

**First Congregational  
Church  
United Church of Christ  
Canandaigua, New York**



**Lenten Devotions  
2023**

## **Ash Wednesday – February 22, 2023**

Two nights ago, I knelt and took the ashes from the fireplace. It was some time before I saw evidence of the smudge of ash upon my face. I washed it quickly away.

Last night I knelt and took the bread and dipped it in the cup, and then I felt the cool smooth finger of ash upon my forehead, asked from last year's palms saved for this holy time. I wondered if there might still be some remnant of Hosanna! lingering in the ashes.

All evening long I wore the ash, that holy ash, and when others saw the smudge, I wondered if they were inclined to wipe it clean or to lean closer in the hope of hearing some soft Hosanna! burning still in ash or heart...

~ Kneeling in Jerusalem  
Ann Weems

## **Thursday – February 23, 2023**

*Submitted by Carla DeMeco*

Out of the depths I call to you, Lord:  
Lord hear my cry!  
May your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy.  
If you, Lord, keep account of sins,  
Lord who can stand?  
But with you is forgiveness  
and so you are revered.  
I wait for the Lord,  
my soul waits and I hope for his word.  
My soul looks for the Lord  
more than sentinels for daybreak.  
More than sentinels for daybreak,  
let Israel hope in the Lord,  
For with the Lord is mercy,  
with him is plenteous redemption,  
And he will redeem Israel  
from all its sins.

~ Psalm 130

**Friday – February 24, 2023**

*Submitted by Carolyn Hotchkiss*

**HOLD GOD’S HAND**

*I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. ISAIAH 41:10 (NIV)*

Read this verse, then close your eyes and imagine God taking your hand. He is with you; He knows the unknown and will help you face any upcoming challenges. He longs to keep company with you, to walk beside you, holding you up when you need strength and guiding you when your faith wavers.

Prayer:

Loving Father, thank You, for guiding me through uncertain times.

From a reading *60 days of Prayer*

**Saturday – February 25, 2023**

*Submitted by Mickey Ely*

**Excerpts from Howard Thurman's Meditation:  
Thank God for Humor!**

There is in every human relationship and in every private life some place for humor, for the sparkle in the water of life. It is easy to understand the reason for much of the tension that engulfs us . . . that life is taking out all its grievances upon us. If this is our mood, there is no antidote quite like a central chuckle of the spirit.

Humor may not be laughter, it may not even be a smile; it is primarily a point of view, an attitude towards experience – a tangent. It requires a certain quality of objectivity – the inspired ability to step aside and see one's self go by . . . The merry music of the humorous spirit means that fear is in rout, that there is deep understanding of the process of life and an expansive faith which advises that because life is its own restraint, life can be trusted.

~ Howard Thurman's 1953 book,  
MEDITATIONS OF THE HEART

## **Sunday – February 26, 2023**

*Submitted by Jay Garrett-Larsen*

### **Afterwards**

She told her granddaughter the whole.  
harrowing story, glossing over nothing,  
not just the lives lost, and the jobs,  
but also, how it seemed like  
the world went dim  
when they lost dancing and singing  
when the theaters and stadiums  
and concert halls closed down,  
when the school playgrounds went silent.  
We never forgot, she assured the girl,  
what a hug feels like.  
We never stopped wanting that.

*But Grandma, the girl asked, how  
did you make it through?  
It wasn't easy, the woman replied,  
But at some point we decided  
we were more attached to living  
than to our old ideas about  
the way things were supposed to be.*

Lynn Ungar

## **Monday – February 27, 2023**

*Submitted by Lin Case*

Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God.

And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

~ Romans 5: 1-5

**Tuesday – February 28, 2023**

*Submitted by Laurie Stoutz*

You never really know the true impact you have on those around you. You never know how much someone needed that smile you gave them, You never know how much your kindness turned someone's entire life around, You never know how much someone needed that long or deep talk.  
So don't wait to be kind.

~ Nikki Banas

## **Wednesday – March 1, 2023**

"While I dance I cannot judge,  
I cannot hate,  
I cannot separate myself from life.  
I can only be joyful and whole.  
That is why I dance."

