

Lenten Booklet 2022

Daily Readings for Lent & Holy Week

Ash Wednesday, March 3
through
Holy Saturday, April 16

“holiness in the ordinary”



St. Anne's in-the-Fields Episcopal Church
Lincoln, Massachusetts



“Take your everyday, ordinary life – your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life – and place it before God as an offering.”

– Romans 12:1, *The Message*

About Lent...

The forty days that traditionally comprise the Christian season of Lent represent the time that Jesus spent in the wilderness enduring temptation by Satan. Lent begins on Ash Wednesday – which in the Western Christian church is March 2 in 2022 – and ends with the Great Vigil on Holy Saturday, just before the glorious celebration of Easter. Some consider Lent a time of grief, repentance, and self-denial (like giving up chocolate!); others use the season as a time of self-reflection.

One form of the Confession of Sin (Rite II, Morning Prayer) contains the call of the Lenten season:

Dearly beloved, we have come together in the presence of Almighty God our heavenly Father, to set forth his praise, to hear his holy Word, and to ask, for ourselves and on behalf of others, those things that are necessary for our life and our salvation. And so that we may prepare ourselves in heart and mind to worship him, let us kneel in silence, and with penitent and obedient hearts confess our sins, that we may obtain forgiveness by his infinite goodness and mercy.

This year's Lenten Booklet theme is "holiness in the ordinary." Daily reflections include parishioners' favorite and original poems, hymns, meditations, and observations on the graces and gifts of everyday, ordinary life. We invite you to spend time each day with these offerings and to pray on your own "things necessary for our life and our salvation."

St. Anne's Lenten Booklet asks parishioners to reflect twice – first in preparing something to include in the Booklet and secondly in reading the pages during the season day by day. The Lenten booklet always allows us a glimpse into each other's spirits, seeing what we each find important in our lives and our faith. We are grateful that so many in the St. Anne's family contributed to this year's Booklet. In giving of ourselves, especially when Covid has kept us physically apart, we grow closer together.

Ash Wednesday: March 2

One of my favorite books about finding holiness in the ordinary is *An Altar in the World: A Geography of Faith* by Barbara Brown Taylor (author, teacher, and Episcopal priest). She writes about things like the practice of waking up to God, the practice of paying attention, and the practice of being present to God. In describing the book, she writes: “[M]y hope is that reading them will help you recognize some of the altars in this world – ordinary-looking places where human beings have met and may continue to meet up with the divine. More that they sometimes call God... So welcome to your own priesthood, practiced at the altar of your own life. The good news is that you have everything you need to begin” (Introduction).

In one of my favorite passages, she writes: “Or I can set a little altar, in the world or in my heart. I can stop what I am doing long enough to see where I am, who I am there with, and how awesome the place is. I can flag one more gate to heaven – one more patch of ordinary earth with ladder marks on it – where the divine traffic is heavy when I notice it and even when I do not. I can see it for once, instead of walking right past it, maybe even setting a stone or saying a blessing before I move on to wherever I am due next” (p. 14).

This Lenten season, may you too be attentive to the little altars in the world and in your own hearts – the places where you meet the Holy in the ordinary.

– *The Rev. Kristian C. Kohler*

Thursday after Ash Wednesday: March 3

My friend Dorothy taught English at the High School.

She would never miss a yard sale and she shopped compulsively.

Her closets were bursting with clothes she would never wear. Wrong size. Hodgepodge of styles and colors.

One day she said, "I've got a situation with one of my new freshman." Poor. Shabby. Shunned.

Dorothy hoed through piles of clothes and created 3 really nice looking outfits in his size.

I watched her iron each item and place it on a hanger to bring to school the next day.

I felt the presence of holiness in that moment as I watched the steam curl from her iron.

– Lois Tetreault

Friday after Ash Wednesday: March 4

My Nature Place

There is a beautiful bridge across the Assabet River at the Stow/Maynard line that has been a special place for me to revere nature for several years. It can be reached by driving down White Pond Road in Stow, off of Rte. 117. If one continues on that road, one side of the Assabet River Wildlife Refuge begins.

Changing with the seasons, the natural environment there by the bridge brings a holy joy to me!

I go there when I want a change of pace, think something through, get exercise, and to just BE! To feel closer to the land, at times I collect some kindling for my wood stove. The river is broad at that spot, the sky above has shown me many patterns and colors of clouds, sunsets, and moon rises. It is a sacred place, with many trees. I am grateful for and fortunately have time to go several times a week.

Nearby on a granite post on the Rail Trail, a blessed quote by Henry David Thoreau: “River towns are winged towns” is inscribed. His words have meaning for the freedom and beauty of this place!

– Nan Tenney

Saturday after Ash Wednesday: March 5

A holy theft: is there such a thing? At Crosby's yesterday I saw something I had never seen before: a woman, poorly dressed, calmly reached out and took a large jar of mayonnaise and put it into her bag. She slightly looked down and walked out the entrance side of the main door.

What had I just seen? Why didn't I tell the manager of this rich store? Why did I do nothing?

She needed that mayonnaise... Oh? That was wrong. That was theft.

– *Mimi Collins*

First Sunday in Lent: March 5

Collect

Almighty God, whose blessed Son was led by the Spirit to be tempted by Satan: Come quickly to help us who are assaulted by many temptations; and, as you know the weaknesses of each of us, let each one find you mighty to save; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Monday, First Week in Lent: March 7

A Moment to Ponder

Slow down, and it will become visible.

Did it take a pandemic to make me realize the ordinary is full of holiness. Maybe the ordinary is not so ordinary?

When two or three are gathered, in His name. We have all become creative in considering what “church” means. There were no elaborate cathedrals when Jesus preached on the Mount.

I’ve reduced commitments. I’m spending more time with family, neighbors, and vaccinated friends. I am not tired of photos of grandchildren achieving new milestones in development. Yes, I love your pet photos. I do not consider these activities ordinary.

I’m reading a bit more as I am in a couple of book groups. Music is always a constant. Cooking is enjoyable. Outdoors is beautiful, no matter the season.

All this reminds me of another favorite poet of mine, Nikki Giovanni. She writes a poem about dinner with her grandparents. The cornbread muffins baking, greens simmering on the stove, fresh churned butter, and setting the table with the everyday dishes. “We are home. I am home.”

Maybe this may sound ordinary, but I am reminded of Sundays at St. Anne’s when we prepare and partake of the bounty of the Lord’s Table. St. Anne’s is home, and extraordinarily holy.

