



Hawai`i District UMC

2026 Lenten Booklet

GREETINGS FROM THE DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT

Aloha and a blessed Lenten season to you. We are so blessed to be able to present this devotional guide to you for this special season of reflection, meditation, and discipline. It is a wonderful and diverse collection of perspectives of faith from different members of our Hawaii District ohana. We are grateful to our devotional guide editor, Judy Cramer, whose vision and hard work have made this wonderful work possible. We are also grateful to all of the authors who contributed a devotional.

We are living in complicated times. Social upheaval and global unrest are causes for concern. At times like this, people of faith who look within deeply often receive insight and wisdom that are so helpful and necessary for the living of these days.

May this Lenten Season be one in which the Holy Spirit will come into each of our lives in a special way!

Grace and aloha,

DS Tom Choi

February 18 — Isaiah 58:1-12

"to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them and not to hide yourself from your own kin?"

-Isaiah 58:12

As we begin Lent, I am struck by how the prophet Isaiah speaks about people who trumpet their piety and yet oppress others.

The events of senseless violence and oppressive practices in Minnesota and other places have been appalling, but perhaps more of a concern, have become commonplace and even normalized, including by those who are uplifted as faithful Christians or if questionably so, uplifted as the instruments of God's will.

It is difficult to watch these events. It flies in the face of the prophet's words: "to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke...."

That is my challenge for us all this Lent, that we may embody the words of Isaiah, where...

[We] shall raise up the foundations of many generations; [we] shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in. - Isaiah 58:12.

My hope is that we will learn the true meaning of Scripture, and know that it is not a vehicle for addressing personal grievances or prejudices, but a call to transformative mission and the dawning of a new era of peace, understanding, and joyful relationship.

Prayer: God of the sacred journey: please abide with us as we invite the true Prince of Peace into our hearts, minds, and souls during this Lenten Season and beyond. In Jesus's name. Amen.

February 19 — Psalm 51

"...Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your holy spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit..." -Psalm 51:11-12

I remember reading Psalm 51 often when I was in high school, returning to it again and again, even when I didn't yet have the language for why it stayed with me. Over time, I've come to imagine David curled in on himself, overwhelmed by shame, hopelessness, and despair because of what he had done, despite a lifetime of knowing God's presence and faithfulness. He does not minimize his sin or explain it away. Instead, he throws himself entirely upon God's steadfast love.

David understands who God is: righteous, just, and especially attentive to those who have suffered injustice, like Uriah, whose life David took to cover up his wrongdoing. God is not a deity to be taken lightly. God is to be feared. And yet, David still cries out. Not because he deserves mercy, but because he knows only God can absolve him. There is no self-forgiveness here, no bargaining, only a raw confession and a fragile hope rooted in grace.

I relate deeply to this prayer. There are times when I, too, feel I have strayed too far, despite God's faithfulness in my life. Psalm 51 echoes a timeless human cry for the divine, reaching out for hope in the midst of our broken condition. This Lent, I am remembering to hold fast to God's steadfast love.

Prayer: Merciful God, we come before you with open hearts, aware of our sin and our deep need for your grace. Wash us thoroughly, speak truth into our hidden places, and create in us hearts that are ready to be renewed. When shame and discouragement weigh heavy upon us, remind us that your steadfast love is greater than our failure. Lead us through this Lenten season trusting not in ourselves, but in your mercy. Amen.

February 20 — Romans 1: 8-17

"For I long to see you so that I may share with you some spiritual gift so that you may be strengthened—or rather so that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine." -Romans 1:11-12

Paul offers a beautiful picture of mutually beneficial spirituality. He longs to visit the believers in Rome to strengthen them through spiritual gifts, but he is equally expectant to be encouraged by them as well. Healthy relationships are never one-sided. They thrive on give and take, on shared encouragement, and on mutual edification.

I have prayed that my husband and I could experience this kind of relationship with another couple. As a clergy couple, finding people whose faith, personality, and affections align is a challenge. You probably know the feeling. You simply click with some people and sometimes your spouse clicks with someone, but both of you connecting with another couple feels rare.

God provided that gift for us. We now meet regularly with another clergy couple to share our life, ministry, struggles and prayers. Because they walk a similar vocational path, there is a deeper understanding of the unique joys and challenges ministry brings. Most importantly, we are encouraged by one another's faith, just as Paul described.

Connection is not optional; it is essential. I pray that you may recognize the value of building relationships that are mutually strengthening. And when God places those people in your life, lean in and invest in it.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the gift of encouragement through one another. Teach us to give and receive support with humility and gratitude, and to invest in the connections you place in our lives. Amen.

February 21 — Matthew 18:1-7

"At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" He called a little child to him, and placed the child among them. And he said: "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me. "If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea. Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to stumble! Such things must come, but woe to the person through whom they come!" -Matthew 18:1-7

Today is my husband, Don's 91st birthday. He now spends his days asleep resting in bed or sitting in a wheelchair under hospice care. Most days, his mind resembles that of a small child. I think, what a tender place to return to after serving most of his life pastoring and serving others. When I retell a story from the past he smiles in recognition. These moments spent with him are deeply joyful as he prepares to meet Jesus face to face.

In response to who is the greatest, Jesus challenges us to become child-like embracing qualities such as innocence, trust, and humility. During this Lenten season may we clothe ourselves with these same qualities. Let us also reflect on how our actions might influence others. Are we lifting others up with our words and deeds, or are we causing them to respond negatively? Let us approach interactions with empathy and understanding, always mindful of the impact we have on those we encounter. We should strive to follow Jesus's teachings and treat others with the respect and dignity they deserve no matter who or how they are.

Prayer: Gracious and merciful God, enter our lives and help us to be more childlike choosing trust and humility over position and power. Transform us to be more like Jesus. Amen.

February 22 — Romans 5:12-19

“Therefore just as one man’s trespass led to condemnation for all, so one man’s act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all. For just as through the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so through the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous.”

-Romans 5:18-19

When I finally get a break or a few quiet minutes, I tell myself, “I’m going to rest”. But often, I end up “doom scrolling” (mindlessly moving from post to post on social media). Instead of feeling refreshed, I feel heavier. The more I compare my life to what I see on a screen, the easier it is to miss the blessings God has already placed right in front of me.

Romans 5:12–19 reminds us that sin entered the world through Adam not only as disobedience, but as a broken way of seeing ourselves, others, and even God. Sadly, comparison is part of that brokenness. It quietly convinces us that we are not enough. But Paul points us to a deeper truth: where sin increases, grace overflows through Jesus Christ.

Lent invites us all to slow down, repent, and realign our hearts. It’s a season to stop striving and start receiving. In Christ, I am freed from comparison and grounded again in grace and gratitude.

Prayer: Gracious God, forgive me for the ways comparison blinds me to Your gifts. Help me see Your grace clearly and live with a thankful heart. Amen.

February 23 — Psalm 32

“Therefore let all who are faithful offer prayer to you; at a time of distress, the rush of mighty waters shall not reach them. You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with glad cries of deliverance. Selah.”

-Psalm 32:6-7

TRAUMA...a piercing, intense, life changing tragedy... The relentless pain is there physically, emotionally and spiritually. The profound grief continues to be tormenting at times. Remembering and reliving the event causes anguish, heartache, insomnia and dread.....and I cry and cry until there are no more tears. The hurt and despair manifests in symptoms spontaneously out of nowhere. Life will never be the same. Clinical studies have demonstrated that our emotions and thoughts resulting from tragic and traumatic life events can directly affect our physical and mental well being and change us.... at the cellular level. When our spirits and soul are deeply troubled it shows up in how we feel, how we act, how we think, what we say and what we do.