~ Quote from Hans Bos

## **Thursday – March 2, 2023**

*Submitted by Kelly Meath*

Every year at this time I reread "Anne of Green Gables" by L.L. Montgomery. I have done this since I was given the book at the age of 10. For some reason, reading about Anne and her philosophy of life has always filled me with hope and happiness. At this time of year, when winter seems like it will never end and spring feels like it will never come, I gain comfort from seeing the first Robin, the Snow Drops from my Grandmother's garden starting to bloom and the ever so slight warming of the breeze that ruffles my dogs' coats as we go for our daily walk. Spring is my favorite time of year.

After all, *"Nothing ever seems impossible in spring, you know"*. Such a lovely idea for all of us to hold on to. Quote from Anne of Green Gables by L.L. Montgomery

**Friday – March 3, 2023**  
*Submitted by Jean Landis*

A blessing is a circle of light drawn around a person to  
protect, heal and strengthen.

John O'Donohue

**Saturday – March 4, 2023**

*Submitted by Marty Daniels*

We chase the melodies that seem to find us  
until they're finished songs and start to play  
when senseless acts of tragedy remind us that  
nothing here is promised, not one day...We  
rise and fall, and light from dying embers,  
remembrances that hope and love last longer  
and love is love is love is love is love is love is  
love is love cannot be killed or swept aside.

~ Lin-Manuel Miranda

**Sunday – March 5, 2023**  
*Submitted by Jay Garrett-Larsen*

"Today begins a new year. The date on the calendar does not matter. The earth starts every morning on its year-long journey round the sun as truly as the first day of January, and each new dawn is therefore a fresh opportunity to begin right. It is for us to determine what the year shall be. The demand upon us is not that we succeed, but only that we try; and to try fully every day and all day long, is to inevitably to gain in the end a supreme success."

~ Author not attributed,  
from a card sent by a friend

**Monday – March 6, 2023**

*Submitted by Linda Whalen*

Everyone should be quick to listen,  
slow to speak, and slower to anger.

~ James 1:19

**Tuesday – March 7, 2023**

*Submitted by Heidi Schwarz*

What we have once enjoyed we can never lose.  
All that we love deeply becomes a part of us.

~ Helen Keller

## **Wednesday – March 8, 2023**

*Submitted by Debbie Lyon*

Desmond Tutu spent his life fighting injustice, maintaining a genuine sense of hope and joy, and inspiring a new generation to do the same. May you find the following quotes from his brave, compassionate life to be inspirational this Lenten season.

“If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor. If an elephant has its foot on the tail of a mouse, and you say that you are neutral, the mouse will not appreciate your neutrality.” “Do your little bit of good where you are; it is those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world.”

“Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all of the darkness.” “Discovering more joy does not save us from the inevitability of hardship and heartbreak. In fact, we may cry more easily, but we will laugh more easily too. Perhaps we are just more alive. Yet as we discover more joy, we can face suffering in a way that ennobles rather than embitters. We have hardship without becoming hard. We have heartbreaks without being broken.”

“If you are setting out to be joyful you are not going to end up being joyful. You’re going to find yourself turned in on yourself. It’s like a flower. You open, you blossom, really because of other people. And I think some suffering, maybe even intense suffering, is a necessary ingredient for life, certainly for developing compassion.”

*Continued...*

“Despair can come from deep grief, but it can also be a defense against the risks of bitter disappointment and shattering heartbreak. Resignation and cynicism are easier, more self-soothing postures that do not require raw vulnerability and tragic risk of hope. To choose hope is to step firmly forward into the howling wind, baring one’s chest to the elements, knowing that, in time, the storm will pass.”

**Friday – March 9, 2023**

*Submitted by Cathy Brooks*

I need to remember and rely on the God of my understanding as I pursue all of my daily activities. How comforting for me is the concept that God works in and through people. As I pause in my day, do I recall specific concrete examples of God's presence? Am I amazed and uplifted by the number of times this power is evident? I am overwhelmed with gratitude for this omnipotent force. The essence of my spirituality rests on this round-the-clock faith in a Higher Power.

~ From Daily Reflections  
meditation book, January 19

**Friday – March 10, 2023**

*Submitted by Dave Pierce*

“Ring the bells that still can ring  
Forget your perfect offering  
There is a crack in everything  
That's how the light gets in.”