Lent is certainly the time to slow down and take a moment to ponder the ordinary.

– *Suzanne Stimpson*

Tuesday, First Week in Lent: March 8

A Fleece Blanket

My home in Wayland was built in 1920 as housing for workers on the Central Massachusetts Railroad. Recently, this old corridor was converted to a rail trail, which runs next to my land. The trail was a favorite walk for my dog Kendra, who died unexpectedly in September 2020.

Last autumn, there was an accident with an injury on the rail trail. Friends of the injured woman brought her onto my lawn so she could lie down until help arrived. One friend asked me for a blanket. I grabbed the top blanket in my chest, which was Kendra's old fleece blanket, and gave it to the friend, who put it over the injured woman.

My beloved pup left me too soon. But I did feel that maybe the essence of my dog Kendra was with the injured woman, standing sentinel until help arrived, and offering comfort with her old fleece blanket.

– Alessandra Kingsford

Wednesday, First Week of Lent: March 9

There is surely little that is sacred about a supermarket, with its aisles of plenty, customers moving in haste or in a haze, clutching their lists, deciding whether to purchase 8 or 12 grain bread, squinting at the ingredients of a jar of pizza sauce. Extra-large, free-range, or organic eggs? Plain or vanilla yogurt?

The above is me a few weeks ago at a local market. Two observations, however, provided moments of grace for me in this secular place. First, as my cart and I maneuvered down the soup aisle, ahead of me was an elderly couple, perhaps in their mid-eighties, walking very slowly, hand-in-hand, kind of propping each other up. I stopped and took time to observe. She selected a can of soup, got his approval, and off they went, slowly but surely, her hand in his, prepared for yet another meal. Later, right in front of me in the checkout line, was a young mother, her cart piled high, and a baby about a year old in a carrier perched on top. She and I had to wait a bit. Mother was making those special sounds, mother-to-infant voicings to get Baby's attention. The baby, eyes wide, intent, focused on Mom, and then smiled a big, hearty magical smile. They held eye contact for a while, she cooing, the child smiling. Old and young, the sacred and the profane, two lovely moments of loving in the supermarket.

– *Al Rossiter*

Thursday, First Week of Lent: March 10

The little cares that fretted me.

I lost them yesterday

Among the fields above the sea.

Among the winds at play;

Among the lowing of the herds,

The rustling of the trees,

Among the singing of the birds,

The humming of the bees.

The foolish fears of what might happen,

I cast them all away

Among the clover-scented grass,

Among the new-mown hay;

Among the husking of the corn

Where drowsy poppies nod,

Where ill thoughts die and good are born,

Out in the fields with God.

– Elizabeth Barrett Browning

– *Barbie Hart*

Friday, First Week in Lent: March 11

Tchaikovsky's *Sixth Symphony* was on the program, and I was joining my Russian friends, the Bykovskys, to attend the Friday afternoon Boston Symphony concert. The early pieces on the program were pleasant, and we chatted during the intermission. Then came the featured work. There were the wonderful harmonies of the first two movements followed by the spark and pageantry of the third movement as the full orchestra gave the performance its all. As the timpani sounded their steady, heraldic beat, I felt Tchaikovsky's pride and love for the motherland, and it sparked my own deep feelings for America, the land of my birth.

Completing the Symphony was the fourth movement, full of sadness and longing. Tchaikovsky, the quintessential Russian in the pathos of his life, touched many souls with his music and the chords reverberated down to my toes. In that moment, sitting next to my friends, Russian Jews who had emigrated to the U.S. in the 1990s, I sensed there was a deep stirring within them for the sounds and rhythms of their Russian past. There was a holiness to that moment when we were one – members of the Family of Man.

– Joan Perera

Saturday, First Week in Lent: March 12

This was one of my favorite poems from high school. Since then, whenever something ordinary strikes me in that lovely, extraordinary way, I whisper it under my breath.

“XXII,” by William Carlos Williams (1923)

so much depends
upon

a red wheel
barrow

glazed with rain
water

beside the white
chickens.

– Jennie Cook

Second Sunday in Lent: March 13

Collect

O God, whose glory it is always to have mercy: Be gracious to all who have gone astray from your ways, and bring them again with penitent hearts and steadfast faith to embrace and hold fast the unchangeable truth of your Word, Jesus Christ your Son; who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Monday, Second Week in Lent: March 14

Years ago I read a story by Philip K. Dick, the legendary sci-fi author and philosopher, that sticks with me to this day. In the story, the protagonist is an unethical businessman who ends up on Mars. While there, he crosses paths with one of the much-feared telepathic jackals known to attack and consume human visitors to the planet. As the moment of certain death approaches, the jackal stops and turns to leave. The human, mystified, asks why was he not devoured. The response: Because you are not holy.

I think about the wild kingdom that we are all a part of. So many creatures in all forms, as well as plants, microbes, cells, all battling it out for survival. At the same time, many of these beings demonstrate traits of collaboration, nurturing.. and I'd like to think, by extension... compassion. I reflect on this as a spider crawls along a wall of our basement. For a long time my response would have been to put the spider out of its misery (assuming I catch it). Today I am compelled to gently put it outside on or near a potentially tasty leaf or shelter, wishing Godspeed for this creature I now understand to be holy.

– *Mike Balin*

Tuesday, Second Week in Lent: March 15

Christians, by Maya Angelou

When I say .."I am a Christian"
I'm shouting, "I'm clean livin'."
I'm whispering "I was lost. Now,
I'm found and forgiven."

When I say.. "I am a Christian."
I don't speak of this with pride.
I'm confessing that I stumble
And need Christ to be my guide.

When I say .."I am a Christian"
I'm not trying to be strong.
I'm professing that I'm weak
And need his strength to carry on.

When I say .."I am a Christian"
I'm not bragging of success.
I'm admitting I have failed
And need God to clean my mess.

When I say .."I am a Christian"
I'm not claiming to be perfect.
My flaws are far too visible
But, God believes I am worth it.

When I say .."I am a Christian"
I still feel the sting of pain.
I have my share of heartaches
So I call upon His name.

When I say .."I am a Christian"
I'm not holier than thou,
I'm just a simple sinner
Who received God's good grace, somehow!

