican.org/articles/bishop-londons-lent-appeal-2019-modern-day-slavery/](http://www.london.anglican.org/articles/bishop-londons-lent-appeal-2019-modern-day-slavery/)).

By recalling in our psalmody the history of the Israelites, we are able to pray new songs, with fresh thoughts. Our praise of God's wondrous works in our history should always be tempered with a critique of 'self' and our part in creating that modern history of today's world. Let us give thanks that God "sends", "instructs" and "appoints" but not lose sight of our part in God's history too.

Graham Buckle, Vicar, St. Stephen's Rochester Row

**Saturday, March 23**

**Psalm 103:1-4, 9-12**

- 1 Bless the Lord, O my soul,  
and all that is within me bless his holy name.
- 2 Bless the Lord, O my soul,  
and forget not all his benefits;
- 3 Who forgives all your sins  
and heals all your infirmities;

- 4 Who redeems your life from the Pit  
and crowns you with faithful love and compassion;
- 9 He will not always accuse us,  
neither will he keep his anger for ever.
- 10 He has not dealt with us according to our sins,  
nor rewarded us according to our wickedness.
- 11 For as the heavens are high above the earth,  
so great is his mercy upon those who fear him.
- 12 As far as the east is from the west,  
so far has he set our sins from us.

As a novelist, I love drama, and this psalm has a good dose. My connection to God has morphed through the years. In Missouri, he was secretly mine and he saw me, and I did not bother with the hell and brimstone promised to me for being who and what I was. As an adult, he comes closer and closer to me each year, and dwells in me, and is me. Does he as the psalm suggest redeem me from the pit? I certainly hope so, though what that pit looks like I can't imagine. And the psalm ends with a gentle promise, which soothes me. So great is his mercy. Then poetry. *As far as the east is from the west, so far has he set our sins from us.*

Scott Hess, Author and Teacher, Holy Trinity

### **The Third Sunday in Lent**

**March 24**

**Psalm 63:1-9**

- 1 O God, you are my God; eagerly I seek you;  
my soul is athirst for you.
- 2 My flesh also faints for you,  
as in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water.
- 3 So would I gaze upon you in your holy place,  
that I might behold your power and your glory.
- 4 Your loving-kindness is better than life itself  
and so my lips shall praise you.
- 5 I will bless you as long as I live  
and lift up my hands in your name.
- 6 My soul shall be satisfied, as with marrow and fatness,  
and my mouth shall praise you with joyful lips,
- 7 When I remember you upon my bed  
and meditate on you in the watches of the night.
- 8 For you have been my helper  
and under the shadow of your wings will I rejoice.
- 9 My soul clings to you;  
your right hand shall hold me fast.

At the crack of dawn, I begin my prayer with these words:

Heavenly Father,  
Take everything from me that keeps me from you.  
Give everything to me that guides me to you.  
Take all of me, and make me all your own,  
Amen.

Catherine Duce, Assistant Curate, St. Stephen's Rochester Row

**Monday, March 25**

**Psalm 43:1-4**

- 1 Give judgement for me, O God,  
and defend my cause against an ungodly people;  
deliver me from the deceitful and the wicked.
- 2 For you are the God of my refuge;  
why have you cast me from you,  
and why go I so heavily, while the enemy oppresses me?
- 3 O send out your light and your truth, that they may lead me,  
and bring me to your holy hill and to your dwelling,
- 4 That I may go to the altar of God,  
to the God of my joy and gladness;  
and on the lyre I will give thanks to you, O God my God.

When we have been attacked or deceived, what do we do? In today's psalm, there is a palpable sense of being trapped in an unjust situation. The psalmist's pleas for vindication transition to deep frustration with God, "You are the God of my refuge; why have you cast me from you?" We feel the writer's desolation and confusion, and a pause is in order between verses two and three (what happens?). However long it took the psalmist's spirit to move between those experiences, in verse three we see trust and the release of control. "O send out your light and your truth, that they may lead me, and bring me to your holy hill." Imagine yourself praying together with the psalmist. It's unclear if that "O" is a sigh of relief or exasperation or hope; it may be different for each of us, but joy and gladness are ahead.

James Stabler-Havener, Educator and Administrator, Holy Trinity



**Tuesday, March 26**

**Psalm 25:3-10**

- 3 Make me to know your ways, O Lord,  
and teach me your paths.
- 4 Lead me in your truth and teach me,  
for you are the God of my salvation;  
for you have I hoped all the day long.
- 5 Remember, Lord, your compassion and love,  
for they are from everlasting.
- 6 Remember not the sins of my youth  
or my transgressions,  
but think on me in your goodness, O Lord,  
according to your steadfast love.
- 7 Gracious and upright is the Lord;  
therefore shall he teach sinners in the way.
- 8 He will guide the humble in doing right  
and teach his way to the lowly.
- 9 All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth  
to those who keep his covenant and his testimonies.
- 10 For your name's sake, O Lord,  
be merciful to my sin, for it is great.