~ **Leonard Cohen**

## **Saturday – March 11, 2023**

Submitted by Lynne Peffley

My Lenten Prayer Cube: “Fasting from ...”

Many years ago at an Ash Wednesday service, my pastor gave everyone in attendance a wooden Prayer Cube to be used as a spiritual practice throughout Lent. Printed on each of the 6 sides there is a “Fasting From ...” suggestion. Since Lent is almost 6 weeks in length, you have one side of the cube to focus on each week. I have used my cube several times over the years to guide my journey through Lent.

**Fast from Complaining:** It is hard not to fall into a cycle of complaining to release steam. And, while venting can help you move forward, unnecessary complaining can overtake “airtime” in your brain. Instead of complaining, recall moments of joy in your day. Be grateful for the people and good things in your life!

**Fast from Discouragement:** Remember Jesus’ promise that He has a perfect plan for you. Though it may not be on your timeline or what you expect, be thankful for Jesus’ steadfast presence. It is hard to be discouraged with a thankful heart!

**Fast from Resentment and Bitterness:** Holding on to resentment and/or bitterness poisons our souls. It stirs negative emotions which only have a negative impact on our lives. We may feel that holding resentments gives us superiority, power or control but it merely binds our hearts and results in blocking God’s powerful work of restoring relationships. Work on forgiving those who have hurt you.

*Continued...*

Fast from Judging Others: Passing judgment on others can become so second nature to us that it can run rampant through our day and lives. We must stop thinking we can know the intentions of another's heart- what he says or what she does. Only God can know the heart. Before judging, recall how Jesus overlooks our faults.

Fast from Anger : Anger is a powerful emotion. It is okay to feel anger and acknowledge it but, acting upon it can lead to bad decisions, damaged relationships, stress and even physical sickness. We must recognize our anger and work to get it out in a safe way.

Refocusing on practicing gratefulness can help. Start with being grateful for your family and those around you and give them an extra dose of love every day!

Fast from Overspending: It can become too easy to spend money on items which are not necessities. Try reducing your spending by 10% for a given amount of time and give those savings to people in need.

## **Sunday – March 12, 2023**

*Submitted by Lorena Garmezy*

Now we cannot...discover our failure to keep God's law except by trying our very hardest (and then failing). Unless we really try, whatever we say there will always be at the back of our minds the idea that if we try harder next time we shall succeed in being completely good. Thus, in one sense, the road back to God is a road of moral effort, of trying harder and harder. But in another sense it is not trying that is ever going to bring us home. All this trying leads up to the vital moment at which you turn to God and say, 'You must do this. I can't.'

~ C.S. Lewis

## **Monday - March 13, 2023**

*Submitted by Nancy Ward*

If I were the trees....

I would turn my leaves to gold and scatter them toward the sky so they would circle about your head and fall in piles at your feet... so you might know wonder.

If I were the mountains...

I would crumble down and lift you up so you could see all of my secret places, where the rivers flow and the animals run wild... so you might know freedom.

If I were the ocean...

I would raise you onto my gentle waves and carry you across the seas to swim with the whales and the dolphins in the moonlit waters, so you might know peace.

If I were the stars...

I would sparkle like never before and fall from the sky as gentle rain, so that you would always look towards heaven and know that you can reach the stars.

If I were the moon...

I would scoop you up and sail you through the sky and show you the Earth below in all its wonder and beauty, so you might know that all the Earth is at your command.

*Continued...*

If I were the sun...

I would warm and glow like never before and light the sky with orange and pink, so you would gaze upward and always know the glory of heaven.

But I am me...

and since I am the one who loves you, I will wrap you in my arms and kiss you and love you with all of my heart, and this I will do until...

the mountains crumble down...

and the oceans dry up...

and the stars fall from the sky...

and the sun and moon burn out...

And that is forever.

~ Love Forever  
by Joni Buehner

**Tuesday - March 14, 2023**

*Submitted by Carla DeMeco*

Jesus, please help me to lay aside my past regrets and longings for the things that have already faded away. Let me find contentment in the present and hope for the future. Guide me into the future in accordance with Your will. Amen

~ “A Daily Devotional:  
3 - Minute Devotions for Women”

## **Wednesday – March 15, 2023**

*Submitted by Karen DeMay*

Because at the end of the day, the right people fight for you. The right people show up. The right people care, not only when life is convenient, but when it is difficult and messy and it aches all over.

