

Ashes Alive: Lent 2024

Lenten Devotionals by LGBTQIA+ Christians & their friends



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Christians & their friends

Ashes Alive Lent 2024 is based on the [Revised Common Lectionary Year B](#)

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Edited by Liggera Edmonds-Allen

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Introduction to Ashes Alive: Lent 2024 by Rev. Dr. Marian Edmonds-Allen

Welcome! We are so glad that you are here with us!

Ashes Alive Lent: 2024 is the seventh in an ongoing devotional series written by LGBTQI+ Christians and their friends from all over the world, from a variety of religious and spiritual traditions, expressions and points of view.

To preserve as best as possible the unique voices of our contributors their entries are very lightly edited and only for clarity when needed. Our goal is for the authentic voices to be heard. If you - are someone you know - would like to be a writer for future devotionals, please email me:

marian@parity.nyc

For many people, devotionals are something they have used before, perhaps for years. For others, this is entirely new concept. What our devotional series intends to do is to share the Scripture passages of the day - currently what is known as Year B in the Revised Common Lectionary. Many Christian faiths and denominations use the Revised Common Lectionary to guide their church services, and many individuals use the Revised Common Lectionary to guide their personal Scripture reading.

Personal Scripture reading can be accompanied by written commentary - a devotional volume, like this one. Devotional compilations are often written by one person or written with a particular theme or perspective.

You may choose to use your own Bible or access an online version. An online version we recommend is Bible Gateway where you can easily choose from different translations (NIV, NRSV, KJV, etc): <https://www.biblegateway.com/>

Our theme is love. We believe that all people are made in the image of God, and dearly loved by God. Each and every person has wisdom to share about God and about Scripture. This project seeks to share and amplify voices that often aren't heard together, and each represents the infinite diversity of God.

You may agree - or you may disagree - with what you read here. That, too, is part of the beautiful diversity of God.

May you be as blessed as we have been as we have worked together to create this for you!

How to use Ashes Alive: Lent 2024 by Rev. Dr. Kim Purl

Ashes Alive: Lent 2024 devotionals are written by LGBTQia+ Christians and their friends. Contributors write from a wide array of Christian conviction and belief at the intersection of faith and LGBTQia+.

Each has freedom to write from their own beliefs and doctrines without harm to another because we believe there is room for all at the feet of Jesus.

This is the heart of holy dialogue.

How you use the devotional guide is up to you. You may choose to find a time and space to begin with prayer, receive the message of the day's devotional and prayerfully reflect.

We have a special invitation for you!

Please consider joining a Converge Group. They are for Christians and for those who aren't Christian but want to talk about Christianity. We have groups for LGBTQia+ folks and for those who love them, in person, and online. Always free.

Email marian@parity.nyc with your questions or interest, or visit: <https://www.holydialogues.org/converge-groups>

We look forward to meeting you!

Wednesday, February 14, 2024: Ash Wednesday

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17 or Isaiah 58:1-12, Psalm 51:1-17;
2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10, Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21
Contributor: [Nancy Wanja Mwangi](#)

Thursday, February 15, 2024

Psalm 25:1-10; Daniel 9:1-14; 1 John 1:3-10
Contributor: [Rev. Robert Van Ess](#)

Friday, February 16, 2024

Psalm 25:1-10; Daniel 9:15-25a; 2 Timothy 4:1-5
Contributor: [Zaweria Hunyu](#)

Saturday, February 17, 2024

Psalm 25:1-10; Psalm 32; Matthew 9:2-13
Contributor: [Rev. Karen Pitt](#)

Sunday, February 18, 2024: First Sunday in Lent

Psalm 25:1-10; Psalm 32; Matthew 9:2-13
Contributor: [Kennedy Mwangi](#)

Monday, February 19, 2024

Psalm 77; Job 4:1-21; Ephesians 2:1-10
Contributor: [Adrian Slonaker](#)

Tuesday, February 20, 2024

Psalm 77; Job 5:8-27; 1 Peter 3:8-18a
Contributor: [Zipporah Nyaga](#)

Wednesday, February 21, 2024

Psalm 77; Proverbs 30:1-9; Matthew 4:1-11
Contributor: [Liggera Edmonds-Allen](#)

Thursday, February 22, 2024

Psalm 22:23-31; Genesis 15:1-6, 12-18; Romans 3:21-31
Contributor: [Idah Gitau](#)

Friday, February 23, 2024

Psalm 22:23-31; Genesis 16:1-6; Romans 4:1-12
Contributor: [Jimmy Abyad](#)

Saturday, February 24, 2024

Psalm 22:23-31; Genesis 16:7-15; Mark 8:27-30
Contributor: [Daniel Kihara](#)

Sunday, February 25, 2024: Second Sunday in Lent

Contributor: [Dr. Stephen V. Sprinkle](#)

Monday, February 26, 2024

Psalm 105:1-11, 37-45; Genesis 21:1-7; Hebrews 1:8-12
Contributor: [Giacomo Liggera](#)

Tuesday, February 27, 2024

Psalm 105:1-11, 37-45; Genesis 22:1-19;
Hebrews 11:1-3, 13-19
Contributor: [Diana Laskaris](#)

Wednesday, February 28, 2024

Psalm 105:1-11, 37-45; Jeremiah 30:12-22; John 12:36-43
Contributor: [Dorcas Kiki](#)