– *Isabel Bailey*

Wednesday, Second Week of Lent: March 16

A Grandchild Grows Up

For many of us, one of the great moments in our lives is seeing a new grandchild grow up. We had a granddaughter a year-and-a-half ago.

How quickly we can forget all the little things a child brings to the world. The uninhibited actions, the thrill they exhibit when they experience something new. Perhaps best of all is the elation of watching the child bound across the room laughing all the way. You just have to say a word or make a sound and the laughing does not stop. It is a wondrous moment to watch and there is more holiness in that simple act than can be found in any of the daily actions. Hearing that little voice giggle all the way across the house is a blessing for sure, and though she may not realize it, she brings joy to everyone who sees her in the moment. A simple act exhibits the holiness of God.

– Fred Livingston



What could be more ordinary than seeing my grandson? Ordinary? Not at all. Standing in the open front door of his house in Arlington, he jumped up and down... “Nana, you’re here!” Such a connection, a spark he and I share. I won’t think about the years ahead when, doubtless, I will bore him. No, this is the holy now, and I feel blessed. And shall we play double solitaire together?

– Mimi Collins

Thursday, Second Week in Lent: March 17

Cheeks Rise

Watch, wallet, glasses, “To Do List” in my pocket.

I slip into my old car; it starts right up! We hum down the road to Boston.

It’s a beautiful day, I give thanks to the Lord.

Traffic moves along, then slows, then moves on.

Mile after mile I sink deeper into alpha waves of thought.

We begin to draw toward the Alewife light.

I’m on the lookout. Glancing ahead I study the approaching intersection.

There’s one, there is one! The vigil is complete.

Rolling forward slowly I watch carefully. Will the timing be right? I ponder...

I draw toward him. He draws toward me until I stop.

My arm hangs out the window my hand holds a small amount of money.

I hold fast to the donation. His hand reaches out to take hold.

For a split second, I hesitate. Our eyes meet.

My hand opens, my voice says, “God bless you.”

Cheeks Rise.

“God Bless You.”

– *Dave Marsh*

Friday, Second Week in Lent: March 18

It was a chance to ski at a ski area sitting at the end of the Great Lakes which was known for getting dumped on with glorious amounts of snow. I loved skiing so much that I had brought my ski equipment to college, with no real plan of how to use it. The opportunity came via an invitation from acquaintances, a pair of male hallmates. We were headed to a chalet owned by one of the parents near the ski area. It was the 1970s. There was no internet blasting the weekly/daily/hourly weather forecast. Besides, we were students. I doubt we would have paid attention anyway.

We made our way to the chalet in an increasingly intense snowstorm, arriving by nightfall. By morning, it was clear that we were going nowhere. The snow continued, measuring in feet, not inches. We soon discovered that the mom had left quite a few homemade pies in the freezer. This should have been a wonderful adventure, but all I felt was emptiness and it was overwhelming.

Desperate, I put on all my snow gear and headed out into snowstorm. Wading through the thigh-deep snow provided some relief, but the emptiness stayed. It was deeper than the snow. I trudged on until I met the trunks of two very large trees. I needed a hug. I needed to give a hug. I embraced the trees and felt a flow of energy. In nature, God was there for me. Amen.

– *Karen McLaughlin*

Saturday, Second Week in Lent: March 19

This writing was given to me by a professor when I was in graduate school and I have kept it for many years. It fills me up and centers me.

May the stars carry your sadness away.

May the flowers fill your heart with beauty.

May hope forever wipe away your tears and above all,

May silence make you strong.

– *Becky Patterson*

Third Sunday in Lent: March 20

Collect

Almighty God, you know that we have no power in ourselves to help ourselves: Keep us both outwardly in our bodies and inwardly in our souls, that we may be defended from all adversities which may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Monday, Third Week in Lent: March 21

Oh for a Closer Walk with God

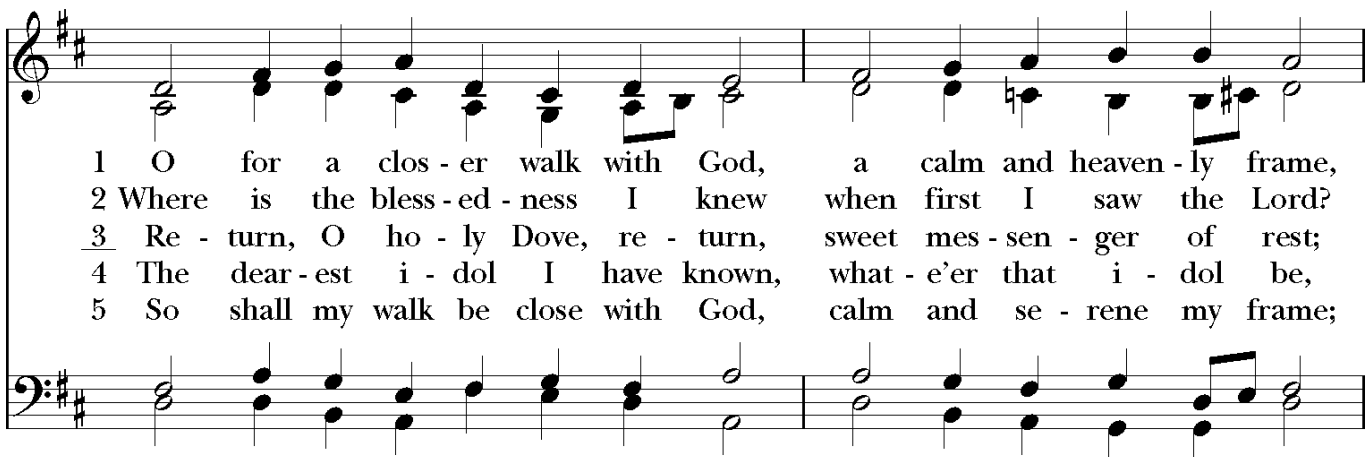
I am walking the dog on my daily morning walk down the road and around the pond. As I begin to plan the day ahead of me, a gentle breeze embraces my face. ----- welcome Holy Spirit.

I come to the pond and I think of John the Baptist baptizing Jesus in the Jordan River. I remember my baptism at about four years old. The font was near an open door that led to a garden that was filled with sunlight. As I started for the door, my mother said, “Barbara, come back!” But the priest said, “Let her go.” As an adult, I remember the Baptismal Covenant. -----“I will with God’s help.”