~ Bianca Sparacino

## **Thursday – March 16, 2023**

*Submitted by Karen Noonan*

Do not look forward to what may happen tomorrow; the same everlasting Father who cares for you today will take care of you tomorrow and every day. Either He will shield you from suffering, or He will give you unfailing strength to bear it. Be at peace, then, put aside all anxious thoughts and imaginations, and say continually: “The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart has trusted in Him, and I am helped. He is not only with me but in me and I in Him.”

~ St. Francis deSales

**Friday - March 17, 2023**

*Submitted by Colleen Pierce*

**ST. PATRICK'S BREAST PLATE**

Christ be with me,

Christ be within me,

Christ behind me,  
Christ before me,

Christ beside me,  
Christ to win me,

Christ to comfort me,  
Christ above me,

Christ in quiet,  
Christ in danger

Christ in hearts  
of all that love me

Christ in mouth of friend  
and stranger.

~ St. Patrick  
5th century Irish cleric

**Saturday – March 18, 2023**

*Submitted by Linda Orrell-Fair*

You cannot get through a single day  
without having an impact  
on the world around you.  
What you do makes a difference  
and you have to decide  
what kind of differences  
you want to make.

~ Jane Goodall

**Sunday – March 19, 2023**

*Submitted by Nancy Ward*

From Despair to Victory

I stood on the brink of the chasm,  
The dark waters swirled at my feet,  
The burden I bore was so heavy,  
There was nothing ahead but defeat.

But a light shone above through the darkness,  
Strong arms loosed my burden and lo,  
It fell in the depths of the chasm,  
Swirled away in the waters below.

I was given strong wings like the eagle  
And flew high o'er that chasm within,  
Underneath were the arms of my Savior,  
And His loving care brought me in.

~ Grace Belle Davison

**Monday – March 20, 2023**  
*Submitted by Kathy Ward*

We can't control the winds,  
But we can adjust the sails.

~ Unknown

## **Tuesday – March 21, 2023**

*Submitted by Amy Ogden*

“Write it on your heart  
that every day is the best day in the year.  
He is rich who owns the day, and no one owns the day  
who allows it to be invaded with fret and anxiety.

Finish every day and be done with it.  
You have done what you could.  
Some blunders and absurdities, no doubt crept in.  
Forget them as soon as you can,  
tomorrow is a new day;  
begin it well and serenely,  
with too high a spirit to be cumbered  
with your old nonsense.

This new day is too dear,  
with its hopes and invitations,  
to waste a moment on the yesterdays.”

## Wednesday – March 22, 2023

*Submitted by Elaine Hilton*

O God, we pray this day:  
for all who have a song they cannot sing,  
for all who have a burden they cannot bear  
for all who live in chains they cannot break,  
for all who wander homeless and cannot return,  
for those who are sick and for those who tend them,  
for those who wait for loved ones and wait in vain,  
for those who live in hunger  
and for those who will not share their bread,  
for those who are misunderstood,  
and for those who misunderstand,  
for those who are captives and for those who are  
captors,  
for those whose words of love are locked within their  
hearts  
and for those who yearn to hear those words.

Have mercy upon these, O God.

Have mercy upon us all.

~ Ann Weems

## **Thursday – March 23, 2023**

*Submitted by Linda Orrell-Fair*

O tested soul, perhaps the Lord is sending you through this trial to develop your gifts. You have some gifts that would never have been discovered if not for trials. Do you know that your faith never appears as great in the warm summer weather as it does during a cold winter? Your love is all too often like a firefly, showing very little light except when surrounded by darkness.

And hope is like the stars – unseen in the sunshine of prosperity and only discovered during a night of adversity. Afflictions are often the dark settings God uses to mount the jewels of His children's gifts, causing them to shine even brighter.

~ Taken from *Streams in the Desert*.  
A daily devotional by L.B. Cowman.  
Updated by James Reimann

**Friday – March 24, 2023**  
*Submitted by Molly & Curt Bailey*

May you know that absence is full of tender presence,  
and that nothing is ever lost or forgotten.

May the absences in your life be full of eternal echo.

May you sense around you a secret elsewhere which  
holds the presences that have left your life.