God created our entire being....our bodies, minds and souls. I don’t think our human body and spirits were designed to handle tragedy and trauma by ourselves. Both our bones and our souls are not indestructible. Remembering to reach out to God to help us is critical to survive. For me, He has and continues to gently lift my spirits and comfort my soul; and there are moments I feel joy and peace.....through His grace.

Prayer: Dear Mother-Father God, You alone who created every creature on earth knows us, loves us and lives in us. Let us not forget to reach out to you in times of tragedy and trauma to allow you to help us heal. Amen.

February 24 — Hebrews 4:14-16

"Since, then, we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

As I write this, the Acts of Repentance Task Force, of which I am a part, just presented to the bishops and of the Western Jurisdiction on the history of Hawai'i, the illegal overthrow on January 17, 1838, and the lasting impacts on the Hawaiian people. I think about my great-grandmother and so many others of her generation who struggled in school because they did not speak English. She was forced to nationalize and become "American." She was prohibited from speaking her native language, was taught only U.S. history, and allowed to sing only U.S. patriotic songs. Born in the Kingdom of Hawai'i, she was a child at the time of the overthrow and grew up through the insurgents' Provincial Government, Republic of Hawai'i, the illegal Territory of Hawai'i, and the eventual illegal Statehood imposed by the U.S. Government that had a treaty with our Kingdom.

I also think about Queen Lili'uokalani, our last reigning monarch, who faithfully believed the goodness of God and the U.S. government, trusting they would restore justice to her and her people. Yet even while falsely imprisoned in her own palace, she forgave those who wronged her and her people. Nevertheless, we too must cling to what we know to be true and not lose faith. Through all my trials and tribulations, I believe that God is in control, and that all things will be made right in His time.

Our nation, our church, and the people of Hawai'i are deeply divided. Perhaps God is waiting for us to work through and let go of all the junk, to be in the right place to receive all the goodness and blessings that He so desires for us. I am thankful to have such a magnificent King-Priest, who knows me in all my frailties and ugliness, and yet still loves me beyond what words could ever describe.

Prayer: Thank you, God for being that magnificent King-Priest that treasures me so much who welcomes me just as I am. Create in me a clean heart to pave the way to receive every blessing and goodness that You so patiently are waiting to lavish upon me. Amen.

Becky Choi
Parker UMC

February 25—Matthew 18:10-14

"Be careful that you don't look down on one of these little ones. I say to you that their angels in heaven are always looking into the face of my Father who is in heaven. What do you think? If someone had one hundred sheep and one of them wandered off, wouldn't he leave the ninety-nine on the hillsides and go in search for the one that wandered off? If he finds it, I assure you that he is happier about having that one sheep than about the ninety-nine who didn't wander off. In the same way, my Father who is in heaven doesn't want to lose one of these little ones."

Looking down on someone can happen much more easily than we imagine. It can happen in many different ways: ignoring them, judging them, not caring for them. We might judge them for not having the type of strong Christian faith that we have but in reality, by refusing to care enough or value enough, we may be demonstrating our own lack of Christian faith.

At first reading I thought that I was among the ninety-nine sheep, safe on the hillside and that someone else was the one that wandered off. But by not caring enough to call on an ailing church member or offering a ride to someone because I would have to travel out of my way, I was the one who is astray, the one who has wandered off from God's great commandment to love our neighbor as yourself.

How blessed are we that God loves us so much that God will strive to reconnect with us. Maybe we got lost unintentionally. God doesn't make any judgment on our wandering. A lost sheep is a lost sheep, and it needs finding. God loves us beyond anything we can imagine and God will find us and welcome us back without judgment.

Prayer: Loving and gracious God, You are my source of strength and hope. All things are possible through You. I will place my hope in You. Even when I wander away from You, You find me and lead me back for my future is found in You. You make my life secure. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Grace Omura
Aiea UMC

February 26 — Psalm 121

*The LORD will keep you from all evil;
he will keep your life.*

*The LORD will keep
your going out and your coming in
from this time on and forevermore.*

-Psalm 121:7-8

After more than two years since the wildfires in Lahaina, I thank God for blessing me with this experience. Some may say, "How can you say that? You lost your family home. Much of your family's treasures and mementos were burnt beyond recognition. You almost lost your life!"

But, I continue to praise God for bringing my brother, sister-in-law and myself through this. I have come to realize that God uses our experiences, whether good, or bad, to shape us into the people that God wants us to be. It was at the Walk to Emmaus retreat, only a couple of weeks after our ordeal with the wildfires, and I was at my lowest, spiritually, when God used this experience to lift me up and show me how much God loves me. I felt God's love so strongly that I was in tears.

Since then, I have drawn closer to God, have strengthened my relationship with God and have learned more about myself and the gifts that God has given me. I have learned how to talk to God through centering prayer and "hear" what God wants me to do and how God will assist me with tasks. I have been able to talk to people about God's amazing love and how God's grace has allowed me to be at places and do things that have brought honor and glory to God. God has definitely watched over my coming and going and I continue to look forward to other exciting paths that God has in store for me. It can be that way for you too. Like me, you just have to "Let go and let God..."

Prayer: Dear God, thank you for always watching over us. Help us to recognize Your love and grace all around us, and use us for Your glory. Amen.

*Judy Cramer
Parker UMC*

February 27 — Micah 7:18-20

*"Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity
and passing over the transgression
of the remnant of his possession?*

*He does not retain his anger forever
because he delights in showing steadfast love."*

-Micah 7:18

My weekly women's prayer group meeting on Thursdays at 6:30pm, is one that I don't like to miss. It is what keeps me grounded and enables me to keep going despite life's challenges. So on Wednesday night, our son, JR, texted me, "Mom, I'm coming to be with my Dad on his birthday. Can you pick me up at 4:43pm on Thursday?" I was so excited then shot back, "Sure thing, Juni!" He texted back to say that he'll call when the plane touches down.

Well, 4:43pm came and went while I anxiously wait. He didn't call until 5:30pm. Those of us who are caregivers know the hustle that goes on in getting ready to go somewhere. However, God was my helper, so me and my charge were able to get on the road pretty quickly. The long and short of it was, I crossed a few solid lines and picked up JR from the airport, then dropped him off at home and made it to church in one piece at 6:40pm. I shouted out loud, "Thank you, Jesus!"

The prophet, Micah, in this particular passage, speaks about God's merciful nature. God chooses to forgive and forget all our shortcomings and wrongdoings, because His unfailing love for us is greater than anything that we can possibly fathom. The most popular and powerful hymn in our Tongan hymnal says, "Lord, your love is like the deepest ocean" which reminds me of the kind of love that the prophet spoke about. People can vouch for God's mercy in any language and in any situation. He is there to offer His love and mercy unconditionally.

Prayer: We thank you, Creator God, for loving us so freely, even though we may not deserve it. Please forgive us. Amen.

*Tupou Seini Kelemen
First UMC of Honolulu*

February 28 — Timothy 1:3-7

"I am grateful to God—whom I worship with a clear conscience, as my ancestors did—when I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. Recalling your tears, I long to see you so that I may be filled with joy. I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, lives in you. For this reason I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands, for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline."

In this scripture, Paul thanks God for Timothy and his family. We learn that Timothy's faith is passed down from his grandmother Lois and mother Eunice and now is instilled within him. He is reminded that God provides the spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline. With that, we should not fear since God did not give us a spirit of cowardice.

As for my faith journey, I grew up at Wahiawa United Methodist Church as my faith was passed down from my grandparents and family. I inherited this faith from my family, and I am blessed to have God's spirit within me. I thank God for with this gift God provides, I am able to live boldly and not fear. For this is my foundation of where my faith began.

In my faith journey, I have been able to share God's love through United Women in Faith. The many motherly mentors in my life have helped to continue to nurture and remind me of God's power, love and self-control that have allowed me to continue and work in the lives of others. May we all be motherly mentors and share God's love with future generations.