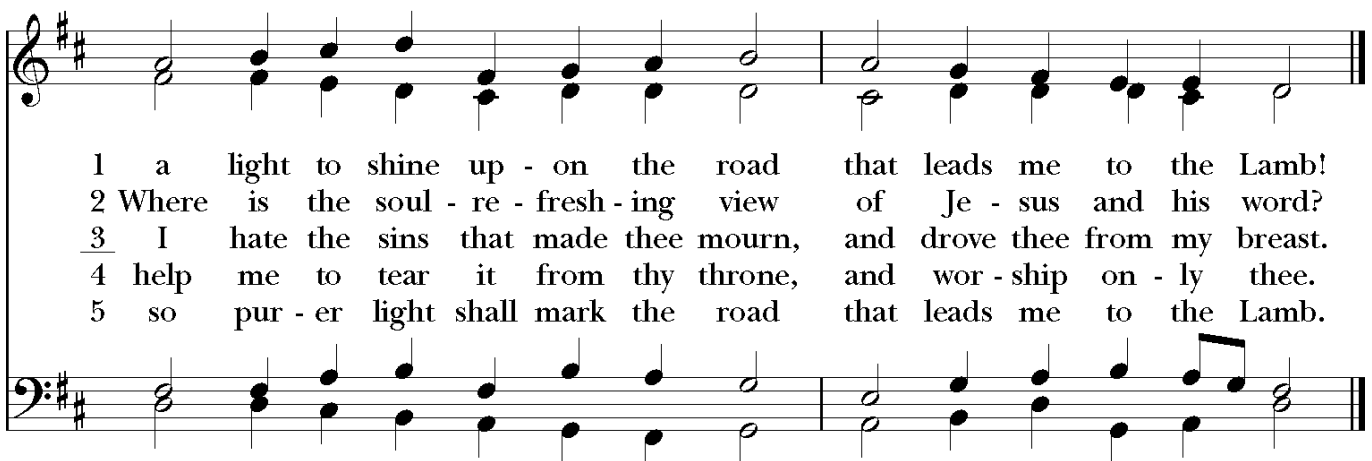
Listen, feel, see, and open your heart in all things. -----God’s Peace.

– Barbie Hart

Hymn #684



1 O for a clos - er walk with God, a calm and heaven - ly frame,
2 Where is the bless - ed - ness I knew when first I saw the Lord?
3 Re - turn, O ho - ly Dove, re - turn, sweet mes - sen - ger of rest;
4 The dear - est i - dol I have known, what - e'er that i - dol be,
5 So shall my walk be close with God, calm and se - rene my frame;



1 a light to shine up - on the road that leads me to the Lamb!
2 Where is the soul - re - fresh - ing view of Je - sus and his word?
3 I hate the sins that made thee mourn, and drove thee from my breast.
4 help me to tear it from thy throne, and wor - ship on - ly thee.
5 so pur - er light shall mark the road that leads me to the Lamb.

Tuesday, Third Week in Lent: March 22

This year again, things seem to be closing in on us from all sides. Scientists repeat dire warnings about the fate of the planet; the pandemic, perhaps finally on the wane, is still with us; American politics continues in turmoil; there may be war in Europe over the Ukraine; and here at home, our own church the building has just been shut down because of, not one, but TWO floods. On top of all this, each of us has our own personal troubles. How are we to persevere?

For me, it has been helpful to keep in mind what I can control and what I cannot. World events are certainly too big for me – even the sprinkler system is beyond my grasp! Of course I can join others in working on the big things, and I think this is a good thing to do. But big worries can distract me from something I think God wants us all to do, every day: treating people with kindness.

I believe that, in all our little daily interactions, we have opportunities to improve things – or not – simply by what we say and do. Even saying an ordinary thing in a friendly tone of voice can make a difference in someone's life, although we may never know it. Does this mean I'm going to sidle up to a cashier at the store and say, with wide eyes and a treacly voice, "How are you... *really?*" What a terrible idea! This is not what either one of us needs at that moment, to say nothing of holding up the line. But I do try to say please and thank you, and look the other person in the eye. Is it enough? Enough for what? For me it is a place to start.

Perhaps Maya Angelou said it best:

People will forget what you said,
people will forget what you did,
but people will never forget
how you made them feel.

– *Jay Lane*

Wednesday, Third Week in Lent: March 23

No one notices her when she enters the bustling wholesale warehouse where she “shops for people.” Her conservative attire and quiet manner allow her to blend in seamlessly among those dashing about with determined expressions, loading staples into their over-sized shopping carts. She lingers in the produce department when she realizes a young Asian woman has been examining the cabbages for what seems an extra-long time. She picks up a cabbage herself. “Do you think these are fresh?” she asks the young woman while slowly rotating the dense-leaved head in her hand. The young woman smiles cautiously and explains in only slightly halting English that she’d prefer Yu Choy but can’t always find it in American stores. They chat pleasantly about food, shopping, and the young woman’s status as a fellowship student at Brandeis University. Before they part, the intrepid “shopper for people” has managed to get the young woman’s contact information and has invited her to Thanksgiving dinner at her house where twelve other college students who are far from home will gather together for food and fellowship.

This very dear “shopper” has nurtured such students for many years. Dozens of foreign young students have benefitted from her gentle guidance as she helps them navigate life in America. She has made countless airport runs, taught novices how to drive (and accompanied them to their driver’s tests), cooked hundreds of meals, found apartments, purchased microwaves, and openly shared a love of Jesus Christ. Her everyday life is holy beyond measure and I am truly blessed to call her my friend.

– *Kathie Dufromont*

Thursday, Third Week in Lent: March 24

I really enjoy starting out many Sunday mornings listening to Krista Tippett's NPR "On Being." The show considers questions such as: What does it mean to be human? How do we want to live our lives? Who will we be to each other?

A recent interview has really stayed with me. Tippett's guest was Trabian Shorters whose bio describes him as "... one of the world's leading social entrepreneurs and the catalyst of a national movement to first define Black people by their aspirations and contributions...". Shorters has developed a concept that he calls "asset framing": we would all benefit by defining all people first by their aspirations and contributions. He noted the pervasiveness of our habit of "deficit framing," that is, we define people who may be in need or face challenges first (and maybe solely) in terms of their problems. He stresses the importance of starting a human relationship by focusing on discovering a person's true self – what is their value in our society?