May you be generous in your embrace of loss.

May the sore well of grief turn into a well of seamless  
presence.

May your compassion reach out to the ones we never  
hear from and may you have the courage to speak out  
for the excluded ones.

May you become the gracious and passionate subject  
of your own life.

May you not disrespect your mystery through brittle  
words, or false belonging.

May you be embraced by God in whom dawn and  
twilight are one, and may your belonging inhabit its  
deepest dreams within the shelter of the great  
belonging.

~ A Blessing by John O'Donohue

## **Saturday – March 25, 2023**

*Submitted by Molly & Curt Bailey*

May you be blessed in the holy names of those who carry our pain up the mountain of transfiguration.  
May you know the tender shelter and healing blessing when you are called to stand in the place of pain.  
May the places of darkness within you be turned towards the light.  
May you be granted the wisdom to avoid false resistance and when suffering knocks on the door of your life, may you be able to glimpse its hidden gift.  
May you be able to see the fruits of suffering.  
May memory bless and shelter you with the hard-earned light of past travail, may this give you confidence and trust.  
May a window of light always surprise you.  
May the grace of transfiguration heal your wounds.  
May you know that even though the storm a rage yet not a hair of your head will be harmed.

~ A Blessing by John O'Donohue

**Sunday – March 26, 2023**

*Submitted by Denise Morphy*

**How Deep the Father's Love for Us**

How deep the Father's love for us  
How vast beyond all measure  
That He should give His only Son  
To make a wretch His treasure  
How great the pain of searing loss  
The Father turns His face away  
As wounds which mar the Chosen One  
Bring many sons to glory  
Behold the man upon a cross  
My sin upon His shoulders  
Ashamed, I hear my mocking voice  
Call out among the scoffers  
It was my sin that held Him there  
Until it was accomplished  
His dying breath has brought me life  
I know that it is finished  
I will not boast in anything  
No gifts, no power, no wisdom  
But I will boast in Jesus Christ  
His death and resurrection  
Why should I gain from His reward?  
I cannot give an answer  
But this I know with all my heart  
His wounds have paid my ransom

~ By Stuart Townend

## **Monday – March 27, 2023**

*Submitted by Carol Benner*

"Blessed are those who trust in the Lord,  
whose trust is the Lord".

- Jeremiah 17:7

Today I resolve to give up my attempts to control life. Instead, I agree with life. I trust that Spirit is in and through all things. Rather than resist or judge what appears before me, I have confidence in divine order and the absolute goodness of God.

I take a deep breath and feel Spirit's presence filling me with calming assurance. I begin to relax as I slowly release my grasp on things outside of my control and touch the fullness of my faith and the depths of my courage. Suddenly I find myself at ease and untroubled.

Freed from the illusion of control, I channel my energy into meeting my responsibilities and find my power in cocreating with the Divine. I let go and let God, moving through life with ease and purpose.

~ From the Daily Word

**Tuesday – March 28, 2023**

*Submitted by Dave Pierce*

**ON SILENCE AND LISTENING**

Better to remain silent and be thought a fool than to  
speak and remove all doubts.

~ Abraham Lincoln

Silence is the best answer to the unwise.

~African Proverb

Speech is Silver  
Silence is Golden

~Winston Churchill

I never learned anything when I was talking.

~Larry King

The answers you seek never come  
when the mind is busy  
They come when the mind is still,  
when silence speaks loudest

~ Leon Brown

## **Wednesday – March 29, 2023**

*Submitted by Colleen Pierce*

### **The King Who Came**

For centuries Israel had awaited the coming of their King. But this King did not look as they would have expected.

- Kings rode on horses. This King rode on a donkey.
- Kings were adorned in royal apparel. This King wore the clothes of a humble peasant.
- Kings were accompanied by an entourage of fighting men. This King rode in alone, followed only by a few friends.
- Kings had many servants. This King served many.
- Kings ruled over the people. This King ministered to the people.
- Kings feasted on sumptuous foods prepared for them. This King multiplied fish and loaves to feed others.
- Kings wore crowns of gold and precious gems. This King soon wore a crown of thorns.
- Kings made loud proclamations and the people were silent. This King stood silent when the people yelled, “Crucify Him.”
- Kings were protected at all costs. This King soon gave His life paying the cost of all sin.