Thursday, February 29, 2024

Psalm 19; Exodus 19:1-9a; 1 Peter 2:4-10
Contributor: [Sontaia P. Briggs](#)

Friday, March 1, 2024

Psalm 19; Exodus 19:9b-15; Acts 7:30-40.
Contributor: [Jacklin Wambui](#)

Saturday, March 2, 2024

Psalm 19; Exodus 19:16-25; Mark 9:2-8
Contributor: [Denise Hamblen](#)

Sunday, March 3, 2024: Third Sunday in Lent

Exodus 20:1-17, Psalm 19, 1st Corinthians 1:18-25,
John 2:13-22
Contributor: [Samuel Thrikwa](#)

Monday, March 4, 2024

Psalm 84; 1 Kings 6:1-4, 21-22; 1 Corinthians 3:10-23
Contributor: [Rev. Dr. Marian Edmonds-Allen](#)

Tuesday, March 5, 2024

Psalm 84; 2 Chronicles 29:1-11, 16-19; Hebrews 9:23-28
Contributor: [Lucy Wanijuru](#)

Wednesday, March 6, 2024

Psalm 84; Ezra 6:1-16; Mark 11:15-19
Contributor: [Naiomi Gonzalez](#)

Thursday, March 7, 2024

Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22; Genesis 9:8-17; Ephesians 1:3-6
Contributor: [David Mwaura](#)

Friday, March 8, 2024

Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22; Daniel 12:5-13; Ephesians 1:7-14
Contributor: [Persis Luke](#)

Saturday, March 9, 2024

Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22; Numbers 20:22-29; John 3:1-13
Contributor: [Boniface Waweru](#)

Sunday, March 10, 2024: Fourth Sunday in Lent

Numbers 21:4-9; Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22; Ephesians
2:1-10; John 3:14-21
Contributor: [Rev. Tom Baynham](#)

Monday, March 11, 2024

Psalm 107:1-16; Exodus 15:22-27; Hebrews 3:1-6
Contributor: [Jemima Mugo](#)

Tuesday, March 12, 2024:

Psalm 107:1-16; Numbers 20:1-13; 1 Corinthians 10:6-13
Contributor: [Lois Anne DeLong](#)

Wednesday, March 13, 2024

Psalm 107:1-16; Isaiah 60:15-22; John 8:12-20
Contributor: [Edwin Kiragu](#)

Thursday, March 14, 2024

Psalm 51:1-12; Isaiah 30:15-18; Hebrews 4:1-13
Contributor: [Rev Dr. Brett Mitchell](#)

Friday, March 15, 2024

Psalm 51:1-12; Exodus 30:1-10; Hebrews 4:14-5:4
Contributor: [Anthony Lemeiyan](#)

Saturday, March 16, 2024

Psalm 51:1-12; Habakkuk 3:2-13; John 12:1-11
Contributor: [Cynthia Vacca Davis](#)

Contents

Sunday, March 17, 2024: Fifth Sunday in Lent

Jeremiah 31:31-34; Psalm 51:1-12 or Psalm 119:9-16;
Hebrews 5:5-10; John 12:20-33

Contributor: Levy

Monday, March 18, 2024

Psalm 119:9-16; Isaiah 43:8-13; 2 Corinthians 3:4-11

Contributor: Anonymous

Tuesday, March 19, 2024

Psalm 119:9-16; Isaiah 44:1-8; Acts 2:14-24

Contributor: Jay

Wednesday, March 20, 2024

Psalm 119:9-16; Haggai 2:1-9, 20-23; John 12:34-50

Contributor: Juliana Boerio-Goates

Thursday, March 21, 2024

Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29; Deuteronomy 16:1-8;

Philippians 2:1-11

Contributor: Josephine Wambui

Friday, March 22, 2024

Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29; Jeremiah 33:1-9; Philippians 2:12-18

Contributor: Tori Allen

Saturday, March 23, 2024

Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29; Jeremiah 33:10-16;

Mark 10:32-34, 46-52

Contributor: Rahab Wambui

Sunday, March 24, 2024: Liturgy of the Palms

Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29; Mark 11:1-11 or John 12:12-16

Contributor: Cathy Callow-Heusser

Monday, March 25, 2024: Monday of Holy Week

Isaiah 7:10-14, Psalm 45 or Psalm 40:5-10,
Hebrews 10:4-10, Luke 1:26-38

Contributor: Lisa Whitesell

Tuesday, March 26, 2024: Tuesday of Holy Week

Isaiah 49:1-7, Psalm 71:1-14, 1 Corinthians 1:18-31,

John 12:20-36

Contributor: Steven Maina

Wednesday, March 27, 2024: Wed. of Holy Week

Isaiah 50:4-9a; Psalm 70; Hebrews 12:1-3; John 13:21-32

Contributor: Edward Moran

Thursday, March 28, 2024: Maundy Thursday

Exodus 12:1-4, (5-10), 11-14; Psalm 116:1-2, 12-19;

1 Corinthians 11:23-26; John 13:1-17, 31b-35

Contributor: Pastor Megan

Friday, March 29, 2024: Good Friday

Isaiah 52:13-53:12; Psalm 22; Hebrews 10:16-25

or Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9; John 18:1-19:42

Rev. Ian Carr McPherson

Saturday, March 30, 2024: Holy Saturday

Job 14:1-14 or Lamentations 3:1-9, 19-24; Psalm 31:1-4,

15-16; 1 Peter 4:1-8; Matthew 27:57-66 or John 19:38-42

Contributor: Paul Nderitu

Sunday, March 31, 2024: Resurrection of the Lord

Acts 10:34-43 or Isaiah 25:6-9; Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24;