As the mother of two young children, I am very conscious of my responsibility of bringing up decent human beings. As a Christian parent, this responsibility increases to bringing up decent human beings *who love God*. While this psalm is a very personal prayer, I also see it as a psalm of encouragement and one that we can use in nurturing each other and in being a witness to others, by living the life that this psalm describes. As I watch my children grow I am reminded that their path is not my path and the best that I can offer is to support them as they journey along their path. With guidance, this psalm is the prayer I would love to be on the hearts of my children. How can I encourage this and be a faithful witness to others; but to attempt to model this life myself?

Jen Adam, Facilitator of Toddler Group, St. Stephen's Rochester Row

**Wednesday, March 27**

**Psalm 147:13-end**

- 13 Sing praise to the Lord, O Jerusalem;  
praise your God, O Zion;
- 14 For he has strengthened the bars of your gates  
and has blest your children within you.
- 15 He has established peace in your borders  
and satisfies you with the finest wheat.

- 16 He sends forth his command to the earth  
and his word runs very swiftly.
- 17 He gives snow like wool  
and scatters the hoarfrost like ashes.
- 18 He casts down his hailstones like morsels of bread;  
who can endure his frost?
- 19 He sends forth his word and melts them;  
he blows with his wind and the waters flow.
- 20 He declares his word to Jacob,  
his statutes and judgements to Israel.
- 21 He has not dealt so with any other nation;  
they do not know his laws.

I've felt a close kinship with the psalmist lately up here in the Catskill Mountains where I am now writing this. The snow comes down like a very thick pile of wool, and blows about like ashes. Who can endure His frost at minus 20 degrees? Or who wants to try, anyway? And icy rain, OK, "morsels of bread" could be an apt description, very cold, hard bread. Suddenly it's 55 degrees F and we worry about the waters flowing and flooding. And then the winds are blowing the branches off the trees and yes, I do sing praises to the Lord for the bars of my gates and the peace in my house and the supply of food. Maybe these extremes of weather are caused by our misuse of God's gifts, but the original amazing inventions of snow, wind, and water were all His.

Melanie Hill, Volunteer Coordinator for Holy Trinity Neighborhood Center

**Thursday, March 28**

**Psalm 95:1-2, 6-end**

*My happiest times are spent playing the organ; I've played services since age 10, and the Psalms follow me around. Here's what comes to mind with this, the curtain-up to Mattins in the BCP order:*

- 1 O come, let us sing to the Lord;  
*The call to worship, the summons: and the invitation to SING! Yes, please.....*
- let us heartily rejoice in the rock of our salvation.  
*The rock won't move; all will be well, therefore rejoice.*
- 2 Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving  
*It's the least we can do.....*
- and be glad in him with psalms.  
*Psallite ejus - "celebrate" – draw attention to Him; make a lot of noise!*
- 6 Come, let us worship and bow down  
*Think about it; we must get real.*

and kneel before the Lord our Maker.

*Like it or not, we only replicate; God gives life and makes the design.*

*We can tamper, but He is the Maker.*

7 For he is our God; we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand.

*Like we said, we are not the architects round here.*

8 O that today you would listen to his voice:

*Actually, His lessons are for me, not just everyone else*

‘Harden not your hearts as at Meribah, on that day at Massah in the wilderness,

9 ‘When your forebears tested me, and put me to the proof,  
though they had seen my works.

*Nothing convinces a cynic; “not even if someone should rise from the dead.”*

10 ‘Forty years long I detested that generation and said,

“This people are wayward in their hearts;  
they do not know my ways.”

*It would be nice to think things had changed, but no! We are all a bit self-willed when pushed.*

11 ‘So I swore in my wrath,

“They shall not enter into my rest.”

*Now that’s serious. OK, Jesus irradiates these OT threats, but we do have to seize  
the proffered redemption, not just presume upon it.*

Rosemary Field, Director of Music, St. Stephen’s Rochester Row

**Friday, March 29**

**Psalm 81:6-10, 13, 16**

6 I heard a voice I did not know, that said:

‘I eased their shoulder from the burden;  
their hands were set free from bearing the load.

7 ‘You called upon me in trouble and I delivered you;

I answered you from the secret place of thunder  
and proved you at the waters of Meribah.

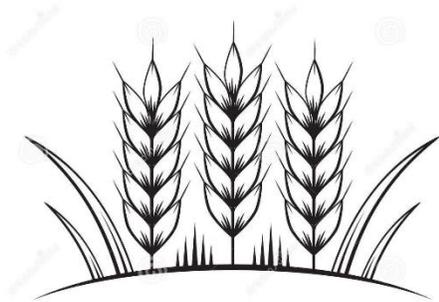
8 ‘Hear, O my people, and I will admonish you:

O Israel, if you would but listen to me!

9 ‘There shall be no strange god among you;

you shall not worship a foreign god.

- 10 'I am the Lord your God,  
who brought you up from the land of Egypt;  
open your mouth wide and I shall fill it.'
- 13 O that my people would listen to me,  
that Israel would walk in my ways!
- 16 But Israel would I feed with the finest wheat  
and with honey from the rock would I satisfy them.