Prayer: May you and your family continue to learn and feel God's presence in your everyday life, knowing that he gives you the power, love and self-discipline to face challenges and fears. During these times of uncertainties in the world today, remember that his spirit inside of you is greater than anything that comes against you. Do not walk in fear, but walk in God's power, love and self-discipline. Amen.

Nicole Nonies
Wahiawa UMC

March 1 — John 3: 1-17

"Jesus answered him, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above." -John 3:3

During the Korean War, my grandfather fled northern Korea with my grandmother and their infant children to the southern coastal city of Busan, including a 26-hour boat escape. As refugees escaping toward safety, my grandfather was found with his family in one hand and a Bible-hymnal in the other. Christian missionaries were so moved by his courage and faith, that, from then, they bore witness to the work and wondrous miracles of G-d through him and many others through Korea. They witnessed miraculous healing of the sick and sudden gifts of knowledge, like how my illiterate and uneducated grandmother's desire to read the Bible was answered through a dream!

The Pharisee, Nicodemus, recognized that G-d was with Jesus through his work and miracles. Jesus rejoices with Nicodemus in saying, "No one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above," (John 3:3) but Nicodemus doesn't understand it. Nicodemus thinks Jesus is talking about an elusive moment of rebirth, yet Jesus is trying to assure Nicodemus that he can recognize G-d's power because he is already born of the Spirit!

There are many like Nicodemus around us who see G-d at work, but don't realize they're already born from above. Like newborn babies, they don't realize this new wonderful reality of the world, and they need people like you to help see that the miracles of G-d are already at work in them!

Prayer: Loving G-d, Who sent Your Son to save it, give us the joy and eyes to see Your Spirit working in those around us, that we too may rejoice in Your loving and redemptive miracles at work! Amen!

Rev. Won-Seok Yuh
First UMC of Honolulu

March 2 — Psalm 128

*Happy is everyone who fears the LORD,
who walks in his ways.
You shall eat the fruit of the labor of your hands;
you shall be happy, and it shall go well with you.
Your wife will be like a fruitful vine
within your house;
your children will be like olive shoots
around your table.
Thus shall the man be blessed
who fears the Lord.
The Lord bless you from Zion.
May you see the prosperity of Jerusalem
all the days of your life.
May you see your children's children.
Peace be upon Israel!*

I selected this scripture during these times when our world so needs to find peace and love. The verse reminds us that when God's divine purpose becomes our focus, living in reverence to God leads to a life filled with His blessings. My wish is for all to have God-centered relationships with their community, their family and others which reflect the joy, spirit and power of God's love.

How do our daily actions and decisions reflect God's character or bring glory to His name? We all are part of that larger community, and pray that our combined actions result in peace.

Prayer: Dear Lord, draw near to us, we need Your presence and pray for Your coming. You hear our cries and know the sorrow of our people. Lord, if it is Your will, please raise up a body of believers who can walk beside us in this struggle, who will pray and fight with us. We pray for our leaders and all those in authority, that they will see Your light. Point us toward Your peace, Father. Open our eyes to the ways You are blessing us, Father. Thank You for Your promise to be near all who are suffering. Amen.

March 3 — Isaiah 65:17–25

*For I am about to create new heavens
and a new earth;
the former things shall not be remembered
or come to mind.
But be glad and rejoice forever
in what I am creating,
for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy
and its people as a delight.
I will rejoice in Jerusalem
and delight in my people;
no more shall the sound of weeping be heard in it
or the cry of distress.
-Isaiah 65:17-19*

Have you ever stepped onto a soggy lawn after days of rain and thought we might be wet forever, only to look back a week later and see everything lush and green? Isaiah's vision of "new heavens and a new earth" carries such hope. The Hebrew word often translated as "new" is *chadash* (*hādāsh*), which can emphasize renewal or restoration rather than something entirely novel. God isn't throwing creation away and starting over; God is restoring what is already here, mending what is fractured, and breathing life back into weary ground. Isaiah imagines a world without weeping, where homes are secure, work bears fruit, and even former enemies live at peace. It is a picture of *shalom* — life as God always intended it. For people in exile, this promise was defiant hope amid despair. For us, it is a Lenten invitation to trust that God is still renewing our lives and our world. Where do you feel worn thin or barren? Those may be the very places God longs to water. Even now, new growth is pushing up through the mud.

Prayer: Gracious God of renewal, restore what is weary in us and make us partners in your healing work. Amen.

March 4 — Ezekiel 36:22-32

"A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you, and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you and make you follow my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances. Then you shall live in the land that I gave to your ancestors, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God."

-Ezekiel 36:26-28

Ezekiel speaks to a people in exile, displaced, ashamed, and painfully aware of how far they have fallen. Lent begins in that same honest space. We acknowledge our sin, our failures, our human frailty, and the ways we fall short of who God calls us to be. Yet this passage reminds us that confession is never the end of the story.

2025 was a difficult year for many. We saw much needed institutions, services, and whole agencies become tenuous. Many days, as I read the news, I find myself wondering when God's justice will arrive, when the voiceless will be heard and when those most affected by injustice will matter to the powers that be. Ezekiel's words speak directly into that longing. God declares that divine justice will be revealed not only to those who know God, but before the whole world. God's righteousness is not hidden, delayed, or indifferent to suffering.

Even in exile, God promises restoration: gathering the people, returning them to their land, and providing what they need. Grain will be plentiful, trees will bear fruit, and shame will give way to sustenance and life. This is not survival alone, it is the promise of thriving.

God will cleanse what is broken, remove hearts of stone, and give hearts of flesh. This Lent, as we confess our brokenness, we also cling to hope. God's love will be revealed in our lives and in the world. Even now, God is at work.

Prayer: Gracious and righteous God, in a weary world we come to you longing for your justice, mercy, and peace. Cleanse our hearts, remove what has grown hard within us, and give us hearts of flesh that are open to your Spirit. When we grow discouraged by what we see around us, help us to trust that you are still at work, restoring, providing, and making all things new. Strengthen us this Lenten season to walk faithfully with you, holding fast to your steadfast love and living as people of hope. Amen.

March 5 — Psalm 95

*"O come, let us sing to the LORD;
let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!
Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving;
let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!" -Psalm 95:1-2*

Singing praises seems to be God's favorite form of prayer. Musical terms are mentioned in the bible more than 1150 times. The Bible invites us to sing to the Lord, come into God's presence with singing, and enter God's courts in song. We sing because singing is what the people of God do in God's presence. According to Martin Luther, "next to the word of God, the art of music is the greatest treasure in the world."

Music can be vocal, instrumental, or any kind of sound that has rhythm, melody, or harmony. Most times we associate the word music with sounds made by human, but have you thought about God's gifts of music in nature? - the call of the orca, the noisy mynah birds, and the sound of the nene goose to name a few. George Santayana, a poet/philosopher and naturalist said, "The earth has music for those who listen. If we open our eyes and ears, and listen to the world that surrounds us, we can truly appreciate the music the earth is making."

Music speaks to us when our words fail. Music is a universal gift. Its power to connect people is without question. Music helps us speak words we can't always express. It feeds your spirit. Music is very spiritual, it has the power to bring people together.

I've been a fan of John Denver and he quoted, "No matter what language we speak, what color we are, the form of our politics or the expression of our love and our faith, music proves: We are the same!"

Joy, in its fuller, spiritual meaning, expresses God's goodness to us and gives us deep-rooted happiness. To modify a quote from Pastor John Pavlovitz, "What have you seen or experienced that has sustained you and given you joy over the past months? What is worth celebrating right now?" Joy and music go hand in hand!

Prayer: God: you are our strength and our song, and you have become our salvation! We thank you for the music of the world that brings such JOY to our souls! Amen.