All of us are quick to apply labels – *disadvantaged, marginalized, impoverished, at-risk* are words that come to mind, and we see/hear these in the media all the time. This narrative focuses on human deficits that need to be fixed. Much philanthropic activity is aimed at defining the worst attributes and challenges and raising money to address these issues. But Shorters suggests that this can be viewed as "denigration for dollars" – while trying to do good, we inadvertently stigmatize or dramatize injustices. This is an unfair way of defining anyone. If we change to an "asset framing" mindset and first consider aspirations and contributions, philanthropy looks more like equity investing – investing in people and potential. Challenges and problems do not go away, but by first focusing on human value, we shift to a more positive and affirming approach to all our fellow citizens.

This framework resonated with me because I'm a financial person – the reference to "asset values" and "equity investing" made sense to me. But also, in the context of our Christian faith and our Lenten theme of "holiness in the ordinary," I believe this simple framework is something that every one of us can try to use every day... and, with that lens, make the world a more positive place.

– Carol Lovell Carmody

The Annunciation of Our Lord: Friday, March 25

“What’re you cooking for supper?” I’d hear over the phone receiver.

Or, “Did you see the front page of the *Globe* this morning? Can you believe it?” my mother would ask, and we’d converse, in appalled tones, about the day’s news.

Her abode for nine years, a small room in a care home for the elderly, was the place from which she viewed the world until her death in 2021. Witty and alert of mind, she was confined only by physical disability.

“I’m trying a new recipe!” I’d reply. Or, “Mama, the air was so fresh and breezy today, I hung the laundry out on the line for the first time since October!”

As the sheets flutter from my hand in the wind, something dissolves. I know I am anywhere and every-where. I know I am connected to something small yet grand. How many women – my ancestors, the ancestors of others all around the world – have felt, in the toil of their day, the breeze lifting the soul as it lifts the linens? Did my mother feel this, too, as she pegged her washing on the line while I played among the fluttering sheets?

All the small wonders of my day – the luminous pungency of the onions I chopped for the soup, the connection with an old friend, the promising feel of the bread dough as I kneaded, the riot of color in the autumn woods, the thrill of first snowfall, the song of peepers in the spring or the thrush in June – all of these became richer and more beautiful as I spoke of them to my mother.

I imagine picking up the phone.

“We had our first tomatoes from the garden today – so delicious! And the zinnias are blooming at last! I’ll bring you some,” I say to her spirit, and the taste, the brilliance, the joy, shine with holiness.

– *Laurel Martin*

Saturday, Third Week in Lent: March 26

Holiness comes wrapped in the ordinary.
There are burning bushes all around you.
Every tree is full of angels
Hidden beauty is waiting
In every crumb.

– Macrina Wiederkerh

All we need to do is to take the time to be aware.

– *M. H. Kitses*

Fourth Sunday in Lent: March 27

Gracious Father, whose blessed Son Jesus Christ came down from heaven to be the true bread which gives life to the world: Evermore give us this bread, that he may live in us, and we in him; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Monday, Fourth Week in Lent: March 28

The meeting of humble and holy often occurs as I put one foot in front of another. In simply walking, my trust in God and myself deepen. In movement, I am free to observe moods come and go, noticing how they resolve on their own... whether the internal weather is buoyant or grave. Even when internal walls crowd me in, my feet keep moving, and over time, the walls fall away.

Setting out on a pilgrimage, whether in beloved Yorkshire or on the rail trail in West Concord, the destination fills my mind – frescoes in a village church, a centuries-old chestnut tree, a gluten-free blondie at Debra's Natural Gourmet. At first, the goal is everything. As the feet warm and expand in my boots, as the rhythm of my breath steadies, as the sun follows its arc overhead, the point narrows – the pebble in the boot, the inner debate as I weigh my thirst against the breaking of stride to take a sip of water, the sky-high exhilaration, my heart quickening as my legs navigate an incline. Anticipation of a far-off moment of arrival evaporates. Awareness fills the present moment as the details of each leaf, each blade of grass come into focus. A pathside memorial to Sky, a border collie who also loved this walk. The scent of sun-warmed hay, the bleating of sheep, the whisper of wind through trees grow to become a song of homecoming. You are loved, you are loved, you are loved.

– *Heidi Stahl*

Tuesday, Fourth Week in Lent: March 29

A Holy Process

Yarn germinates in a basket on the floor
With many colors and textures,
Mixing and combining.
What will it become?

Thinking of someone beloved,
And in need of prayers,
I cast on new stitches
For a new venture

As I knit, the prayers form,
Repeating in my head,
Following the rhythm of my fingers,
With familiar tunes.

Calming, restoring, creating
A piece of my love that comes from above,
Strengthening bonds between us,
Renewing my faith.

– *Nancy Torti*

Wednesday, Fourth Week in Lent: March 30

As a non-practicing Christian, when I hear the word “holy,” my mind first considers “wholly.” What makes me whole, what makes sense of why I am here on this Earth. The two words are more alike than not – can holiness mean that which makes you feel whole?

My youngest, my daughter, turns 18 during this Lent.. on my birthday no less. That many years ago, I invited my mom into the operating room because, 36 years before, she and I had met for the first time. Mom was the first one to hold Phoebe, her only granddaughter. Whole and holy, that day.

Come this September, Phoebe will be off to college, and my house will be kidless. Through the process of applying to schools, she had already left me behind – she researched which schools offered musical theatre majors, made all her audition appointments, filled out the FAFSA – all while working a part-time job, leading three separate school clubs, rehearsing with her theatre group in Maine and performing with them in Atlanta (by herself), running around with her friends, and still managing to sleep until noon. Sure, I’d love it if she put her cups IN the dishwasher instead of on the counter above it... But damn! She really doesn’t need me anymore, does she?

Billions of mothers have raised their children since time began. Motherhood is about as ordinary as we humans can get, I suppose. Yet, our motherhoods sometime feel extraordinary... How do our bodies do this thing?! How can our hearts hold this much love?! How desperately we want just one more day of crawling or needing to be driven to practice?! How stubbornly we deny that we must give them up to what is beyond.

I know this is what God intended; the wholeness I feel from my children is deeply, definitively holy. That so many other mothers feel this too... maybe that’s what makes it holy (or wholly) ordinary.

– Jennie Cook

Thursday, Fourth Week in Lent: March 31

Somebody smart suggested that I think about time in two dimensions. There is regular time going by all the time – *chronos* – that I don't even notice going by. Then occasionally something big happens as a special moment – wow, this moment is really big. And suddenly a different quality of time – *kairos* – has made itself felt. To help me visualize the model, they used *chronos* time as the horizontal arms of the cross, and *kairos* time as the vertical axis.