God has already blessed God's people by easing their burden, freeing them from their load, delivering them from trouble. God longs to bless them further by filling their mouths, feeding them with them with the finest wheat, and satisfying them with honey. With blessing comes responsibility: do not have or worship strange or foreign gods.

If God richly blesses those who walk in God's ways, what 'strange gods' do God's people have, and why do they have them? Israelites who lived in dry regions may have worshiped Ba'al, the storm god, to pray for rain for their crops. Perhaps they worshipped Ba'al because they did not trust God to provide, or maybe God wasn't providing fast enough. Maybe they thought God could use a little help. Today, which of God's blessings do you need most? What 'strange gods' do God's people currently have? Why do we have them?

Michelle Stabler-Havener, Linguist and Teacher, Holy Trinity

**Saturday, March 30**

**Psalm 51:1-2, 17-end**

- 1 Have mercy on me, O God, in your great goodness;  
according to the abundance of your compassion  
blot out my offences.
- 2 Wash me thoroughly from my wickedness  
and cleanse me from my sin.
- 17 For you desire no sacrifice, else I would give it;  
you take no delight in burnt offerings.
- 18 The sacrifice of God is a broken spirit;  
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.
- 19 O be favourable and gracious to Zion;  
build up the walls of Jerusalem.
- 20 Then you will accept sacrifices offered in righteousness,  
the burnt offerings and oblations;  
then shall they offer up bulls on your altar.

Merciful God,  
Forgive us our sins.  
We trust in your goodness  
and compassion.  
Be gracious to us,  
and heal our broken hearts.  
For Christ's sake.  
Amen.



Elizabeth Witts, congregational member, St. Stephen's, Rochester Row.

### **The Fourth Sunday in Lent**

**March 31**

**Psalm 32**

- 1 Happy the one whose transgression is forgiven,  
and whose sin is covered.
- 2 Happy the one to whom the Lord imputes no guilt,  
and in whose spirit there is no guile.
- 3 For I held my tongue;  
my bones wasted away  
through my groaning all the day long.
- 4 Your hand was heavy upon me day and night;  
my moisture was dried up like the drought in summer.
- 5 Then I acknowledged my sin to you  
and my iniquity I did not hide.
- 6 I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,'  
and you forgave the guilt of my sin.
- 7 Therefore let all the faithful make their prayers to you  
in time of trouble;  
in the great water flood, it shall not reach them.
- 8 You are a place for me to hide in;  
you preserve me from trouble;  
you surround me with songs of deliverance.
- 9 'I will instruct you and teach you  
in the way that you should go;  
I will guide you with my eye.
- 10 'Be not like horse and mule which have no understanding;  
whose mouths must be held with bit and bridle,  
or else they will not stay near you.'
- 11 Great tribulations remain for the wicked,  
but mercy embraces those who trust in the Lord.

- 12 Be glad, you righteous, and rejoice in the Lord;  
shout for joy, all who are true of heart.

Growing up in the Presbyterian Church, I was used to corporate prayers of confession—general, broad, and all-encompassing. But as I was preparing to be confirmed in the Episcopal Church, I was curious about the Reconciliation of a Penitent, according to the Book of Common Prayer. I had heard that Private Confession in the Anglican Tradition was one of those things for which “All *may*, some *should*, but none *shall*.” I felt I *should*, and I have done so seasonally ever since. It’s at least a Lenten “spring cleaning of the soul,” but there have been other occasions when Confession (and counsel, penance, and absolution) have lifted out of useless navel-gazing and destructive guilt. As a priest, I am always happy to meet with someone for Confession, either in my office, in the church, in a home, or hospital room, or a park—wherever God brings us together. Confession is a gift of the Church to help us “be glad, rejoice in the Lord, and shout for joy.” If you’re curious about Confession, you might check Martin L. Smith’s wonderful book, *Reconciliation: Preparing for Confession in the Episcopal Church* or the booklet on Confession by Brother Curtis Almquist, CSJE (both of which are linked in the Sacraments section of Holy Trinity’s website.)

John Beddingfield, Rector, Holy Trinity

**Monday, April 1**

**Psalm 30:1-5, 8, 11-end**

- 1 I will exalt you, O Lord,  
because you have raised me up  
and have not let my foes triumph over me.
- 2 O Lord my God, I cried out to you  
and you have healed me.
- 3 You brought me up, O Lord, from the dead;  
you restored me to life from among those that go down to the Pit.
- 4 Sing to the Lord, you servants of his;  
give thanks to his holy name.
- 5 For his wrath endures but the twinkling of an eye,  
his favour for a lifetime.  
Heaviness may endure for a night,  
but joy comes in the morning.
- 8 To you, O Lord, I cried;  
to the Lord I made my supplication:
- 11 You have turned my mourning into dancing;  
you have put off my sackcloth and girded me with gladness;
- 12 Therefore my heart sings to you without ceasing;  
O Lord my God, I will give you thanks for ever.

This is a beautiful psalm where the speaker declares or relates what God has done to deliver them from crisis. It tells a story of thanksgiving. “You have drawn me up”; “you have healed me”; “you brought me up”; “you restored me” – these are all expressions of hope and the intention to give thanks and praise to God for his deliverance. In verse 4, we are referred to as the faithful ones and the ones who are called to join in the thanksgiving to God. In verse 5 we are reminded of the reasons why we should give thanks but that in God’s eye anger and weeping are but a mere moment in the context of a life of joy and hope.