March 6 — Exodus 16:9-21

"This is what the LORD has commanded: Gather as much of it as each of you needs, an omer per person according to the number of persons, all providing for those in their own tents." The Israelites did so, some gathering more, some less. But when they measured it with an omer, those who gathered much had nothing over, and those who gathered little had no shortage; they gathered as much as each of them needed."

-Exodus 16:16-18

In this passage, the people of Israel are tired, hungry, and unsure about the road ahead. And right there in the wilderness, God provides manna — not all at once, not for the future, but just enough for each day. That feels like a Lenten word for us.

Lent reminds us that we don't have to carry everything at once. We don't have to solve the whole future today. God meets us in the present moment, offering daily grace for daily needs.

Some gathered more, some gathered less — but in the end, everyone had enough. That's a quiet but powerful reminder that God's care isn't about excess, but about sufficiency. Not abundance for storage, but trust for today.

As we journey through Lent, maybe the invitation is simple: to release our need to hoard control, certainty, and worry — and instead learn to trust God for today's portion of strength, hope, and peace.

Not tomorrow's manna - just today's. And today, that is enough.

Prayer: Loving God, teach us to release our worries about tomorrow and to receive Your care for today. May Your daily manna give us strength, peace, and hope. Help us to live this day trusting that You are already enough. Amen.

March 7— Ephesians 2:11-22

"So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near, for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then, you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone; in him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God." -Ephesians 2:17-22

Sometimes it's hard to believe that we've been staring at the same kinds of arguments and divisions for as long as people have been people. Even in church, we have had the same kinds of fights and drama for 2000 years! Paul tells the church in Ephesus that the redemptive work of Jesus's death and resurrection mean that one does not have to be or become Jewish (e.g. be circumcised) to be saved, but that we are all one family of God in Christ.

I was watching The Lion King 2: Simba's Pride with my four-year-old daughter the other day, and the plot of the movie revolves around the separation of the lions of Pride Rock and "the outsiders" who had been banished by Simba before the movie begins. At the end of the film, Simba's daughter Kiara said to her father, "Them? Us? Look at them. They are us." As we consider who we are this Lent, I hope we can find this same impulse toward unity —not at the cost of the vulnerable and marginalized—because there is only "us," and we rise and fall and are saved together.

Prayer: God-of-all-of-us, grant me the open heart to consider all your children as members of my own family, and allow your love to flow through me, that I may love them as you do even when we disagree. Amen.

March 8 — Romans 5:1-11

"For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us. Much more surely, therefore, since we have now been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation." -Romans 5:6-11

Why did I select these verses... I asked myself as I thought about my reflection on this scripture. How does one express deep gratitude to YHWH, our Creator God, who provides a way for us to experience life to its fullest? I am unworthy with my attitude of pride, arrogance and disobedience. I must remind myself that it is for this sinful nature that our Gracious God, through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, gave us a way out (or a way up, if you will). Our Heavenly Father lifts us out of the muck, washes us clean, and breathes into us His breath of life. His breath, if we deeply breathe in, gives us renewed strength of body, mind and spirit, to cope with the hurt, anger, betrayal, despair, darkness, that burden us. We must receive Him, allow Him to dwell within us, transform us, be courageous, trust Him and look forward with the spirit of Hope that is God.

Prayer: Most Gracious God, thank you for being our living Hope that helps us overcome the darkness that casts a shadow on this world. With your spirit of Hope, help us to shine your Light all around us.

March 9 — Psalm 81

"I relieved your shoulder of the burden; your hands were freed from the basket. In distress you called, and I rescued you; I answered you in the secret place of thunder; I tested you at the waters of Meribah. Selah Hear, O my people, while I admonish you; O Israel, if you would but listen to me! There shall be no strange god among you; you shall not bow down to a foreign god. I am the Lord your God, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt. Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it."
-Psalm 81:6-10

I love to read the Psalms. Every emotion is expressed somewhere in the book of Psalms. It's not just the joyful, happy, loving ones. For instance, my favorite psalm is psalm 139. David seems to change his tone as he asks God to kill all the wicked. Psalm 51 highlights his heartbreak and contrition which he wrote after Nathan confronted him about Bathsheba. I know that I can pour out all my emotions to God just as the psalmists do. Knowing that those who wrote the psalms were honest with God about their emotions helps me to feel comfortable about coming to God with my emotions. This psalm, however, begins with the community praising God and then switches to an unknown voice—the voice of God—pouring out God's emotions, God's distress that the people are not following what God says to them. As you read this psalm today, imagine that God is speaking to you in verses 6-16. Are you listening to God? Are you following God's ways? Does your satisfaction come from your relationship with God?

Prayer: God, thank you for how You provide for our every need. Help me to hear You and to follow your ways. You are the One who truly satisfies our every need. Amen.

March 10 — Genesis 29:1-14

“...and when all the flocks were gathered there, the shepherds would roll the stone from the mouth of the well and water the sheep and put the stone back in its place on the mouth of the well. Jacob said to them, “My brothers, where do you come from?” They said, “We are from Haran.”

-Genesis 29:3-4

Who's still awake? Have you ever drawn water from a well? I texted that question one night to my Mom and three siblings in Chicago. My youngest replied, "Nope — we had city water." It made me think about how easy water is for many of us. We just turn on the faucet and it's there.

In Genesis 29:3–4, Jacob came to a well and saw people waiting. There was water in the well, but a big stone covered the opening. No one could move it alone. They waited until everyone came, and then they moved the stone together.

Lent can feel like that. We know God can help us, but something feels in the way. Maybe the “stone” is worry, tiredness, anger, or a bad habit we can't stop. Sometimes we feel like we have to fix everything by ourselves. But this story shows us something important: we are not meant to carry heavy things alone. God gives us the church and people who care so we can help each other.

Jacob asked a simple question: “Where are you from?” Lent is a good time to ask, “Where am I right now with God?”

Prayer: Dear God, sometimes my heart feels heavy. Sometimes I feel tired and worried. Please show me what is blocking my love and joy. Help me not to do life alone. Give me good people who will pray with me and help me. Please lift the heavy stone from my heart and fill me with Your peace. In Jesus' name, Amen.

March 11 — John 7:14-31, 37-39

“On the last day of the festival, the great day, while Jesus was standing there, he cried out, “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, ‘Out of the believer’s heart shall flow rivers of living water.’ ” Now he said this about the Spirit, which believers in him were to receive, for as yet there was no Spirit because Jesus was not yet glorified.” -John 7:37-39

What's your go-to drink when you are thirsty? For me, it depends. After a 4-mile walk, I want a tall glass of cold water. After a busy weekend workday at church, I might enjoy a soda or a root beer float. But sometimes, tap water is enough.”

Our hearts get thirsty too. In John 7:37, Jesus stood up and said, “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink.” He was not only talking about water. He was talking about our lives. Sometimes we feel empty inside - stressed, sad, or confused. We may try to fill that emptiness with things that don't last. But Jesus invites us to come to Him.

Then Jesus gives a promise: “rivers of living water will flow from within” those who believe (John 7:38). John 7:39 explains this “living water” is the Holy Spirit - God's presence with us. The Spirit comforts us, guides us, and helps God's love flow through us to others.

Lent is a time to reflect our need for Jesus - “Jesus, I need You.” Today, if you feel thirsty inside, come to Jesus. He welcomes you.

Prayer: Dear Jesus, I am thirsty inside. Please forgive me and bring me close. Fill me with Your Holy Spirit. Put Your peace in my heart and Your love in my words. Help me share Your kindness today. Amen.

March 12 — Psalm 23

*"The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters;
he restores my soul.
He leads me in right paths
for his name's sake."*
- Psalm 1-3

During Lent, as we slow down and reflect more honestly on our lives, this psalm reminds us that our spiritual journey has never been solitary. From the very beginning, God has been our Shepherd who is patient, attentive, and deeply committed to our care.