1 Corinthians 15:1-11 or Acts 10:34-43; John 20:1-18

or Mark 16:1-8

Contributor: Moses Njoroge

Wednesday, February 14, 2024 Ash Wednesday

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17 or Isaiah 58:1-12, Psalm 51:1-17

Contributor: [Nancy Wanja Mwangi](#)

2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10, Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

Joel 2:12- 13 “But even now”, says the LORD, “repent sincerely and return to me with fasting and weeping and mourning. Let your broken heart show your sorrow; tearing your clothes is not enough. “Come back to the Lord your God. he is kind and full of mercy; he is patient and keeps his promise; he is always ready to forgive and not punish. (GNB)

Our primary school was sponsored by the Anglican church, every Thursday morning we held prayers led by the local clergy. There was one specific man that all the students loved to mimic. Before he started preaching, he would introduce himself and say “My name is Joseph, I am a very sinful man whose sins are forgiven by God”. He repeated those words every day he came to minister to us. He was nicknamed “a sinful man” and when I grew up, I realized this was his normal way of introducing himself. I attended a funeral that he presided and noted the nickname “sinful man” was so common even with grown-ups. This man was so humble and polite, he was a darling to many because he served with humility and compassion. He died of old age and his funeral was like a wedding, the man was celebrated and it was like every body believed our “sinful man” whose sins were forgiven had gone to meet the savior.

Through his testimony, this preacher always reminded us that we are just humans and none of us should think that they are perfect before the eyes of God. His testimony was like a full sermon that reminded his congregation to repent.

Psalm 51:5 I have been evil from the day I was born; from the time I was conceived, I have been sinful.

I made this confession to so many times, I cried and fasted. I believed that confessing to God would wash away the queerness in me. I know most Lgbtq+ Christians are familiar with this when coming to terms about our sexual orientation. Many people ask why Lgbtq+people are so spiritual, those who have already judged us think we cry because we know we are living in sin. They do not realize the peace we have in knowing that we do not need to change who we are because God loves us just as He created us.

Psalm 51:17 My sacrifice, O God, is a broken Spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God will not despise (GNB)

Ash Wednesday reminds us that we are alive and we only have limited time on this earth. May God help us to return to his love because he is gracious and merciful. He is slow to anger and his steadfast love abounds forever.

Thursday, February 15, 2024:

Psalm 25:1-10; Daniel 9:1-14; 1 John 1:3-10

Contributor: [Rev. Robert Van Ess](#)

"God is Light"

In the morning I wake up and go to the bathroom and look in the mirror. I can still see the faint outline of the cross imposed on my forehead with palm ash from last night. "Remember you are dust, and to dust you shall return." Where yesterday's Ash Wednesday service had me contemplating my inevitable death, today I am looking towards the miracle of Easter Sunday and the gift of new life the resurrection is all about. I turn on the radio and hear a dance mix of one of my favorite songs and I remember I found God, and a new life, on the dance floor when I needed it the most.

I think about the days of my youth in the late 1980's living in a small blue-collar midwestern town in the United States. Every day I lived a lie. I hid my homosexuality from almost everyone in my life. My relationships with my family, my job, and pretty much anyone else I had grown up with, was a charade. I was not "out," or even "in," the closet. I was living in that tortured space in-between one occupies when you try to move back and forth between them. Never fully embracing who you really are while always trying to preserve the image of the type of person you believe people want you to be.

I would pretend to be straight, or at the very least asexual, all day long, waiting, longing, panting for the night. For it was at night that I would go to this little gay bar with a tiny dance floor and find myself. This was my church. My sweat was my offering. My dance was my praise. My salvation was the moment I would find my rhythm chasing the beat, releasing the weight of my lies, my fear, my endless anxiety, for the sweet embrace of the lights on the dance floor. In those moments the music, by body bumping and grinding with those gathered around me, and smoke from the smoke machine and the endless cigarettes, would all become one, and I would be free. I could be anyone or anything I wanted to be and no one and nothing could make me be anything other than who I really am; An authentically gay man who loves men, who falls in-love with men, who wants to be with men, who likes to dance and tell sassy jokes and carry on as effeminate or as butch as I wanted to be in any given moment. No lies, no pretending to be something you're not, just me.

The revelation from God I could only see at that time in my life by the living lights on the dance floor that gave me the gift of new life was: God is light and God is touch and God is sweat and God is musk. In my sacred space squeezed in between the bar top and a pool table the light would bless us all equally and without prejudice. I am who I am, and I am good. God is light and I AM GOOD.

Friday, February 16, 2024

Psalm 25:1-10, Daniel 9:15-25a, 2nd Timothy 4:1-5

Contributor: [Zaweria Hunyu](#)

My mother had hopes that her first born daughter was going to have a very big wedding that would be talk of our village.

She was shocked when she noted that I was pregnant and I was not ready for marriage. The truth was that I was not in love with the father of my child and I just wanted to prove to myself that I was not a lesbian. Nobody understood why I refused to get married and the man was ready to marry me. I was not ready to enter in to a loveless marriage and I chose the most difficult path of raising my child as a single parent.