In verse 8 we get a sense from the speaker that when in times of trouble and crisis God had hidden his face and had departed from the speaker. Notwithstanding this, the speaker does not turn his back on the Lord and continued to have faith that God would answer his supplications. This reminds us today that although we may feel that God has not heard our cries because his deeds are not always apparent, he does respond in less obvious ways with his love, mercy and guidance and we should remain faithful that once again he will show us his face and favour. He is present in times of joy and trouble and in all parts of our life.

The psalm ends with a renewed promise of praise and thanksgiving to God throughout life and forever. Not just for the good things he has already done for us (praise for which we often forget to give) but for the good things he is yet to do in the remainder of our earthly lives but also for evermore.

Tony Sewell, Weekend Verger at St. Stephen’s, Rochester Row, for the past 22 years.

**Tuesday, April 2**

**Psalm 46:1-8**

- 1 God is our refuge and strength,  
a very present help in trouble;
- 2 Therefore we will not fear, though the earth be moved,  
and though the mountains tremble in the heart of the sea;
- 3 Though the waters rage and swell,  
and though the mountains quake at the towering seas.
- 4 There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,  
the holy place of the dwelling of the Most High.
- 5 God is in the midst of her;  
therefore shall she not be removed;  
God shall help her at the break of day.
- 6 The nations are in uproar and the kingdoms are shaken,  
but God utters his voice and the earth shall melt away.
- 7 The Lord of hosts is with us;  
the God of Jacob is our stronghold.
- 8 Come and behold the works of the Lord,  
what destruction he has wrought upon the earth.

To me, this psalm makes the point that only God is permanent and unchanging, using dramatic examples from creation to rivet our attention. We believe things like mountains, nations, kingdoms and the earth itself are permanent, and the psalmist tells us otherwise. Yoga philosophy takes a different path but arrives at the same place, teaching that the only thing that is permanent is the Divine and the spark of the Divine that is our soul, or our True Nature or Higher Self. Defining ourselves by impermanent things is called attachment and is viewed as one of the great obstacles to happiness. The impermanent things we like to attach to -- our intellect, career, possessions, appearance, friends, etc., even the earth -- will all pass away. In both teachings we discover the One who is permanent.

Liz Poole, Advertising Consultant and Yoga Instructor, Holy Trinity

**Wednesday, April 3**

**Psalm 145:8-18**

- 8 The Lord is gracious and merciful,  
long-suffering and of great goodness.
- 9 The Lord is loving to everyone  
and his mercy is over all his creatures.
- 10 All your works praise you, O Lord,  
and your faithful servants bless you.
- 11 They tell of the glory of your kingdom  
and speak of your mighty power,
- 12 To make known to all peoples your mighty acts  
and the glorious splendour of your kingdom.
- 13 Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom;  
your dominion endures throughout all ages.
- 14 The Lord is sure in all his words  
and faithful in all his deeds.
- 15 The Lord upholds all those who fall  
and lifts up all those who are bowed down.
- 16 The eyes of all wait upon you, O Lord,  
and you give them their food in due season.
- 17 You open wide your hand  
and fill all things living with plenty.
- 18 The Lord is righteous in all his ways  
and loving in all his works.



This is a magnificent statement of faith that we share with the Jews and probably with most Muslims. The earth is God's and he fills it with his mercy and love. 'The Lord is loving to everyone': how wonderful it would be if it seemed to be so everywhere, and everyone believed it. How gloriously optimistic.

But what do we make of verses 14-18 when we remember those who must walk miles for a little muddy water, whose crops fail through no fault of their own or of any human agency, or who die in poverty, misery and pain? What of the innocent who suffer the worst excesses of torment that can be inflicted on them? Where is the providence of God then? What does it actually mean when we say that Jesus came to take away the sins of the world by his sacrifice? What good do our prayers do?

Margaret Duggan, congregational member, St. Stephen's Rochester Row

**Thursday, April 4**

**Psalm 106:19-23**

- 19 They made a calf at Horeb  
and worshipped the molten image;  
20 Thus they exchanged their glory  
for the image of an ox that feeds on hay.  
21 They forgot God their saviour,  
who had done such great things in Egypt,  
22 Wonderful deeds in the land of Ham  
and fearful things at the Red Sea.  
23 So he would have destroyed them,  
had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach,  
to turn away his wrath from consuming them.