These are seasons when the path feels clear and restful, when green pastures and still waters seem close. But there are also seasons when we find ourselves in dark valleys where we experience grief, exhaustion, uncertainty, or fear. Psalm 23 does not deny these valleys but instead, it assures us that God enters them with us. The Shepherd does not rush us through or stand at a distance, but walks besides us, offering comfort with His steady presence.

One of the most tender responsibilities of a shepherd is to feed the sheep, especially when they are too weary to find nourishment themselves. Sometimes a shepherd kneels down and handfeeds a weak sheep, patiently offering what is needed to survive. Many of us know what it feels like to reach such a season. There are moments when even our prayers feel difficult and our souls feel empty. Lent gently reminds us to stop striving and allow ourselves to be fed. Even in the valley, God prepares a table for us. May we trust the Good Shepherd enough to rest, receive, and be sustained by grace.

Prayer: Good Shepherd, in this Lenten season, lead us when we are weary, feed us when we are empty, and help us to trust your presence even in the darkest valleys. Amen.

Rev. Joe Yun
Wesley Foundation

March 13 — Ephesians 4:25-32

"So then, putting away falsehood, let each of you speak the truth with your neighbor, for we are members of one another. Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not make room for the devil. Those who steal must give up stealing; rather, let them labor, doing good work with their own hands, so as to have something to share with the needy. Let no evil talk come out of your mouths but only what is good for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption. Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you."

Last Christmas I began breaking out in hives and couldn't stop scratching. Even with medical help and trying simple treatments, nothing eased the itching or revealed its cause. It felt as though a battle between good and evil was taking place in my mind and body. Eventually, I realized I had been stewing over a relationship I believed was one thing, while the others involved saw it differently. I was carrying sadness and disappointment and began portraying those people to others as unkind and untrustworthy. I was grieving the loss of the relationship while also harboring bitterness, rage, anger and self pity over how I was treated.

When I finally released those feelings and chose to offer forgiveness, the hives disappeared. I know who I belong to-a loving God- and that my identity does not depend on anyone else's approval.

Are you holding unkind feelings toward someone? Are you allowing those feelings to shape false impressions? During this Lenten season, is it time to forgive?

Prayer: Loving God, thank you for your steadfast love. If we hold unloving feelings toward others, help us release them and offer forgiveness. Help us also receive forgiveness with grace. We pray in the name of Jesus the Christ. Amen.

Winnie Ching
Kahalu'u UMC

March 14 — John 1:1-9

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overtake it. There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world."

In one of the groups I participate in each week, we ask, "How have you experienced the gifts of God?" This week, I answered, "Music." When things are darkest and seem bleak, it is music that lifts my soul.

In the gospel of John, we have a creation story. God comes to us as the Word, bringing light in the darkness. Words are sound. They fill the air with vibration, as music does. When life seems hopeless or dark and I hear uplifting music, I remember that the Word comes to us in music to heal us and make us whole. That is one of the great gifts of God.

As we go through this introspective season of Lent, hope can come through intentionally listening to inspiring music, and we can experience the gift of creation, life itself, renewed in the presence of the Word of God.

Prayer: Holy God, you who come to us as the Word made manifest in Jesus the Christ. Bless us with inspiring music that will sing in our soul and renew us each day. We pray this in Jesus. Amen.

March 15 — Ephesians 5:8-14

"...for once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Walk as children of light, for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true. Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness; rather, expose them. For it is shameful even to mention what such people do secretly, but everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for everything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says,

*"Sleeper, awake!
Rise from the dead,
and Christ will shine on you."*

Sometimes when I meet a new person, I get a big "crush" on them—not a romantic one, just a friendly "squish"—and try to find out all about them. Back in the days when everyone had a blog, I remember reading many posts at a time so I could get to know them, their likes and dislikes, their hobbies, their friends. I remember once scrolling all the way through someone's ten-year Instagram history because I just wanted to know them so much!

In this passage, Paul says "try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord". I wonder what it might be like to treat God like a new friend or "crush" and do all we can to learn about God's will and ways—to study God's word the way I used to study my future friends' blogs—and to learn and do what God is calling us to do.

Prayer: Loving God, thank you for the gift of relationship and connection. Help me, as I journey through Lent, to prioritize my connection with you in new, deep, broad ways. I love you and I want you to know it. Amen.

March 16 — Psalm 146

*"Praise the LORD!
Praise the LORD, O my soul!
I will praise the LORD as long as I live;
I will sing praises to my God all my life long."
- Psalm 146:1-2*

"Praise the Lord!" Do you know its meaning? Have you thought about what it meant? Praise takes our minds off our problems and shortcomings and focuses them on God. Thank goodness!

"Praise the Lord" has a deeper meaning, knowing that the Lord means so much to us, Trust comes from the Lord.

He upholds the oppressed and gives food to the hungry. He is Lord! He gives sight to those who are blind and gives us praises unconditionally. He does not separate us from each other. He accepts all, especially the needy. He upholds the cause of the oppressed. We are His instruments to help all on earth. The Lord reigns forever. Praise the Lord!

"Don't be surprised when others don't understand your Christian values, don't give up to theirs." Matthew 16:25

Prayer: Dear Father, we praise You and give you thanks for all that you have done for us. May we continue to sing praises to You every day. Thank you, Almighty God. Amen.

March 17—Colossians 1:9-14

"For this reason, since the day we heard it, we have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God." -Colossians 9-10

It took me 70 years, but reading these verses opened my eyes that my maternal grandmother, Mary Lewis Lawson Rankin, whom I called "Mom," was the person who introduced me to God and Jesus by living her beliefs everyday. She was a cradle Methodist who raised award winning roses and cooked the best cherry cobblers and country hams.

We lived next door to my grandparents until I was nine years old. Of course, I spent a lot of time at their house. She gave me my first Bible and marked verses that we could read together. We played "school," and "bank." She "tried" to educate me about roses, and I pretended to listen, but what I remember with fondness was when she would say, "Let's go look for four-leaf clovers." Our "clover hunts," were something only she and I shared. Whenever we found a clover, she would write a Bible verse as we lovingly put the clover in my Bible. It is a keepsake that I treasure because it helps me feel closer to her when I see her handwriting and touch that withered clover that she and I found together.

Prayer: Creator God, thank you for grandparents, whose lives can be an invitation to us by showing that faith is a way of life that brings joy and purpose. Their wisdom and love serve as beacons of the light of Christ for future generations. In Jesus Name we pray, Amen.

March 18—Isaiah 60:17-22

*"Instead of bronze I will bring gold;
instead of iron I will bring silver;
instead of wood, bronze;
instead of stones, iron..."*

*...I am the LORD;
in its time I will accomplish it quickly."*
-Isaiah 60:17a, 22b

"Let go and let God" is a phrase I've heard countless times but living it out is much harder than saying it. I admit that I like to be in control. I like to know the plan, the timeline, and the outcome. Yet I am reminded that I must loosen my grip and to surrender my life, my family and ministry into God's hands.

In Isaiah 60:17–22, we are reminded that God is always at work transforming what we offer. God promises to exchange bronze for gold, iron for silver, and chaos for peace. Even when I can't see the change happening, God is moving. Lent has taught me that God's timing doesn't operate on my schedule, but it is always faithful. "*I am the Lord; in its time I will accomplish it quickly*" (v. 22). So let us all seek to let go and trust in God today.

Prayer: Gracious God, help me release what I've been holding too tightly. Teach me to trust Your timing and promises. Transform my heart during this Lenten season, and help me walk by faith, even when I cannot see the way forward. Amen.