My mother was so heartbroken by my decision, she was shamed by her women friends as she was blamed of my decision. The women church council was so mean to her that I demoted her from her role as their chairlady. In frustration, my mother sent me away. I had brought big shame to her and she didn't want to see me. I went to stay with my aunt until I gave birth to my beautiful girl, that is when my mom came for me and took me back home.

I knew I would bring more frustrations if I stayed at home for long. My longest nightmare was if my secret of being a lesbian was known. I was scared of putting my mother through a bigger shame.

I was so relieved when I left our village and got employed at a beauty shop, I was so dedicated to learn about this business because it was the only chance, I had of changing my future and that of my daughter. My employer got a chance to go outside the country for greener pastures, he sold the business to me at a very reasonable price and I paid her with installments.

The challenge I had was that I had no money to expand my business, my daughter needed school fees and I had bills to pay. I prayed **Psalm 25**, I thought of what would happen if my business failed, the shame of going back home, the shame of failing as parent and worst of all the shame that I would put my mother through because of my failures again.

I prayed and fasted, trusting God for a miracle and just as I was about to give up, I was introduced to Parity. I applied for a business grant that was approved almost immediately. I restocked my business and paid bills that were so pressing. **Psalm 25:10 "All the ways of the Lord are loving and faithful toward those who keep the demands of his covenant."**

Lgbtq+ persons have been subjected to shame and very difficult trials. This is the perfect time to come back to God in repentance, let us cry out to God and seek Him for his wisdom. Our God is loving and faithful.

Saturday, February 17, 2024

Psalm 25:1-10; Psalm 32; Matthew 9:2-13

Contributor: [Rev. Karen Pitt](#)

**Go and Learn What this Means:
'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.'**

I have journeyed through life and remember so many encounters, feeling included and excluded from my community. This caused me to ask, 'why are our lives so painful and why do we feel like outsiders?'

Jesus said, "Go and learn what this means. I desire mercy, not sacrifice." (Matthew 9:13) This caused me to ask myself and others 'what does this mean?' From the age of 8 years old I remember reading these words from the Gospel of Matthew. As I attended church and got involved in so many activities and acts of service, I asked, 'Is this all there is? For the rest of my life?' So many acts of sacrifice in my faith, seeking to do all the right things. Some things I did on my own. Other things I did in groups, which for me, were the source of bullying, rejection, and relational trauma. I found God alone was my consistent companion and friend. The words of Psalm 32:7, re-presented in a song, gave me comfort and assurance. "You are my hiding place. You always fill my heart with songs of deliverance so whenever I am afraid I can trust in You."

My sense of refuge was alongside my separateness from others. I heard the words of so many people judging me as being too sinful and unacceptable. They told me their belief in 'God's way' found in the hostile experience of 'conversion therapy'. In the midst of this hurtful process, I turned to the story of the calling of the disciple, Matthew. The distinct difference was in Jesus' calling and celebration of belief in God the Father, within a closer relationship that offered compassion.

Jesus, calling each person by name, revealed his love and overcoming mercy for their past and present actions, inviting them from their histories into a new and redeemed future. Matthew, a tax collector, traitor, outcast and sinner, was called by Jesus to come and follow him. The other disciples and observers were dumbfounded by Jesus' invitation. Jesus asked Matthew to leave his life behind and immediately follow after Him. This was full and inclusive, with the offer of mercy, grace and compassion, in relationship with the One who offered forgiveness, restoration and enabled him to share the life found in Jesus.

This invitation, though clear and simple, is not easy. It is not led by our actions, but a full 'hearts-in' response to follow after Him. We all experience the call to follow after Jesus, and the only imperative to this heart felt command is in the answer - yes or no. Will you come and follow Him as He calls your name?

Sunday, February 18, 2024

Genesis 9:8-17, Psalm 25:1-10, 1st Peter 3:18-22, Mark 1: 9-15

Contributor: [Kennedy Mwangi](#)

I am a straight man and my brother is gay, I have witnessed the struggles my brother has gone through before he accepted himself. He always tried to be perfect and to make others happy, he went beyond his means to cover the fact that he was gay. When my brother came out to me, I was more scared than he was, I was not ready to accept it. I did not hate my brother for being gay but I was ashamed of him and of myself. As much as I didn't want to lose him, I was ashamed of embracing him. I believed he had made a bad choice of choosing to be gay because that is what I was taught. Why did my only brother choose to shame our family? Who messed with his innocence? I had so many questions but I had to keep them to myself. Talking about my brother being gay was too shameful. I tried to practice the saying "hate the sin and love the sinner" but I was not ready to accept that my brother was born gay.

I used to pray for my brother to change, I had this strong conviction that he was just going through a phase and he will realize the mistake. One day as I was going through family album, I saw a picture of my brother during prayers in church. I wondered why God would allow someone that loved him so much to be ashamed by being gay. I decided to make google my friend and I searched "gays and Christianity", I read many stories of gay Christians and also about Christian ally's. my world view was changed and I was ready to accept the fact that my brother was born gay and I should support him to live and enjoy life just as he was born.

It was not easy to make that decision as many people did not understand why I chose to support "sin", my wife was the most affected as she even told me I wanted to be gay. My mother is slowly coming to terms with accepting that she has a gay son, she is still afraid of "society shame". But for me, I have chosen to stand with my brother. I will not allow him to be discriminated because of something that is beyond his control. I will love and support his choice of love.