On Mt. Sinai the Israelites, in the setting of disappointment with God, abandon him for the worship of another god who "feeds on grass" – seemingly for them a short-term gain given a deity they can see while forgetting the ongoing deliverance and caring that God has provided them. I believe that Rolf Jacobson\* in his co-authored book describes the cost of this action well. It is a timely message today:

"Whenever the person of faith puts trust in something other than the true and living God, the neighbor suffers. When we worship wealth, we cannot see to our neighbor's needs. When we pursue power, we do so at the expense of the neighbor. When we deify career, or family, or country, concern for the widow, the orphan, and the sojourner will be tragically subordinated." (The Book of Psalms, Declaisse-Walford, N, Jacobson, R, Tanner, BL, Keller Library, 2014)

Marlin Mattson, Psychiatrist, Renewal Works Team Member, and Volunteer, Holy Trinity



**Friday, April 5**

**Psalm 34:15-end**

- 15 The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous  
and his ears are open to their cry.
- 16 The face of the Lord is against those who do evil,  
to root out the remembrance of them from the earth.
- 17 The righteous cry and the Lord hears them  
and delivers them out of all their troubles.
- 18 The Lord is near to the brokenhearted  
and will save those who are crushed in spirit.
- 19 Many are the troubles of the righteous;  
from them all will the Lord deliver them.
- 20 He keeps all their bones,  
so that not one of them is broken.
- 21 But evil shall slay the wicked  
and those who hate the righteous will be condemned.
- 22 The Lord ransoms the life of his servants  
and will condemn none who seek refuge in him.

I am a Church Army Evangelist who is passionate about bringing God's love into our community. I have been commissioned for over 50 years and my passion to love those around me has grown deeper and deeper, especially for those who are broken hearted and crushed in spirit, and for those who need to find God as their rock and refuge. I join St Stephen's at morning prayer in the week to pray and praise Our Lord and to get strength for the coming day. Verse 18 reminds us that the individual person despite his or her troubles is precious to Our Lord and our Lenten journey reminds us that we follow Our Lord throughout the journey to Calvary, to the cross and resurrection. We have this wonderful privilege to share Our Lord's love with those we meet in our community. This is not a job just for clergy or the Church Army but for every Christian. If you, like me, have found the Lord Jesus Christ as your friend and Saviour we then (verse 22) can tell our world and community that He is our refuge, our helper and verse 15 tells us his ears are open to our cry.

Sr. Theresa Pountney, Midweek congregational member, St. Stephen's Rochester Row

**Saturday, April 6**

**Psalm 7:1-2, 8-10**

- 1 O Lord my God, in you I take refuge;  
save me from all who pursue me, and deliver me,
- 2 Lest they rend me like a lion and tear me in pieces  
while there is no one to help me.

- 8 Give judgement for me  
according to my righteousness, O Lord,  
and according to the innocence that is in me.
- 9 Let the malice of the wicked come to an end,  
but establish the righteous;  
for you test the mind and heart, O righteous God.
- 10 God is my shield that is over me;  
he saves the true of heart.

No lions tearing me to pieces, but like the psalmist, I can feel assaulted from both within, from my own regrets and judgments, and from without. Our unhappy mail carrier, for one, crushes first class letters, jamming catalogues on top (o.k. too many), breaking the locks on boxes and leaving the doors open. What's the story?

At times, there will be some with anger, hostility, judgments, and challenging behaviors. I can avoid or scold or show anger. Instead, I take refuge in God. Prayer is God's shield that is over me and shelters me. I pray for their needs and ask for better words.

We are to seek and serve Christ in all persons. Someone noted that Christ might sometimes appear in distressing disguise. What can I give and still protect myself? God answers me, and I trust things will work out in ways pleasing to God.

Louisa Young, Church Tour Guide, Renewal Works Team Member, and Volunteer, Holy Trinity

### **The Fifth Sunday in Lent: Passion Sunday**

#### **April 7: The First Station: Jesus in Agony in the Garden of Gethsemane**

*They went to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, 'Sit here while I pray.' He took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be distressed and agitated. And he said to them, 'I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and keep awake.' And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. He said, 'Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want.'* Mark 14:32-36

I have always been moved by this harrowing section of the Passion and Christ's sufferings. The sheer pain and cry of Jesus on his knees praying that this might not happen, that it might pass him by, whilst his friends fight to keep their eyes open. What strikes me again reading this section from Mark is the complete openness of Jesus to his friends, the fact that he is willing to share the dreadful fact that he is "deeply grieved, even to death." It is an openness we would should take note. Our lives, I'm sure, have had occasion when we've experienced such grieving and anxiety, but how willing or able have we been to share that with others, or even with friends? The depth of Jesus's pain is shown that he not only throws himself on the floor, but even implores his friends to keep awake - such is the level of his anxiety.

As believers we often look at the Redeemer's sufferings in an unrealistic and drowsy manner, and instead of being ready to die with Christ. How prepared are we are not prepared to acknowledge God's pain and watch with him one hour?

Graham Buckle, Vicar, St. Stephen's Rochester Row

**Monday, April 8**

**The Second Station: Jesus Betrayed by Judas and Arrested**

*Immediately, while he was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, arrived; and with him there was a crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders. Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, 'The one I will kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard.' So when he came, he went up to him at once and said, 'Rabbi!' and kissed him. Then they laid hands on him and arrested him. Mark 14:43-46*

Jesus had predicted his betrayal by one of his disciples. Judas Iscariot betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. The fact that Jesus knew that Judas would betray him does not remove the responsibility from Judas. It was his choice to betray Jesus. We have free choice. God gives us a circumstance and we determine how we will respond to it. The combination of both is what determines the outcome.