March 19 — Psalm 130

*"Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD.
Lord, hear my voice!
Let your ears be attentive
to the voice of my supplications!"*
-Psalm 130:1-2

Psalm 130 is one of the Songs of Ascents, a collection of psalms (120–134) sung by pilgrims as they traveled uphill toward Jerusalem and the Temple. These were not stationary prayers, but traveling songs. They were meant to be prayed while walking, climbing, and pressing forward. In that way, they offer a powerful image for Lent, which is not a season of arrival but of movement, repentance, and trust. They can also serve as an illustration for our whole lives: faith lived one step at a time.

I think of this often when I remember my middle school years, walking nearly two miles home each day. I would cut through the back woods, a Gideon Bible tucked into my pocket. As I walked, I read these psalms, letting their words accompany me along the path. In those moments, I felt as if the prayers invited God's presence, God's protection and love, into the ordinary and sometimes lonely journey home.

Psalm 130 begins honestly: "Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord." Lent invites that same honesty. The psalm does not deny sin or struggle, yet it clings to hope: "With you there is forgiveness." Because of that mercy, the pilgrim can keep moving forward, waiting for the Lord "more than those who watch for the morning."

This Lent, Psalm 130 reminds us that God meets us on the road, in the depths, and in the faithful steps we take toward hope.

Prayer: Gracious God, out of the depths we cry to you, trusting in your mercy and steadfast love. Meet us on the road when our steps are weary and our hearts are heavy. Forgive what is broken within us and renew our hope as we wait for you. Lead us forward, step by step, into the light of your grace. Amen.

March 20— 2 Corinthians 5:17

"So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; look, new things have come into being!"

Living in Hawaii, I now notice the news of the volcanic eruptions more than when I lived in California. In 2025, Kilauea erupted 38 times, and counting. Some people livestream it on YouTube and even have it broadcast on their smart tv in their bedroom, watching it at night. We marvel at the height, the radiant orange color, the varying dimensions of the emulsions, and the river-like patterns that are formed. Some say it's "Madame Pele." Others say that the Creator God is at work.

Whether it's Madame Pele or the creator God, we do not really know the reasons for the eruptions. Only that new land mass is being added.

Though astonishing, beautiful, and majestic, getting too close is dangerous—the searing heat, the possibility of being burned, or even death. Invisible effects from the eruptions include: volcanic fog or smog, VOG for short, and allergies and respiratory problems that may occur. Moreover, when the hot lava enters the ocean, it changes the water temperature, killing some ocean vegetation and fish.

Recently I went on a tour of Mauna Ala, the Royal Mausoleum in Nuuanu and our guide mentioned the 'Ama'u, which is a fern that emerges from the lava beds. So after the ashes, there is new birth and new life.

In the season of Lent, we live with the image of ashes, but also knowing that new birth and new life will be emerging. The covering over of what once was, eventually takes new shape and form.

Prayer: Mysterious and powerful God, may we notice the ways in which you are causing change in our lives. There is beauty in the change, but sometimes we question why there needs to be loss and pain and grief. Help us to be patient and prayerful and to trust that new life will soon emerge, especially in this Lenten season. Amen.

March 21— Luke 24:44-53

"Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled." -Luke 24:44

Jesus gives his life; but it is part of Gods plan to his people to deliver a Messiah of love and forgiveness. Jesus reveals to his disciples that his resurrection is proof of this promise.

What I love the most about this scripture is that Jesus comes to his disciples in the Upper Room, where he shared his bread and blood with them and where he washed their feet. The Upper Room is a safe place where they could see and feel his return to them. He instructs his disciples to carry this message of his resurrection and of God's plan to Jerusalem and beyond. This is not an easy ask. The disciples are under attack for their loyalty to him, but Jesus reassures them that they will have the "power from on high" to do this hard work.

The disciples have to teach forgiveness when they themselves feel anger toward the establishment and people who betrayed and killed Jesus. They have to "die to" their human emotions of anger and fear and let the **power from on high** lead them. Before Jesus left them and ascended into Heaven, he blessed them, giving them great joy and they returned to the city praising God.

Today this passage resonates with me so strongly. We call on the Holy Spirit to aid us to BOLDLY do the hard work that Jesus has commanded us to do. There is so much work to do it can feel overwhelming.

Prayer: Dear God, thank you for fulfilling your promises to us through your son Jesus Christ, thank you for giving us the Holy Spirit to fill us with love for all humanity and forgiveness for ourselves and neighbors. Thank you for your armor that makes us extra strong in difficult times so that we can deliver the message of LOVE and Forgiveness. Best yet, thank you for teaching us to be JOYFUL while we do it! Amen.

March 22 — Romans 8:6-11

“But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, then the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you.”

-Romans 8: 9-11

The reading reminds us that we have the Holy Spirit dwelling within us. Christians are empowered to live in the Spirit. Daily we must set our eyes on the things of Christ and deny the flesh, when we make ourselves aware of the Holy Spirit within us, we are able to be more like Jesus. The Holy Spirit helps us achieve a peaceful, grace-filled mindset which then allows us to minister and serve others.

Because Aldersgate is in downtown Honolulu, we have become aware of the needs of the community. As a church we come together and provide hygiene kits for those in need within the community. Susannah Wesley is our neighbor, and the United Women in Faith members often volunteer and give to help the different programs they offer the community.

As Christians let us be open to the leading of the Holy Spirit and help those in need, to be Spirit filled is to act on our faith and serve.

Prayer: Dear Lord Jesus, please help us be more aware of the Holy Spirit within us that we may become more Christ-like in our everyday encounters. Lead us in a way that we can honor you. Forgive us for our shortcomings. We pray this in your holy name. Amen.

March 23 — Psalm 143

*“I remember the days of old;
I think about all your deeds;
I meditate on the works of your hands.
I stretch out my hands to you;
my soul thirsts for you like a parched land. Selah”*
—Psalm 143: 5-6

Last December, I ran my second Honolulu marathon solo, without a partner. I had done the first one with a fellow church member and was able to walk the whole way with her company. After completing one marathon, I figured the second time might be easier since I would be familiar with the course. Absolutely not.

I had not trained consistently. The longest I ever jogged on the treadmill was 4 miles. On race day, it poured heavily just minutes before the race began. I stepped into a deep puddle early on and had to jog in soaked socks and shoes. Because it was raining on and off, there were fewer spectators cheering on the runners...morale felt low.

For the first 5 miles, I felt pretty good and maintained a good pace. By mile 10, fatigue set in, but energy gels helped me push on. By mile 15, I felt despair due to the growing pain in my feet and toes. I just needed to complete 11.2 more miles.

As I walked, I began to converse with God. I prayed about how I wanted to finish this marathon and how much I wanted to give up. Exhausted, I remembered how God has always been there for me during difficult times. I stretched out my hands and prayed for relief. Just like that, each mile became more bearable. The pain did not vanish, but my spirit felt renewed. God did not remove the path before me, but He guided me through it. My pace gradually quickened and I was able to cross the finish line with the help of our heavenly Father.

Prayer: When our spirits are weary and our lives feel overwhelmed, let us remember Your goodness and the works of Your hands. Restore our hope, guide our steps, and surround us with your steadfast love. Amen.

March 24 — Ephesians 2:1-10

“...but God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus...”
-Ephesians 2:4-6

A few weeks ago. Bishop Sandy Olewine (now Bishop of the California-Nevada Annual Conference) posted to Facebook, “Now is a time when we get to choose who we are.”

Making a commitment to follow Jesus is a choice that is supposed to change our lives. Paul says that we used to be beholden to the ways of the world, to our bodies, to the whims of the powerful. But being saved by grace through faith means we belong to God in Christ, and Christ calls us to a new life, where we aim, as John Wesley says, to be made perfect in love.

May we choose, every day—every moment—every second—to be the kind of people Christ calls us to be. May we be people filled with the fruits of the Spirit. May we love people with God’s love. May we be transformed.