I thank God for giving me a chance to share with you my story this Lent, a time that Christians around the world come together to understand the suffering of Jesus Christ. Our God is very patient, as he waited patiently during the time of Noah, he is still waiting for us to follow in his steps of loving unconditionally.

1st Peter 3:18 For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit. (NIV)

Monday, February 19, 2024:

Psalm 77; Job 4:1-21; Ephesians 2:1-10

Contributor: [Adrian Slonaker](#)

Psalm 77, written by Asaph, one of David's chief musicians, starts out with **"I cried out to God for help; I cried out to God to hear me. When I was in distress, I sought the Lord; at night I stretched out untiring hands"** (Psalm 77:1-2 [NIV]).

Since childhood, I have prayed regularly. I have talked to God about sensitive matters I could share with few or any human beings, no matter how close to me. Psalm 77 rings true for me in this aspect, but it also reminds me of urgent phone calls to my own parents, especially when I was younger, asking for money or for a place to stay.

Later on, Asaph muses **"Will the Lord reject forever? Will he never show his favor again? Has his unfailing love vanished forever? Has his promise failed for all time? Has God forgotten to be merciful? Has he in anger withheld his compassion?"** Then I thought, **"To this I will appeal: the years when the Most High stretched out his right hand. I will remember the deeds of the LORD; yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago. I will consider all your works and meditate on all your mighty deeds."** (Psalm 77:7-12 [NIV]).

Since childhood, I have been a regular "sinner," like many of God's children. I have been lazy and foul-mouthed. I have gossiped, lied, and held grudges. I have mistreated my body, the temple of the soul. I have been sexually promiscuous with both men and women. I have worked during the Sabbath. I have not loved my neighbor as myself, or myself as my neighbor. Similarly, sometimes I have been a rebellious son, mouthing off, lying, refusing to do chores, mistreating my parents, and even stealing cash from Dad's wallet!

Even if I have apologized to God and to my parents, offering restitution when necessary, has this been enough? Have I appreciated them enough? Am I worthy?

Even if I do not think so, for God and for my parents the answer has been a moving and unfathomable "yes." Psalm 77 ends with **"Your path led through the sea, your way through the mighty waters, though your footprints were not seen. You led your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron."** (Psalm 77:19-20 [NIV]).

No matter what I have done or said or left undone or unsaid, God has been there to lead and to help. His love, kindness, and mercy are extended to all of us, as we are all God's children. Similarly, no matter what scrapes I have gotten into or how obnoxious I may have been, my parents are still there, promptly and unfailingly, whenever I need them. This love from heaven and earth has helped me to feel alive, to give me much-needed support for me to grow and develop as my own identity while also embracing that of a child of God and a child of my parents.

On this past New Year's Eve, I took part in the Eucharist at St. George's Anglican Church in Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada. During the part of the liturgy that states "we entirely desire thy fatherly goodness mercifully to accept this our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving,"¹ I started thinking of my own dad's earthly "fatherly goodness" (and my mom's "motherly goodness"). If Dad and Mom can overlook and pardon my uncooperative and, at times, reprehensible behavior, how much more can God, who is more perfect than any human being, forgive us and love us for who and what we are?

Let God's presence, love and mercy also help you to feel more alive. Have a blessed Lent!

Tuesday, February 20, 2024:

Psalm 77; Job 5:8-27; 1 Peter 3:8-18a

Contributor: [Zipporah Nyaga](#)

Psalm 77: 9 Has God forgotten to be merciful? Has anger taken the place of his compassion?” (GNB)

The story of Job is widely used to encourage people when they are going through hard times, in this story we see how Job’s faith was tested, how he conquered Satan and finally how God rewarded him. when we are going through hard times we believe as Christians that our faith is being tested but the human nature in us still doubt the greatness of our God.

I am a queer Christian, single mother living positively. All these qualities put me in fore front of marginalization. Being HIV+ was the hardest to accept no matter how people tried to convince me I was still in Gods plan. I felt that God had dealt so harshly on me and I did not deserve that, I was always complaining and questioning God.

Job 5:17-18

Happy is the person whom God corrects! Do not resent it when he rebukes you. God bandages the wounds he makes; his hand hurts you, and his hand heals.

I came to realize that my constant complains were driving me away from God, I started looking at life from Job’s perspective “I came naked in to this world and I will go naked”. I began to live each day at a time and I only care about each day’s trouble. I remembered how God had saved me from a horrific road accident that resulted to my HIV+ status, many people died and others were crippled but by the grace of God I survived to write my story.

Sometimes we lack the “correct” words to comfort our friends when they are facing troubles and we get careless with words like jobs friends. I always have a setback whenever I try to date because of my HIV status, I got tired of explaining how I got it because most people think I got careless with sex. There is a lot of suffering in the world today, economically, almost every household has a cancer patient, discrimination of lgbtq persons. People are in pain.

Lent reminds us how Jesus suffered for our sins, let us also share with those suffering as instructed in 1 st peter 3:8 “To conclude: you must all have the same attitude and the same feelings; love one another, and be kind and humble with one another.

As we share in suffering, let us always remember that, our God is faithful and merciful and when we cry to him, we are just telling him we are tired. We can no longer bear the hurt alone; we are asking God to take the pain from us and bear it for he alone can handle it as he handled the cross.