Do you sometimes feel like you have been unfaithful to God? Or have not even considered Him in your daily activities? Or worst yet deliberately done what was against His best for you? Then do not accept less than the best that God wants for you. Run to God through Jesus Christ and ask for another chance! "Remind me, Jesus, that Lent is not a test of my will, but an invitation to open my heart."

Lydia M. Colón, Leader in the Cursillo Renewal Movement and Treasurer of Holy Trinity Neighborhood Center, Holy Trinity

**Tuesday, April 9**

**The Third Station: Jesus Condemned by the Sanhedrin**

*Now the chief priests and the whole council were looking for testimony against Jesus to put him to death; but they found none. For many gave false testimony against him, and their testimony did not agree. Some stood up and gave false testimony against him, saying, 'We heard him say, "I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands".' But even on this point their testimony did not agree. Then the high priest stood up before them and asked Jesus, 'Have you no answer? What is it that they testify against you?' But he was silent and did not answer. Again the high priest asked him, 'Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?' Jesus said, 'I am; and "you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power", and "coming with the clouds of heaven".' Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, 'Why do we still need witnesses? You have heard his blasphemy! What is your decision?' All of them condemned him as deserving death. Mark 14:55-64*

Would you rather get in trouble for giving false testimony, or speaking an uncomfortable, unwelcome truth? Truth has a power all of its own. In our world of false media, politicians seeking mob approval rather than standing by principle, and FUD (Fear, Uncertainty & Doubt) being used to manipulate, can we find our way back to simple honesty? Bonhoeffer put it well:

“We have been silent witnesses of evil deeds; we have been drenched by many storms; we have learnt the arts of equivocation and pretense; experience has made us suspicious of others and kept us from being truthful and open; intolerable conflicts have worn us down and even made us cynical. Are we still of any use? What we shall need is not geniuses, or cynics, or misanthropes, or clever tacticians, but plain, honest, and straightforward men. Will our inward power of resistance be strong enough, and our honesty with ourselves remorseless enough, for us to find our way back to simplicity and straightforwardness?”

Matt Harbage, Priest and Husband of Cath, Assistant Curate of St. Stephen’s, Rochester Row

### **Wednesday, April 10**

#### **The Fourth Station: Peter Denies Jesus**

*At that moment the cock crowed for the second time. Then Peter remembered that Jesus had said to him, ‘Before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times.’ And he broke down and wept. Mark 14.72*

In Catholic school, the good sisters taught us all about the Christian martyrs - brave women and men who refused to deny Jesus, even in the face of torture and death. We prayed for their courage, wondered how we might act if faced with such a choice, and maybe even hoped for the “fast track to heaven” promised to martyrs.

Now, as an adult, I am painfully aware that I deny my Creator any time I fail to embrace my own goodness, my own worthiness, my own call, my own gifts. I am a beloved child of God, called to discipleship of Christ. May God give me the courage to live as such!

Maryann Tyrer, Morning Prayer Participant at Holy Trinity and Pastoral Associate at our neighboring parish, St. Monica’s Roman Catholic Church

### **Thursday, April 11**

#### **The Fifth Station: Jesus Judged by Pilate**

*Pilate asked them, ‘Why, what evil has he done?’ But they shouted all the more, ‘Crucify him!’ So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified. Mark 15:14,15*

Is Pilate really judging/ or are we judged? It is so easy to be tainted by that brush: Why, what evil has he done? A truth Pilate knows, though ‘wishing to satisfy the crowd’ has him flogged,

as a token gesture of appeasement in support of them. Yet are we sometimes so tainted: so cowardly? I certainly stand culpable, and am condemned.

Joanna Smith, Myanmar Link Coordinator and congregational member, St Stephen's Rochester Row

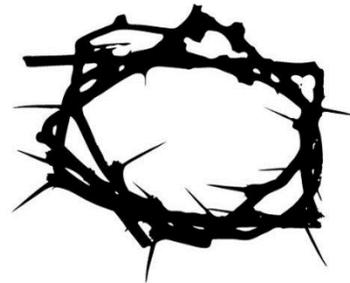
**Friday, April 12**

**The Sixth Station: Jesus Scourged and Crowned with Thorns**

*And they clothed him in a purple cloak; and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on him. And they began saluting him, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' They struck his head with a reed, spat upon him, and knelt down in homage to him. Mark 15.17-19*

They cried messiah  
we desire power  
no different demand  
vanquish the enemy  
change the system  
rock the status  
quo sword bullets  
no matter violence  
for violence an eye  
for an eye

But they brought the  
lamb to slaughter  
we miss saviors all  
together they/we  
miss God in  
the enemy God  
not the system status  
quo not sword bullets  
not violence vengeance  
unending restitution



Erwin de Leon, Poet and Instructor, Holy Trinity

**Saturday, April 13**

**The Seventh Station: Jesus Carries the Cross**

*After mocking him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him. Mark 15.20*

He was put on trial - arraigned.

He was dressed in the trappings of power - arrayed.

These states did not represent Him,  
did not suit Him.

But being stripped he was prepared  
to be clothed in glory.