~ <https://reasonsforhopejesus.com>

**Thursday – March 30, 2023**

*Submitted by Kathy Ward*

When you can't control what is happening,  
Take control of the way you respond to what is  
happening, for that is where your POWER IS.

~ Attribution Unknown

**Friday – March 31, 2023**  
*Submitted by Karen Noonan*

Disturb us, Lord, when  
We are too well pleased with ourselves,  
When our dreams have come true  
Because we have dreamed too little,  
When we arrived safely  
Because we sailed too close to the shore.

Disturb us, Lord, when  
With the abundance of things we possess  
We have lost our thirst  
For the waters of life;  
Having fallen in love with life,  
We have ceased to dream of eternity  
And in our efforts to build a new earth,  
We have allowed our vision  
Of the new Heaven to dim.

Disturb us, Lord, to dare more boldly,  
To venture on wider seas  
Where storms will show your mastery;  
Where losing sight of land,  
We shall find the stars.

We ask You to push back  
The horizons of our hopes;  
And to push into the future  
In strength, courage, hope, and love.

~ Attributed to Sir Francis Drake - 1577

## **Saturday – April 1, 2023**

*Submitted by Lynne Peffley*

This is an inspirational story that has been around for many years. The author is unknown. I first came across it when looking for an opening devotional to use at a Deacons' meeting and I have read it as a personal devotion many times over. I find that this is a fitting reflective piece for Lent.

### **Bruised Apples**

A group of salespeople went to a regional convention. They had assured their spouses and significant others that they would be home for Friday night's dinner. Well, as such things go, one thing led to another, and the final meeting lasted longer than anticipated.

The group raced to the airport trying to catch their flight. With tickets and briefcases in hand, they barged through the terminal intently focused on reaching the boarding area. In their haste, one of them inadvertently knocked into a table which held a display of baskets of apples. Apples flew everywhere. Without stopping or looking back, they all managed to reach the plane for their nearly missed boarding. All but one, that is. One man paused and took a deep breath as a twinge of compassion for the girl whose apple stand had been overturned overtook him. He told his companions to go on without him and asked one of them to call his wife and explain that he would be taking a later flight.

Returning to the terminal area, he saw the apples were still all over the floor and the young woman, with tears running down her cheeks in frustration, was helplessly groping for her spilled produce. It was then that the man realized that the young woman was blind! People swirled all around her, but none stopped or cared about her plight.

*Continued...*

The salesman knelt on the floor and said, “Here, let me help.” He gathered up the apples, put them into the baskets and helped reset the display. As he did this, he noticed that many of the apples had become battered and bruised; these he set aside in another basket. When he had finished, he pulled out his wallet and said to the young woman, “Here, please take this money for the damage we did. Are you okay? I hope we didn’t spoil your day too badly.”

As the man started to walk away, the bewildered blind girl called out to him, “Mister...” He paused and turned to look back at her. She continued, “Are you Jesus?”

The man thought about her question and finally said, “No, I am nothing like Jesus—He is good, kind, caring, loving and would never have been so self-absorbed as to carelessly bump into your display in the first place.”

The young woman gently nodded. “I only asked because I prayed for Jesus to help me gather my apples and He sent you to help me. Thank you for hearing his call.”

Slowly, the man made his way to catch the later flight with the girl’s question—“Are you Jesus?”--burning and bouncing about in his soul.

Do people mistake you for Jesus? Do you listen for His call and answer with action? That’s our destiny, is it not? To be so much like Jesus that people cannot tell the difference as we live and interact with a world that is blind to His love, life and grace. We, who claim to know Him, should live, walk and act as He would.

We are the apples of His eye even though we, too, have been bruised by a fall. Jesus stopped what He was doing and picked you and me up on a hill called Calvary and paid in full for our damaged fruit.

Let us live like we are worth the price He paid.

**Palm Sunday – April 2, 2023**

*Submitted by Sue Reh*

“Adopt the pace of nature;  
her secret is patience.”

~ Ralph Waldo Emerson

## Monday – April 3, 2023

*Submitted by Tarry Shipley*

For the beauty of the earth,  
For the beauty of the skies,  
Hill and vale, and tree and flower,  
Sun and moon and stars of light.