Prayer: Holy God, I want to be transformed by your love. I want your love to live in and radiate from me so that others see you and are transformed too. Allow your love to be made perfect in me. Amen.

March 25 — Jeremiah 32:36-41

“I will make an everlasting covenant . . . I will rejoice in doing good to them, and I will plant them in this land in faithfulness, with all my heart and all my soul.” -Jeremiah 32:40a, 41

“Promise me.” he said.

“What is the promise?” I asked.

“Just promise, and then I will tell you.” he said.

That was a real conversation I had many years ago. That relationship did not last!

Jeremiah writes of a relationship with God whose promise was clearly stated. Just prior to these verses, Jeremiah buys a field; land sure to be lost as a result of foreign occupation. Land then reclaimed and restored upon the promised return of the people.

It is not the same, but these days I often feel like I am losing my country, just as Jeremiah did. It feels like I have been spiritually and emotionally exiled from freedom, law and justice, however imperfect. Such losses are a result of people who act from greed and the lust for power, not from God’s punishment.

Within the context of an impending siege of his city, Jeremiah remembers God’s covenant. He affirms God’s presence and steadfast love. He proclaims a God who promises to be present with the people, a God who rejoices in doing good. A God who gives hope. May it be so in our present day as well.

Prayer: Holy, gracious God of covenant promise, help us to lean on you in days of uncertainty and fear. Hold us close so that we may find our hope in you. We pray this in Jesus. Amen.

March 26 — Psalm 31:9-16

*"But I trust in you, O LORD;
I say, 'You are my God.'
My times are in your hand;
deliver me from the hand of my enemies and persecutors.
Let your face shine upon your servant;
save me in your steadfast love."*
-Psalm 31:14-16

In my ministry I have had many people who loved me dearly and supported me wholeheartedly. But I have had some people, not very many, who didn't like me. I remember one gal who didn't like me because I am not a man and I am not a white person. It was very hurtful. I felt like broken pottery. I was in distress and consumed by anguish.

So, I fasted for three days and God spoke to me, "Get rid of the list of her wrongs and forgive her. Love her unconditionally." I realized that God wanted me to practice loving my enemy. There was only one way to make it possible – through prayer. I went to church at five in the morning and prayed. I poured out my heart to God and asked Him to fill me with His love so that I can love her.

As I prayed, she didn't change, but God changed me. I began to understand how she became a hateful and miserable person. I began to pray whenever she hurt me, "Lord, forgive her for she doesn't know what she is doing." In His time God delivered me from the hands of my enemy and made me stronger and more mature spiritually.

Prayer: Merciful God, in my distress I cry out to You. When my strength fails and fear surrounds me, help me to trust You. I place my time in Your hands. Let Your face shine upon me and save me in Your steadfast love. Amen.

March 27 — Philippians 1:1-11

"I thank my God for every remembrance of you, always in every one of my prayers for all of you, praying with joy for your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now." Philippians 1:3-5

I have been independent for the last 26 years when I became a widow. I did have an accountability sister, but she died about 20 years ago. I never replaced her.

Timothy and Paul had such a relationship where they worked together and encouraged the followers of Jesus in Philippi. They were so encouraging and praised these followers as well as prayed for them.

Have you a Christian who agrees with you and joins in celebrating and experiencing the help from God such as Paul received when he was thrown in jail and put on trial?

I have not received such punishment as Paul, but oh how quickly I could get discouraged and feel sorry for myself throughout my surgeries and rehab.

I was fortunate to find many who prayed for me and are still helping me remind myself of God's love. They truly are living a life Jesus will be proud of and my prayer is that their love may abound more and more close to Him forever.

Perhaps the Philippines reward is a song we all wish we could live by: This is the chorus:

*"In the service of the King
Every talent I will bring
I have peace and joy and
Gladness in the service of the King"*

Prayer: Gracious God I look to You to show me whom I may encourage. I thank You for those You have placed in my life who uplift and strengthen me. It's in Jesus's name I pray. Amen.

March 28 — Lamentations 3:55-66

*"I called on your name, O Lord,
from the depths of the pit;
you heard my plea, "Do not close your ear
to my cry for help, but give me relief!"
You came near when I called on you;
you said, "Do not fear!"*
-Lamentations 3: 55-57

It teaches that faithful prayer in times of the deep despair (the "pit") brings comfort. GOD hears cries, draws near and reassures believers to "fear not." It emphasizes GOD'S role as a redeemer who takes up the cause of the oppressed vindicating them against enemies and providing ultimate deliverance.

God answered so many of my prayers over the years. As long as you have faith and believe in him, he does answer prayers. When he answers its so amazing and joyful. When GOD answers my prayers, I thank him over and over with joyful tears. I always give GOD the credit for all the good that I do. GOD is always with you.

Prayer: Heavenly Father thank you for your daily blessings and knowing at times I can call upon you with my faith and believing in you. Amen.

March 29 — Matthew 21:1-11

*"The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; they brought the donkey and the colt and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting,
"Hosanna to the Son of David!
Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!
Hosanna in the highest heaven!"'*

-Matthew 21:6-9

Jerusalem buzzes with Passover crowds as pilgrims stream into the city and Roman soldiers display their strength, a reminder of who holds power. Into that charged moment, Jesus enters not on a warhorse but on a borrowed donkey. The crowds wave palms and shout "Hosanna!" hoping for a king who will overthrow Rome and fix everything fast. Yet Jesus fulfills the promise of a humble king, choosing gentleness over force and vulnerability over spectacle. While the empire parades its might, Jesus walks at ground level, close enough to touch. It is easy to miss a Savior like that. We often look for dramatic victories, yet Christ's kingdom comes through service, mercy, and self-giving love. By the end of the week, the cheers will fade, but his quiet way will endure. Lent invites us to ask whether we want Jesus on our terms or whether we are willing to follow him on his — the path of humility that leads not to domination, but to peace.

Prayer: Loving Jesus, quiet our need for power and teach us your gentle way. Lead us from palms to the cross. Amen.

March 30 — Isaiah 42:1-9

*"I am the LORD; I have called you in righteousness;
I have taken you by the hand and kept you;
I have given you as a covenant to the people,
a light to the nations,
to open the eyes that are blind,
to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon,
from the prison those who sit in darkness."*
-Isaiah 42:6-7

Lent often invites us to look for God in quiet places rather than dramatic ones. In Isaiah 42, God introduces a servant who does not shout or force change, but brings justice gently and faithfully. Isaiah offers us these tender images—a bruised reed and a dimly burning wick—not to describe weakness, but to show us the way the servant brings God's justice into the world. These images remind us that God works by caring for what is broken and fragile in our lives, not by rushing past it or giving up on it.

God's justice moves steadily, restoring what feels fragile and worn. During Lent, many of us may feel tired, uncertain, or stretched thin by the weight of daily life. Yet God does not discard what is weak. God tends to it with compassion.

The servant is also called to be a light—to open eyes and to free those bound by darkness. This light is not harsh or blinding. It is the kind that helps us see clearly, offering hope and direction, and guiding us forward one step at a time.

As we journey through Lent, Isaiah invites us to trust the quiet faithfulness of God. Even when change feels slow and progress is hard to see, God is still at work—healing, restoring, and gently leading us toward new life.

Prayer: Gracious God, thank you for meeting us with tenderness when we feel weary or fragile. Help us trust your quiet work within us, and lead us gently toward hope, healing, and new life. Amen.