John Turpin, Congregational Member, St. Stephen's Rochester Row

## **Palm Sunday**

**April 14**

### **The Eighth Station: Simon of Cyrene Helps Jesus to Carry the Cross**

*They compelled a passer-by, who was coming in from the country, to carry his cross; it was Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus. Mark 15:21*

How often are we challenged – or given the opportunity – to carry the cross? How, and how often do we rise to the challenge? I do not think we have to look far to meet the challenge. Today, the cross comes in many forms: the homeless, the hungry, the lonely, outsider, and the overwhelmed. It is easy to preach that volunteering our time, money (if we have it), and talent (if we recognize it) are ways to carry the cross. Yes, easy to preach, so it probably is easier than we think to do.

Too often, there is news of a parent who has committed an unspeakable crime against a child. I am always horrified that someone could do something so despicable, and try to wrap my head around how it could happen. I eventually come to the conclusion that the parent/caregiver did not have a support system. There was no offer or opportunity for someone to help carry the cross. There may have been an opportunity for social services, or some sort of intervention. Some people just “slip through the cracks.”

There is a shelter here at Holy Trinity, Friday through Tuesday evenings. It is coordinated completely by volunteers. So too, the Neighborhood Supper on Saturdays, and the Senior Luncheon on Tuesdays. Alcoholics Anonymous, and Al Anon meetings are held here twice a week, in our choir room. These programs rise to the challenge (and opportunity) to carry the cross.

Not interested or able to reach out to carry the cross? Simply looking someone in the eye and smiling can help. When responding to someone asking for a handout of food or money, look them in the eye, acknowledge their humanity, and the sacred in them.

We are all “coming in from the country.” We can all carry the cross. We can all lighten the load.

Erlinda Brent, Parish Secretary, Holy Trinity

**Monday, April 15**

**The Ninth Station: Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem**

*A great number of the people followed him, and among them were women who were beating their breasts and wailing for him. But Jesus turned to them and said, 'Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For the days are surely coming when they will say, "Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed." Then they will begin to say to the mountains, "Fall on us"; and to the hills, "Cover us." For if they do this when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?' Luke 23:27-31*

The first time I had the opportunity of going through the stations of the cross and walking the Via Dolorosa (Way of Suffering) like Jesus did was in the year 2000 as a student on a spiritual journey in Jerusalem. At that time I could not understand why Jesus was silencing these wailing women. I have since walked the same way several times again, and each time, I come away with questions of my own.

Here, Jesus was being escorted to his death. He must have been very tired with all the beatings and having to carry his cross before being relieved. Perhaps the last thing he needed were these noisy wailing women. Yet, through suffering, he had time to address the women, knowing fully well that others in the crowd were listening. But who were these women? Why did he have such harsh words for them?

In some parts of the world where I come from – Nigeria, when a woman loses her husband, she must rise at the crack of dawn running to the market square weeping and wailing so the whole town gets to know her husband is dead. Sometimes, the rich ones will pay people to help them do the crying. Did Jesus think these women of Jerusalem were paid and so they were not sincere?

Whoever they were, and for whatever reason, Jesus could see beyond their wailing, he saw their hearts and he addressed them directly "----- Daughters ( Women) of Jerusalem, do not weep for me but weep for yourselves.

We have once again been going through the season when many try to give up something for Lent. Through our readings particularly on good Friday we shall read these words and others on the cross.

When I think on these words, I hear Jesus calling me by my name alone and in the crowd, not women. I hear him calling me to weep for my sins. He calls me to come with a sincere heart and follow him. He calls me to give myself to him not 'things' so I can follow him. All I can say is yes Lord I will follow you

Lord Jesus,  
you followed the path of suffering for my sake,  
help me to hear your call and follow you daily and love you dearly.

Comfort Fearson, Member of PCC, St. Stephen's Rochester Row

**Tuesday, April 16**

**The Tenth Station: Jesus is Crucified**

*And they crucified him, and divided his clothes among them, casting lots to decide what each should take.  
Mark 15.24*

Ecce homo. Behold the human. Christ's body. A broken Jewish body. Our body. Not an Olympian body. Not the exalted emperor's body. He mocks them all with a crown of thorns and inscription on the cross. Our dying bother in which we also die. God as a mirror of our own deep-seated suffering and needs. One which reminds us of those who suffer close by and far away.

In our hyper-mediated world where everything is a copy of a copy of a copy; where images come at us at the speed of light; here he hangs an unmoving mediation of suffering brought close. As theologian Jurgen Moltmann once said, "Jesus cried out, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" and all Christians lives are basically an answer to this question that Jesus asked while He was dying." We are the ghosts upon the earth — a very Holy Ghost — who struggle to answer this question for ourselves and others with our lives.

Calvyn du Toit, Musician and Theologian, Holy Trinity

**Wednesday, April 17**

**The Eleventh Station: Jesus Promises the Kingdom to the Penitent Thief**

*One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, 'Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!' But the other rebuked him, saying, 'Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong.' Then he said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.' He replied, 'Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.' Luke 23:39-43*

The first man makes up his mind on any matter without looking for objective evidence or considering other points of view – he considers himself to be infallible. He will almost certainly

have thought Jesus to be dishonest and a fraud – and even in their perilous situation would express this view to bolster his ego.