Church is a place that reminds me that regular time sometimes has that quality of *kairos* to it. It's helpful for me to get a bit of a reminder every week (or so). And church is reminding me using all the tools at its disposal – praying, preaching, singing, movement, communion, candles, color, smells, bells. It's an effective combination.

But what if every moment of time zipping by has the capacity to have the quality of *kairos* in it? Or to be more honest, what if I NOTICED that every moment has that capacity?

I imagine that I could get a lot done with that kind of impetus.

But I doubt that I could maintain that kind of continuous attention. The mental effort sounds exhausting. I envision myself getting hangry at having to sustain the realization.

So, church is giving me periodic reminders that there is a different quality of time available. I'm working on integrating that insight into my daily life.

– Paul Hoffman

Friday, Fourth Week in Lent: April 1

Holiness in the Mundane: Eye Contact

Four years ago, I was struggling with unquenchable pain and spasms running through both my legs from pinched nerves in my lower spine. Consequently, I was forced to use that four-legged gismo called “THE WALKER.” You know, the one you see old folks struggling around with: shuffle, shuffle, slow, slow, too slow to follow.

For months, the shame of having to use this “crutch” to get around was anathema to my “still youthful soul.” Its mere physical presence was “branding me as a cripple” for the first time in my life. Needless to say, whenever trying to enter a building, someone most always would open and keep the door open and wait patiently for me to pass before them inside. I was always so embarrassed, it was impossible for me to make eye contact. That only deepened my pain.

One Sunday, I was struggling for the St. Annes’ front door. A fellow parishioner ahead of me reached it, halted, turned around, and held the door open, patiently watching me, waiting, smiling gently. At that moment, a flicker of grace pricked my mind as my gaze was drawn deeply in this person’s eyes: I felt the Holy Spirit “looking back at me.” Gratitude washed through me in a strangely transformative way.

Holiness from one ordinary glance? Today, no one is my stranger at the door anymore. A gentle, loving “Thank you for your kindness” while smiling deeply into their eyes is my way of passing IT on...

– *Sandy Creighton*

Saturday, Fourth Week in Lent: April 2

Jesus nurtured His Disciples.

A task is something that lifts another's spirits:

Making supper/taking it to someone

Buying roll of cookie dough for granddaughter to bake on snowy day

Writing note to friend on beautiful note paper/ mailing it

Emailing nature photo to group of friends

At mail hut asking neighbor, "How are you? Have you and your family survived these 21 months?"

Collating alumni news

Zooming with kids weekly

Taking book to granddaughter and baby

Card with chocolate inside to each neighbor

Making cookies/sharing with neighbors

Picking up mail for neighbor recovering from surgery

Nurturing yourself:

Buying new paperback

Ordering new flannel sheets

Take out from favorite restaurant

Surprise Gift:

Son texting from New Hampshire, coming down to give me a hug!

– Wendy Paton

Fifth Sunday in Lent: April 3

Collect

Almighty God, you alone can bring into order the unruly wills and affections of sinners: Grant your people grace to love what you command and desire what you promise; that, among the swift and varied changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed where true joys are to be found; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Monday, Fifth Week in Lent: April 4

The problem with church is that it's just so ordinary. Schedule the committee meeting. Buy the flowers. Tape down the microphone cable. It's too cold. It's too hot. The floor is squeaking. A car just went by on 126.

Church is constantly getting in the way of my efforts to get that holy feeling.

Holy is arriving at the mountaintop. Holy is the moment after that perfect chord resolution. Holy is awakening from the dream vision. Holy is that blood thrill of feeling inspired. Holy is that elevated level to be sought.

But... I find that for all its ordinary routine, church is also making outlandish claims about my life. I am a child of God. Wha...? What if I lived as if that were true? Instead of continually searching for some sign of holiness, what if I lived as if my life is already holy?

Make my actual lived reality holy. Now there's a project.

– *Paul Hoffman*



“I believe that appreciation is a holy thing, that when we look for what's best in the person we happen to be with at the moment, we're doing what God does. So, in loving and appreciating our neighbor, we're participating in something truly sacred.” – Fred Rogers

Lord God, whomever you bring into our path today, may we see Christ in them and may they see Christ in us, for your love's sake. Amen. – “A Pilgrim's Prayer”

– *Tricia Crockett*

Tuesday, Fifth Week in Lent: April 5

View the World as a Toddler

I live close to an elementary school and enjoy watching young children walking to school with Mom and older siblings. The toddlers always stop to examine all small items along the way. It could be a stone, stick, or a flower. Often, Mom has to have a look. Appreciating the little things means slow down, stop, observe. Poet Mary Oliver always put this practice into beautiful words.

Song of the Builders

On a summer morning
I sat down
on a hillside
to think about God---

a worthy pastime.
Near me, I saw
a single cricket;
it was moving the grains of the hillside

this way and that way.
How great was its energy,
how humble its effort.
Let us hope

it will always be like this,
each of us going on
in our inexplicable ways
building the universe.

– *Suzanne Stimpson*

Wednesday, Fifth Week in Lent: April 6

Last October I visited my sister in Florida. We had fun reminiscing and doing crossword puzzles from the *Palm Beach Post*. Because I was there over a weekend, I hoped to watch the Buccaneers football game to see how New England's hero, Tom Brady, was doing with his new team.

We watched the game, and it was evident that Brady was settling in nicely with Tampa Bay Buccaneers. At some point, during one of the time-outs, I was aware of Tom Brady walking towards the stands. The camera crew zoned in on #12 as he approached the section where a father and his 8- or 9-year-old son were sitting. As Brady came closer, the father moved forward, his son close by his side. There appeared to be a short conversation with the father, and then as Brady was leaving, he leaned over, said something to the boy, and patted him on the shoulder. Then Brady returned to the field. The camera remained focused on the stands where the boy, dressed in his #12 football jersey, was unsuccessfully holding back tears. In that instant, we, the fans, were watching a boy whose dream had come true – to meet the great Tom Brady. I watched the father gently place his hand on the boy's arm, and the gaze of love he directed towards his son was the second gift of the special encounter.