Wishing you all a blessed Lent.

Wednesday, February 21, 2024

Psalm 77; Job 5:8-27; 1 Peter 3:8-18a

Contributor: [Liggera Edmonds-Allen](#)

‘He provides rain for the earth; he sends water on the countryside. The lowly he sets on high, and those who mourn are lifted to safety. He thwarts the plans of the crafty, so that their hands achieve no success. He catches the wise in their craftiness, and the schemes of the wily are swept away.’

How painful this passage is for me, when governments make it illegal for the impoverished to collect rainwater. How horrifying, when those in power legislate against me and my transgender siblings. The LORD provides food and water for us all – yet the ‘crafty’ and ‘wily’ divvy it up, and tell the starving there is simply not enough.

There’s a lot of ‘craftiness’ these days. Billboards float in the ocean. Projected advertisements blot out the sky. People have found ways to buy the stars and sky above, and cut it into parts and parcels for businesses to obtain. Everything the LORD has created has been commodified and sold, all for the purpose of selling more, more, more. The LORD is abundant, and the ‘wily’ crave this distinction. Although every season has its waxes and wanes, and every week has its day of rest, the ‘wily’ cry for more, more, more. More profits, more workers, more production. The only things I can think of that are expected to always grow and never decay are cancer cells, and capital.

What can be done, now, in the face of greed? This is the eternal question. Do we tighten our belts and wait for our heavenly reward? Do we pray for the downfall of the crafty?

I remember a joke from somewhere; a man is drowning, and a boat comes by. ‘Do you need any help?’ ‘No,’ the drowning man says. ‘The LORD will save me.’ A surfer and a helicopter pilot all ask the same question. The drowning man gives the same reply: ‘No, I don’t need help. The LORD will save me.’ And yet the man does drown, and marches up to God in heaven. ‘What gives?’ ‘Well!’ the LORD says. ‘I sent you a boat, a surfer, a helicopter...’

I believe that we are made in the LORD’s image. I believe that the LORD works through us to make change on Earth, today. He was there for the drowning man, in the hands of those driving the boat. He does not come to us in the ways we might expect.

Thus, I propose we replace the pronoun ‘He’ with the idea of ‘We’ – us and God, God working with us. We will thwart the plans of the crafty. We will set the lowly on high. This is not to erode the sacred nature of the LORD: this is to fully expose our most sacred mission. The LORD gives us the power and responsibility to love our neighbor, to protect his creations. We must ‘catch the wise in their craftiness,’ ignore their shiny advertisements, and bring to light their disgusting abuses of power. We must refuse to give them ‘more, more, more,’ while paychecks dwindle and abuse skyrockets.

Although they crave the LORD’s abundance, we deny that to the crafty and wily in power. As we know, their schemes will be swept away...

Contributor: [Idah Gitau](#)

Genesis 15: 5. The Lord took him outside and said, “look at the sky and try to count the stars; you will have as many descendants as that”.

My best friend in primary school was called grace, we came from the same village. Her mother died when we were in class 3. Her father remarried immediately after grace mother died because he worked in Nairobi and he wanted someone to take care of grace. After a few years, the step mother started mistreating grace by giving her all the house chores. In our village we used to go to the river to fetch water, before going to school, grace was ordered to first go to the river and fetch water. In class grace was always tired and yawning but to everyone’s surprise she always topped with very high marks. This did not go well with her step mother; she was angry that even after mistreating grace she was performing well in class. She had two step sisters who were not allowed to do any house chores but they were very poor in class.

One day we were in class when grace step mother came and asked the teacher to give grace permission to go home, she lied that there was an emergency that she wanted grace to attend to. Grace went home with her step mother and she was told to go and collect firewood in the forest because she was going to visit her father in Nairobi and she would return home late. She had cooked a nice meal and told grace she would eat after finishing the work Grace in her obedience rushed to the forest and came back with big load of firewood to make her stepmother happy and avoid being punished. She did not eat the food as she wanted to hurry and catch up with school as we were about to do exams. That day we left her in class as we went home because she had a lot of class work of the lesson she missed.

Around six in the evening, the whole village was filled with screaming from graces compound. As we were rushing to the scene, we met grace as she was coming from school, we reached at their compound and her step mother was the one screaming saying she has killed her children. She confessed that she had poisoned the food for grace to eat but her children ate it. everyone was shocked at her confession. Grace was taken from the scene by police officers who took her to a children’s home where she found foster parents. Grace succeeded and she is a medical doctor at Nairobi hospital.

I share her story because sometimes we are clouded with uncertainties, we focus so much on our current situations and only see impossibilities. Our hero of faith Abraham believed when God told him his descendants will be as many as the stars. Having faith in God removes fear and doubt.

Talking about Lgbtq+ rights in Africa is something that many people are not ready to talk about. We continue to suffer in silence but let us continue to trust in God.

Always trust in the one who conquered sin, suffering and death.

Contributor: [Jimmy Abyad](#)

Not gonna lie, I experienced some whiplash going through these passages. I started with Genesis and instantly thought, 'I don't want to read this story again, give me a break.' Then I got to Romans and thought, okay, maybe there is a better way to see this. These days, I have this response more often when I read the Bible. In the past, Scripture was held up as the bastion of all truth, all life, and it was my access point to God. Whether it was that pressure or other contributing beliefs, I did not feel I could engage honestly with Scripture. Sure, I could bring some of my anxieties, my hard days, and look to God as my 'good Father' but could I bring my anger, my grief, the parts I considered to be dirty (even though now I'd say none of that is 'dirty'). I didn't feel I could, nor did I see many others free to do that.