The second man was one who always looks for the good in everyone he meets, no matter what crime or evil act they are known to have perpetrated – he would appear to have a totally Christian outlook. However, I wonder how this man would feel about those people in ISIS who (only in the last few days) were, according to international observers, responsible for the killing of 49 men who wanted to leave BURGUEH (in Syria) with their wives and families who were about to be evacuated from this war zone which was, and still is, under threat of total destruction by bombs and shells.

John Mayat, congregational member, St. Stephen's Rochester Row

**Thursday, April 18**

**The Twelfth Station: Jesus on the Cross; His Mother and His Friend**

*When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, 'Woman, here is your son.' Then he said to the disciple, 'Here is your mother.' And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home. John 19:26,27*

Mary is referred to by her son as Woman and to the disciple whom Jesus loved as “Here is your mother”. She goes in name from Mother of the Son of God to Woman to the mother of a beloved unnamed disciple: from the specific as Jesus's mother, to the general category of Woman, to the mother given to the care of another man.

Mary, from the time of annunciation to the death of Jesus, lived a life of constant reassessment and acceptance.

As a young woman betrothed to Joseph, she learns that she is pregnant with the son of God, yet still a virgin. As a mother, she sees her son challenging the priests in the temple and fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy. She sees him performing miracles. As Jesus grows up, she sees him growing in power and reputation, and in increasing danger.

Everything that happens to Mary is beyond the rational. Yet, she accepts what she is given and what she is told and the burden she has to bear. This doesn't mean she lacks feeling or has no sense of loss. She lives with uncertainty. Mary is full of grace.

Alden Prouty, Altar Guild Coordinator and Warden of Vestry, Holy Trinity

**Friday, April 19**

**The Thirteenth Station: Jesus Dies on the Cross**

*At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, 'Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?' which means, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, 'Listen, he is calling for Elijah.' And someone ran, filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink, saying, 'Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down.' Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last. Mark 15:34-37*

Almighty God, in your crucified Son you show us what love means.  
Where your church has forgotten  
that its place is outside the city with those who are discarded and abused,  
call it outside again.  
Where your church has settled for a forgiveness that does not dare to face the harder  
truth,  
call it deeper into your mercy.  
Where your church has spoken of love and yet has acted without compassion,  
call it into your heart  
to there encounter the bruised soul of a broken child  
and so come face to face with you.  
Make your church, kneeling and sorrowful,  
a place of transformation and healing,  
where all find compassion and belonging,  
all are set free, and all can find you. Amen.

Catherine Duce, Assistant Curate, St. Stephen's Rochester Row

**Saturday, April 20**

**The Fourteenth Station: Jesus laid in the tomb**

*Then Joseph bought a linen cloth, and taking down the body, wrapped it in the linen cloth, and laid it in a tomb that had been hewn out of the rock. He then rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. Mark 15:46*

Recently, a man with a suitcase entered a church in Manhattan, walked up to the altar, removed four antique candlestick holders, and walked out of the church. Several parishioners were in the church when he did it and said nothing.

We have all heard reports of crimes done in the presence of witnesses who froze out of fear or helplessness or confusion. Perhaps we can remember times when we wish we had acted, or acted sooner, or acted better.

Joseph of Arimathea asked to remove the dead body of Jesus, wrap it tenderly, and place it

respectfully in a rock-hewn tomb. We have no way of knowing exactly what Joseph thought of Jesus—whether he viewed Jesus as a rabbi, a holy man, an unfortunate victim, or the Messiah and Son of God. But regardless of how Joseph viewed Jesus theologically, Joseph had the courage and strength of character to act. Joseph risked his own safety, reputation, and standing in the community; yet he did the right thing, the good thing, and the holy thing. He must have thought he was also doing a final thing. But he would soon learn that no act of evil, nor tomb, nor death-dealing force would ever be able to silence the love of God.

John Beddingfield, Rector, Holy Trinity

## **The Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ: Easter Sunday**

**April 21**

### **The Fifteenth Station: Jesus Risen from the Dead**

*When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But he said to them, 'Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.' So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid. Mark 16:4-8*

We've made it...we have journeyed together from our Christian communities in New York and London sharing our thoughts on the Psalms and Jesus's Passion. And he HAS Risen! But I would on this Easter Day like to briefly focus our attention on the friends of Jesus, who take such meticulous care of his body. The women come to the tomb, presumably because they wanted to continue Nicodemus's attention of care of Christ's body. They come, we are told, with a large quantity of spices. The respect that they, and others show Christ, should encourage us in showing our respect to the Lord. And those who seek Christ diligently, will find difficulties in their way, but we are told not to be alarmed. And like those women, we should go and tell others about this wondrous thing. This is our missional call of the resurrection. To participate in communicating, with zeal to those we meet, and boldly proclaim that Christ IS risen! He IS risen indeed. Alleluia!

Graham Buckle, Vicar, St. Stephen's Rochester Row

HE IS RISEN  
*alleluia*