There are so many times when I glance outside, with wonder at the beauty of nature. Whether it is the new buds waiting to burst out in the spring, the full greenery and blossoms in the summer, the wonderful deep variety of color in the fall, even the sparkling of fresh snow in winter on the branches and fields, it is all a special gift. But it is so much more than nature, it is the gift of sight, smell and hearing; that our bodies are created to see this, to take in the soft aromas of buds and blossoms, to hear the rustle of the wind, and songs of birds.

FOR THE JOY OF EAR AND EYE,  
For the heart and mind's delight,  
FOR THE MYSTIC HARMONY LINKING SENSE  
TO SOUND AND SIGHT.

We are so blessed to be here, in the Finger Lakes, where the abundance of nature, through the changing seasons, brings us so much. Always, we have the beauty of the hillsides and the changing moods of the lake. And we have the convenience of transportation to expand our horizons.

Lord of all, to thee we raise,  
This our hymn of grateful praise.

**Tuesday – April 4, 2023**

*Submitted by Sue Geraci*

“Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.”

~ Viktor Frankl

**Wednesday April 5, 2023**

*Submitted by Debbie Wilbur*

“Unless there is  
Good Friday in your  
Life, there can be no  
Easter Sunday.”

~ Fulton Sheen

## Maundy Thursday – April 6, 2023

Lord of every pilgrim heart,  
may I journey with You today  
remembering those who plotted against You;  
who betrayed You;  
who shared the Passover with You;  
who argued with You about who came first with God;  
who denied You;  
who left You alone;  
who arrested You;  
who denied You again;  
who beat You and mocked You –  
that my own life may again  
be propelled to a deeper understanding  
of the One who hold us all,  
through Your surprising Spirit,  
alive in our midst.

~Iona Dawn, Through Holy Week  
with The Iona Community  
ed. Neil Paynter

## Good Friday – April 7, 2023

What I know is that this blessing will begin as soon as you set out.

That this blessing will meet you in every step.

That it is gladly bound to you and cannot do without you.

That you are part of the path this blessing makes: that it creates a way not only for you but through you and I you, that it finds its road as you find yours.

I can hardly fathom how it is that this blessing is already waiting for you even as you fashion it, step by faltering step.

But there it is, in all its wending mystery.

So may you meet it with courage. May you enter it with clarity. May you walk it with wisdom. May you travel it with joy.

May you come to it not as one buffeted by chance but as one who has chosen. Uncertain, perhaps; unready, perhaps; but this path. This one. With abandon. *This.*

*~ Circle of Grace  
by Jan Richardson*

## **Holy Saturday – April 8, 2023**

*Submitted by Rev. Dawn Garrett-Larsen*

Buried deep in cold dark earth.  
Like a pebble, only not.  
Rocks never were alive, I was  
Once vibrant and full of life.  
Where does it go, the beauty, the energy?  
What happened? Why do I lie alone?  
I remember the kiss of sun on my face,  
The caresses of the wind, the rain like tears  
Then growing old, the ending, the dying.  
I lie alone, in the frosty earth,  
Hoping and waiting.

This is not all! It cannot be.  
I long for renewal, for transformation.  
Into my cold existence comes warmth.  
Something stirs within.  
No longer lifeless or alone, I  
I tentatively push on the cold dark walls  
The crusty tomb cracks and crumbles.  
Elation, I see the light once more!  
I reach for the sky, unfurling  
Purple petals, a Lenten lesson...  
in resurrection joy.

## **Easter Sunday – April 9, 2023**

O God, Who cracks open the seed, the soil, and even the grave and brings forth life, we praise you for your wondrous touch;

Who stretches the daylight, warm the air, melt the dark and cold in us, we praise you for your healing touch;

Who sets animals frolicking, birds singing, hearts laughing, we praise you for your renewing touch.

This day we bring to you everything – in us, in our lives, in our world – that is still in winter’s cold and barren grip or under death’s dark shadow.

Word your wonder there. Let patience and strength take root in hard and barren ground. Let hope bud where none seems possible. Let passion and courage for what is right flower among us.

Let life rise out of the deadness of empty hearts and broken places. God of this day, work your “Easter wonder on us, even as you raise your Christ.

All praise be yours. Alleluia! Amen.