– *Joan Perera*

Thursday, Fifth Week in Lent: April 7

Hope

I was smack in the middle of the pandemic, feeling low and exhausted at the end of a short winter's day. It was January 2, 2021, a little after four o'clock. This was just an ordinary Thursday at dusk, the daylight fading. I was driving the habitual forty minutes back home from a family visit. Almost home to isolation at the end of the commute.

A patch of river came into view as I stopped for a traffic light before the last turn toward the big hill and home. The water suddenly called to me to take a moment of refreshment... to drive to the opposite side of the river, get out of the car into the very cold air and the fading light, and see the river close up. I walked through the woods down a short path to a new, long, wooden narrow dock to give me access to the river. Or better said, to be out at the end of the dock surrounded by ice in the marshy flats near the shore, in among the slightly swaying tall cattail reeds frozen in the ice. I could just make out the delicate traces of footprints giving evidence of local water birds' habitat. I was grateful to be surrounded by mystery and beauty in two minutes, no longer alone. Even in the cold I was filled with a feeling of comfort. In such a short time I had found a fascinating expansive haven for renewal.

Staying a little longer and braced by the chill breeze, I looked beyond the ice to the center of the river and some open water, colored somber gray and sparkles of silver. The day was on the wane, just about to shut down.

Then suddenly, mid-way along the river, a narrow path of orange and gold brilliance broke through and crossed the water and ice coming toward me. Its source, the setting sun, gave off explosions of pale yellow light, streaming low along the sky, peeking out from under the ominous dark gray clouds and through dark, lacy, tall trees on the western horizon. A thrill of H O P E for the year to come literally shivered through me. I stood staring as it flooded me with joy and energy. "I have this image to spark joy in my days going forward. I can keep going," I thought.

The promise of an unexpected sunset is sacred ~ a kind of magic ~ centered now in my heart.

– *Carole Enright*

Friday, Fifth Week in Lent: April 8

One of my favorite books is *Joshua* by Joseph F. Girzone. I think I've read it at least five times and learn something new each time.

A few years back I was dealing with some of life's stresses. While on a walk with my dog, Lucy, I noticed that the place in Acton where we frequently take our walks has a beautiful meadow. I was reminded of a passage from the book:

"When you are sad, walk out into the meadow, and on the upper meadow you will find Jesus. He will meet you there. Talk to him and let him guide you."

I looked across the meadow and found the point with the highest elevation, and this has become "the upper meadow." For three years now, whenever I walk by this point I stop, look out across the meadow, take a deep breath, and pray to Jesus, "Please guide me and show me the right path."

The meadow is a rather ordinary piece of nature, and I am thrilled to have this small yet holy place for a quick prayer. I have found *holiness in the ordinary* and encourage you to find an ordinary place in nature to send a prayer to our Lord.

– Gary Poisson

Saturday, Fifth Week in Lent: April 9

Choir asana

Primary practice:

Breathe in, brief pause, breathe out Tallis, pause.

Breathe in, brief pause, breathe out Sanford, pause.

Breathe in, brief pause, breathe out Hurd, pause.

Preparatory exercise - find robe, exchange gossip.

– Paul Hoffman

The Sunday of the Passion: Palm Sunday, April 10

Collect

Almighty and everliving God, in your tender love for the human race you sent your Son our Savior Jesus Christ to take upon him our nature, and to suffer death upon the cross, giving us the example of his great humility: Mercifully grant that we may walk in the way of his suffering, and also share in his resurrection; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Monday in Holy Week: April 12

The Sacred and the Propane

Every time I drive to the Cape on the Southeast Expressway, I love to pass by the Boston Gas Tank, the large white storage tank painted in huge swathes of vibrant rainbow colors. If you look quickly enough, you can spy the artist's signature: Corita.

Sister Mary Corita Kent (1918-1986) was an artist and Roman Catholic nun for most of her life. She was part of the Pop Art movement of the 60s in America. Many of her colorful pieces juxtapose images from popular culture and the language of advertising with the message of the Gospel, helping us to see the sacred in the everyday, ordinary things of life.

One of her series features "Wonder Bread," the ubiquitous white bread with its packages covered in red, blue, and yellow dots. By combining these dots with the words of poetry and Scripture, she performs a modern miracle of transubstantiation: the dots become the round wafers of Holy Communion, the real "Wonder Bread." Likewise, she uses an advertisement for a local car salesman, "See the Man Who Can Save You the Most," to point to Jesus in day-glow colors.

In college, I can remember sitting in the dorm room of a friend. On the wall was a Sister Corita print of a yellow apple with these words: "Guard me, O Lord, as the apple of your eye." (Psalm 17:8). Thirty years later, that friend and I went to see a retrospective of Corita Kent at the Harvard Art Museums. I continue to be inspired by her art to see holiness in the ordinary and God's presence in the world around me.

– Kay Peterson

Tuesday in Holy Week: April 13

"Doing the Dishes" by Gunilla Norris

My life will always have dirty dishes.
If this sink can become
a place of contemplation,
let me learn constancy here.

I gaze through the window above the sink.
There I see the constancy of dawn,
the constancy of dusk,
the constancy of the seasons,
of the sun and moon,
and the rotation of the planets.

Your love is discerned by repetition.
Turn and return me to Your love.
Let my fitful human constancy
be strengthened in the willing,
wheeling wonder of Your stars.

– *Laurel Martin*

Wednesday in Holy Week: April 13

Holiness in the Humbling

Recently I was making a textile. Alternating six- to eight-inch bands of hand-painted cotton with a commercial rayon print would make a back for a tunic. I had carefully hand-basted the bands together into the whole before I sat down at the sewing machine to permanently join them with a decorative stitch.

The first three bands smoothly went together. Feeling relaxed and certain, I began to run the stitching more rapidly as I joined the fourth band. Three-quarters of the way through, I became aware of a greater bulk of cloth below the machine needle. I had made a “rookie mistake” – something my first semester design students might have done – fabric from another part of the textile had found its way under the needle. Now I had about nine inches of the opposite corner stitched to the seam joining the bands.

There was nothing to do but carefully, gently, slowly rip out the stitches. And because it was decorative stitching, there were a lot of extra bits of thread to undo.

Stepping away from the machine, armed with my most delicate seam ripper, I found a sunny spot in my studio and began the meticulous task. It became a meditative interlude. Focused on the repetition of undoing, stitch by stitch, being careful not to rip the more delicate rayon, I reflected on the humility I was feeling. In the holy repetition, the holy care, the holy attention, it was a moment of sudden grace.