March 31 — John 12:20-36

"Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor." -John 12:25-26

This passage of John provides insight into Christ's message of love and light. In verse 25 Jesus tells his disciples and others that "He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal." These words have significant implications for our spiritual development and ongoing growth. Jesus teaches that worldly attachment can hinder our efforts to find true meaning in our lives; and non-attachment to the things of this world will allow us to realize the eternal nature of Christ's love. Jesus speaks to the need to relinquish our desire for material wealth and fleeting worldly pleasures for eternal values found in love, sacrifice and faith. Using the example of the wheat that must first die to produce a bountiful harvest - we must feed our soul by renouncing that which provides no nourishment, or poisons us. Conversely, Jesus tells of a joy greater than worldly pleasures or possessions. In verse 36, Jesus tells us that "While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light." Christ is inviting us to enjoy the bliss of being children of God. Having discovered the light of Christ, we should bask in it and share it, as we convey God's love for all.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus that we might have everlasting life. Thank you for the light of Christ which illuminates that which is real and eternal from that which is worldly and perishable. We rejoice in your love and the radiance of your divine light. Amen.

April 1 — Isaiah 50:4-9

*"The Lord GOD helps me;
therefore I have not been disgraced;
therefore I have set my face like flint,
and I know that I shall not be put to shame;
he who vindicates me is near.
Who will contend with me?
Let us stand in court together.
Who are my adversaries?"
Let them confront me.
-Isaiah 50: 7-8*

The reading directs us to the heart of a servant. As a disciple of Jesus, we look towards him as our role model. Despite everything Jesus endured he never lost his courage, he remained faithful and obedient to his calling. As Jesus' disciple we will surely go through trials and tribulations, but we must not be discouraged because if "God is for us, who can be against us". I remember as a young Navy recruit, on my first day in boot camp it started snowing, this was my first time experiencing snow. I didn't know how to walk on snow. I kept falling and I kept getting yelled at because I was holding up the line of recruits.

I asked my superior, "How am I supposed to walk?"

He yelled back, "One foot in front of the other!"

Well that still didn't help me by the time we made it to our barracks my butt was sore and it was bruised. As disciples we too will stumble and become disobedient, but we must stay on the course and stay strong in faith for we will be blessed for it. With God's grace, I did graduate boot camp and learned how to walk in the snow.

Prayer: Dear God thank you for your faithfulness despite our disobedience to your word. Help us to walk faithfully in service to you. Guide our actions that we may honor you in all that we do. This we pray in your holy name. Amen.

*Gay Porzio
Aldersgate UMC*

April 2 — 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

"For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."
-1 Corinthians 11:23-26

In our Korean churches, we experienced Communion once a month, and we would leave our Sunday School or Youth services early just to make it in time for us to receive the "traditional" King's Hawaiian Sweet Bread and Welch's Grape Juice as the body and blood of Christ. It felt like we only remember that Jesus died for our sins once a month through Communion. This holy meal was meant to be remembered with important people, and this is the time to take it seriously.

Most of our UM churches consider Jesus' meal with his Disciples to be significant and holy enough to do it once a month, but that was mostly due to circuit-riding clergy availability. While we might not all have unleavened bread and wine in our daily meals, Jesus wants us to remember the self-sacrificial love and covenant of forgiveness beyond the official gatherings. Remembering Jesus daily, as often as we eat and drink, reminds us how often to break bread and share life together, forgive one another in the covenant of love, and remember that Jesus demonstrated the greatest of G-d's grace with his Disciples, even on the night he would be betrayed.

Prayer: Gracious G-d, may we remember daily that Jesus invites us to the table of grace, to join in the feast of life and covenant of forgiveness with all whom You bring eternal life. Amen.

*Rev. Won Seok Yuh
First UMC of Honolulu*

April 3—Hebrews 4:14-16, 5:7-9

"In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered, and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him..."

-Hebrews 5:7-9

Jesus, our great High Priest, knows the depth of human weakness because He lived it. He felt weariness, sorrow, and temptation—yet never sinned. When I come to Him with my struggles, big or small, I find mercy waiting and grace ready to help me stand.

When life feels heavy and I doubt my strength, this truth draws me closer: I can approach God's throne with confidence, not because I've earned it, but because Jesus understands. He learned obedience through suffering and carries my pain with compassion. Nothing I face is beyond His care.

There are times when my pain is too deep, and I cannot find the words to pray. In those moments, I lean on the Holy Spirit to carry my unspoken prayers to Jesus. Whispering the simple prayer, "Thy will be done," has brought me peace and assurance that I am never alone.

In every moment of need, I meet not a distant God but One who has walked my road. He understands, He intercedes, and He welcomes me into His presence. So today, I hold fast to my faith and lean into His mercy—trusting the One who opened the way for me.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for walking this road of life with me. You know my weakness and my strength and today I hold fast to You trusting in you alone. Thy Will Be Done. Amen.

April 4—John 19:38-42

"Nicodemus, who had at first come to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about a hundred pounds. They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths, according to the burial custom of the Jews." -John 19:39-40

Can you imagine the grim task of caring for Jesus' body . . . seeing that indeed, he is dead? I cannot consider such a thing, yet Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus somehow gathered their courage, respect, and love for Jesus to give him a proper burial. We have the advantage of reading on in John 20, where the sequence of discoveries that Jesus had risen are revealed. At that time, however, they did not know this was to come.

Despite our fear, death sometimes provides us with unique opportunities to reflect on our relationship with the deceased: recalling times spent together, conversations shared, meetings at the table to break bread, even transformations that occur within us due to that person's influence. I wonder whether if Joseph and Nicodemus were able to reach beyond their deepest grief to find some solace in their relationship with Jesus, or even to take comfort in what he said about himself: that he would, indeed, be killed, but that he would rise again (John 2:19).

We can tell that Joseph and Nicodemus took great gentleness and care with Jesus's body, tending to him with the aloes and myrrh, and wrapping him in linen. Such an act of grace and intimacy! Perhaps the balm helped also to soothe *their* pain.

What I take from the bleak scene of this passage are memories of how Jesus told us to care: love one another, be kind, feed my sheep . . . feed my lambs, love your neighbor as yourself, and so on. I like to think that these two men cherished such thoughts as they readied Jesus for the tomb. May we all remember that Jesus encouraged us to show gracious generosity to other people, even at the time of their death, as we celebrate the RISEN Christ in His Glory! Amen!!

Prayer: Beloved God, as we contemplate the death of Jesus Christ, let us be ever mindful of His sacrifice for us. We rejoice in the abundant life we have through His resurrection! Amen.

April 5 — Matthew 28:1-20

"After the Sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning and his clothing white as snow. For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.' This is my message for you." So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers and sisters to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

While they were going, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests everything that had happened. After the priests had assembled with the elders, they devised a plan to give a large sum of money to the soldiers, telling them, "You must say, 'His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.' If this comes to the governor's ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble." So they took the money and did as they were directed. And this story is still told among the Judeans to this day.

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshiped him, but they doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Matthew's retelling of the Easter experience is a Resurrection story that is similar through the four Gospels. But in verses 11-15 is a curious story: religious leaders who were against Jesus, having heard about the Resurrection, conspired to spread a false rumor that the disciples had removed Jesus's body while the guards were asleep. This story competed with the truth of the Resurrection.

We live in a time when the meaning of truth is in question. Are we living at a time when George Orwell's chilling writings in his dystopian novel, 1984, ring more true than ever: "The Party told you to reject the evidence of your eyes and ears. It was their final, most essential command" and "Reality exists in the human mind, and nowhere else."

I believe in the truth and reality of the Resurrection and the hope it provides. It is based on the life, teaching, death, and resurrection of Jesus the one who anoints others with a Spirit of truth, a Spirit of peace, of joy, and of love.

The disciples met Jesus at Galilee. It is there that the disciples are commissioned and sent out to make disciples of all nations and to teach them all that Jesus commanded.

May we celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus and live out that miracle in being eyewitnesses of unwavering truth, of timeless reality, and everlasting Good News. Happy Easter!

Prayer: May the reality of the Resurrection be embodied in us to speak out against injustice and be willing to speak truth to power, so the Good News may be declared throughout the world. In the name of the Risen Christ. Amen.