Sure, the gay card came into play, but there were and are a lot of other challenging passages to get through around non-Israelites, or non-males, or anyone who dares to make a mistake in the eyes of God (see Uzzah in 1 Chronicles 13:9). This gave me the feeling of walking around on eggshells (accidental easter pun) with God and Scripture, and most of the Christian people in my community of family and friends. I thought to myself, what if I cross a line with my questions, or miss something I definitely should have known. So just in case, I better force myself to read this, to memorize it, understand it, pray it, study it, meditate on it, and whatever else helped me to survive from being struck down.

Survive is a strong word and I now realize, over time, my fight to find safe places and people comes from being in harsh relationships with church, religion, and relationships, even myself. By harsh, I mean ones that did not see me, did not hear me, said hateful things to and about me, or contributed to self-hatred and distrust of myself and others.

Abraham made mistakes and yet was reckoned as righteous, even after these frustrating stories like the one with Hagar, especially the subsequent effects on Hagar and her future son being punished and banished for something outside their control. Abraham was reckoned to be righteous, Romans emphasizes, before he even had the opportunity to make mistakes or even right his wrongs. It's almost as if the Romans author himself is trying to make sense of how he came to be considered righteous.

As I find myself relatively hopeful after finishing with Romans 4, that it's my faith that makes me righteous in God's eyes rather than the good versus bad that I do, it remains hard to trust Scripture as much as I once did or hoped to. Yet here I am, grateful that I can come to Scripture with a different perspective, a lighter, simpler, more honest approach. This approach has been life-giving and healing. It allows me to bring my full self, with all my doubts, but also my full self that always desired to connect with the Divine love whom it seems still wants to connect with me regardless of my perfect approach to Scripture. Oddly, this is the freedom and love I always wanted with my faith. I did not expect it to come from this particular path.

Saturday, February 24, 2024

Psalm 22:23-31, Genesis 16:7-15, Mark 8:27-30

Contributor: [Daniel Kihara](#)

Genesis 16:13 Hagar asked herself, “Have I really seen God and lived to tell about it?” so she called the Lord, who had spoken to her, “A God Who sees.” (GNB)

Hagar was running away; she had no idea where she was going, the only thing she knew was that she was running away from Sarai. The angel of the Lord called her by name. I can imagine the expression on her face when the Angel told her to go back to her mistress and submit. She knew very well the Angel was aware of how she had behaved in her mistress home after finding that she was pregnant. Immediately she realized she had seen God. Hagar was wandering in the wilderness and she was pregnant, with the harsh conditions probably she could have died together with her kid in the wilderness.

As a gay man, I know the feeling of being in the wilderness, running away from myself. I have struggled to love my own body; I hated my soft voice. I was ashamed of talking in public as people would laugh at me, I never looked at myself in the mirror. I admired men with deep voices and I was so much ashamed to show it. I was taught that desiring same sex persons was sinful and should be denied. I moved from my village with the hope of starting a new life where no one knew me. I was trying to fit in a new environment and I made new friends that turned out not to be too good to be called friends. I was introduced to hard drugs and I lost focus in life, I found my self in hospitals many times as a result of overdose. I begged to die but I lived.

Each one of us has their turning points, mine came during covid 19. Town life had become unbearable because of lock down. I decided to go back to the village, I had no idea how I was going to survive as a gay man in the village but I found “A God who sees”. I was introduced to Pastor Megan and I felt like I had met with an angel in the wilderness. We started a home fellowship for Lgbtq+ Christians in our village and surrounding villages. In the fellowship, I met with a friend who is an expert in farming. We were lucky to secure a grant from Parity that enabled us to start farming in large scale. Going back in the village was so humbling but this is where I found my blessings. Sometimes we just have to submit to the circumstances we don’t like for things to work out.

I know we have many Lgbtq+ persons who are suffering in our society, it is my prayer that in their messy situations they will find “A God who sees”, the one who cares enough to know our past, present and future.

Sunday, February 25, 2024

Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16; Psalm 22:23-31; Romans 4:13-25;

Mark 8:31-38 or Mark 9:2-9

Contributor: [Dr. Stephen V. Sprinkle](#)

...But he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, being fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.

A small rural congregation at the foot of the Blue Ridge Mountains, Salem Fork Church, birthed me in faith. I grew up there. I became aware of my same-gender-loving orientation as well as my sense of call to the ordained ministry among those Christians who made their living from the land. My mother and my aunt sang in the choir. My cousin played piano. All my deceased relatives lie buried in the church cemetery, just across from the sanctuary where I professed my faith many years ago.

No one at our church talked about sexual orientation in my youth. Thankfully, in critical difference from some other churches in the vicinity, I never heard a negative word about gay people at Salem Fork. It wasn't mentioned. No Salem Fork preacher in my memory ever declared an ugly word about queer folk. I heard plenty of hostility in other places, like work and school...but never at church. The promises of Christian faith grew in me without fear of God's rejection.