– Lise Stahl Brown

Maundy Thursday, April 14

Purpose

To admire the rosebud
pink, wrapped tight round itself;

to note the hellebore cup
opening mottled inside its grapevine ring;

to answer chickadee and finch
with handfuls of seed on the stone post;

to breathe steam rising from a mug of tea
and sip, bathing mouth and throat with honeyed heat;

to smell the orange-oily peel as it curls,
drying white, quick -- and

to give thanks
as you pass me the good heavy half.

– Deborah Howe

Good Friday, April 15

My husband, Bill, had been ill for nearly two years: cancer. Now he was dying, the final ordinary, extraordinary, holy moments. We didn't talk about what was happening, that his breath was becoming more shallow. All I knew was that I would lie beside him and hold his hand forever, the forever that remained to us.

But something was stopping him, preventing his last breath. Was it our daughter, Caitlin's, presence? He couldn't leave her? She had been on the other side of the room for a long time. Unspeaking, she turned and went out onto the front deck. Silence. I said to him, "She's outside. She's not here. If you must, if you want, if you need... you can go."

He drew one more breath, that suspension that could not be recalled or traversed, an arc of life finally passing away.

That was all.

– *Mimi Collins*



Here, dying for the world, the world's life hung,
Laving a world's sin in that deathly tide;
That downbent head raised earth above the stars:
O timeless wonder! Life, because One died.

Alcuin of York, 735-804
The Oxford Book of Prayer

– *CJ Coppersmith*

Holy Saturday, April 16

Hymn #416: For the Beauty of the Earth

1 For the beau - ty of the earth, for the beau - ty of the skies,
2 For the beau - ty of each hour of the day and of the night,
3 For the joy of ear and eye, for the heart and mind's de - light,
4 For the joy of hu-man love, bro-ther, sis - ter, par - ent, child,
5 For the Church which ev - er - more lift - eth ho - ly hands a - bove,

1 for the love which from our birth o - ver and a - round us lies,
2 hill and vale, and tree and flower, sun and moon, and stars of light,
3 for the mys - tic har - mo - ny link - ing sense to sound and sight,
4 friends on earth, and friends a - bove, for all gen - tle thoughts and mild,
5 of - fering up on ev - ery shore thy pure sac - ri - fice of love,

Refrain

Christ our God, to thee we raise this our hymn of grate-ful praise.

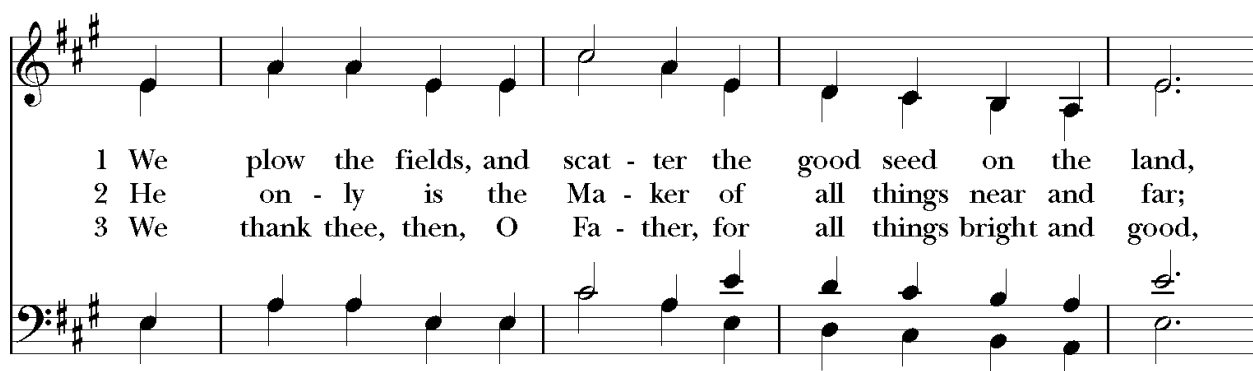
6 For each perfect gift of thine
to the world so freely given,
faith and hope and love divine,
peace on earth and joy in heaven,

Refrain

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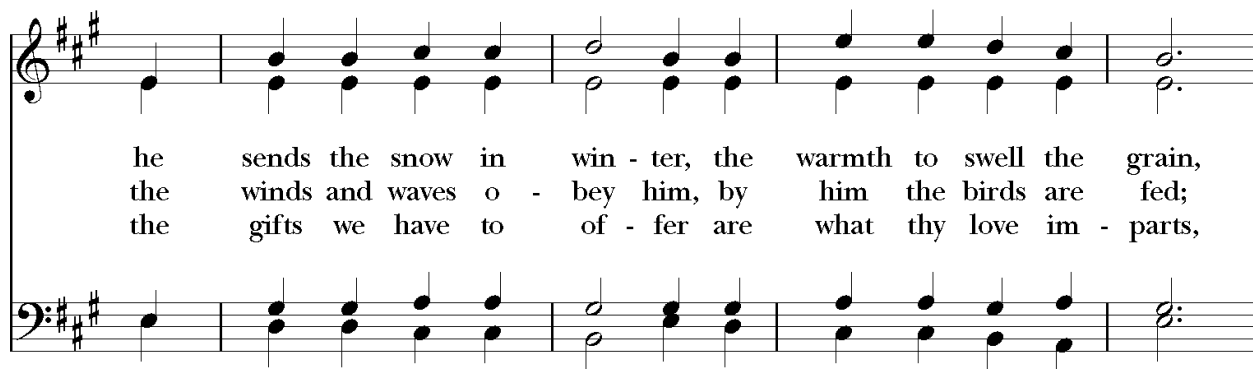
Hymn #291



1 We plow the fields, and scat - ter the good seed on the land,
2 He on - ly is the Ma - ker of all things near and far;
3 We thank thee, then, O Fa - ther, for all things bright and good,



but it is fed and wa - tered by God's al - might - y hand;
he paints the way - side flow - er, he lights the eve - ning star;
the seed - time and the har - vest, our life, our health, our food:



he sends the snow in win - ter, the warmth to swell the grain,
the winds and waves o - bey him, by him the birds are fed;
the gifts we have to of - fer are what thy love im - parts,



the breez - es and the sun - shine, and soft re - fresh - ing rain.
much more to us, his chil - dren, he gives our dai - ly bread.
but chief - ly thou de - sir - est our hum - ble thank - ful hearts.



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