I followed my calling, went away to school and seminary, and pastored churches throughout my adulthood. I went back to my home church from time to time, but never broached the subject of my orientation to anyone there, other than my Aunt Lora. It just never came up.

I received a handwritten letter from the church years after leaving Salem Fork, from the Chair of the Official Board of the congregation, a wonderful fellow named Monk McCraw.

Monk's family and mine were longtime members and friends at the church. The McCraws belonged to the Sunday School class my mother taught for over 25 years. Monk was a chicken farmer with a gracious wife named Vivian whom everyone knew by her nickname, "Doodle." The handwriting on the letter was Doodle's. Monk had asked her to write down his message to me.

He began by saying, "Steve, we've been talking about you in the Board Meeting. We're proud of you, son. Now, we figure you're never going to get married. But the Board voted to offer you a space in the graveyard right beside your Mama and Daddy, if you'll have it. You see, you're part of us...."

It was the next line that touched me as deeply as anything I have ever read. Doodle wrote down Monk's words just as he spoke them:

"...For when we rise, we want you to rise with us."

Monk's simple trust in the promise of the resurrection, underwritten by the shared faith of the Board members, reached out and caressed me. I knew they understood who I am, bone of their bone, and flesh of their flesh...and faith of their faith. Unmarried to a woman, or partnered with a man. All they cared about is what we will always share. Just love.

This is why Jesus Christ matters to me. Among them I *will* rise, as surely as God is able. The Very One "who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead." The One who keeps promises.

Saturday, February 26, 2024

Psalm 105:1-11, 37-45; Genesis 21:1-7; Hebrews 1:8-12

Contributor: [Giacomo Liggera](#)

In Genesis 21:1-7, Sarah bears Abraham a son, Isaac, despite their respective ages. This fulfills God's promise to both her and Abraham, a dream they had thought was impossible.

This verse resonates in weird ways to me. I have chosen not to have children. When I was 17, I was diagnosed with a life changing illness, one that is hereditary. Although I recognize my privileges in life, my illness changed it in every aspect. All too often, I envision what a life without it would look like; everything that would have been easier, from little to big. Children are one of the things I have come to ruminate on more and more.

This year, I will turn 29 years of age. As I grow closer and closer to 30, and see the people my age bear their own children, it is hard not to think of myself and others like me. In some ways, the fact that I could become pregnant makes it more complicated. Instead of a definite no, having children would be a gamble. Any child I have would have a 10 percent chance of inheriting my illness.

My story is not particularly unique. I know many other people struggle with the same issue I do, some under much worse circumstances. However, Sarah's words bring me comfort:

God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me.

Sarah, who laughed at the idea that she could have children, is now with a child.

At first, I was uncomfortable reading this verse. Confronted very viscerally with my chosen infertility, it is hard not to feel scorn, which I readily admit to, for inspiring false hope with others similar to me.

However, I am comforted that I too will be able to share in the laughter of those around me. The knowledge that my family wants, and are able to safely have children, brings me incredible joy. While I will never have my own children, I am content in the fact that I will share in the laughter, and love, of those who surround me.

Tuesday, February 27, 2024

Psalms 105; 1-11,37-45; Genesis 21:1-7; Hebrews 1:8-12

Contributor: [Diana Laskaris](#)

The story of people longing for a better country really resonates with me. During the pandemic angry men with semi-automatic rifles stood at the capitol building of my city yelling that no one could tell them what to do for public health reasons. I finally decided that I could no longer live among such people. I left the United States and moved to Portugal in search of a safer, more peaceful life. I still struggle with the realization that I feel more at home and welcome as a foreigner than with my own people in the country of my birth. But it is true.

By the time I left the U.S., even calling myself a Christian felt wrong. I no longer found comfort in a church community. I cringed when someone told me in no uncertain terms what a “good Christian” they were while at the same time spewing hostility, resentment, and intolerance that I never associated with good Christian behavior. I felt like the loving God I knew had been ripped away from me and replaced by a hateful, disapproving, elitist tyrant. Because I don’t look “different” on the outside, it was assumed that I agreed that those with less money or in the LGBTQ+ community were merely Christian-adjacent, that is, not real Christians like them. Apparently they forgot who they were talking to.

Ironically, I brought a Catholic friend to my protestant church once. He said that he enjoyed it so much, but what a shame that everyone there was going to Hell. I guess he forgot that he was gay or believed that because he was very wealthy, he could somehow avoid that fate. The hypocrisy around me was stunning.

I also feel tested like Abraham. Although my immediate environment is much more welcoming, I agonize over what is happening in the rest of the world. Brutal wars, mass shootings, politicians encouraging hate and divisiveness. As if that were not enough, the destruction of the earth, wildlife, the oceans, money to be made. How far am I willing to trust in the Lord when all of this happens? Everything is being ignored for the sake of money to be made. How far am I willing to trust in the Lord when all of this is happening?

Hebrews says that faith is “confidence in what we hope for and assurance in what we cannot see.” I now live among peaceful people who welcome strangers, protect and celebrate LGBTQ+ people, and treat one another as part of a genuine community. I feel more connected to my neighbors, who are compassionate not hateful. Even though I live in a different country and culture, I feel less like a foreigner and stranger on earth.

My new country is not perfect. But I feel God’s presence and see faith in action through my community, my neighbors, my friends. Maybe this was the Lord’s plan for me all along. To rediscover myself, my faith, and the best of human nature, I had to leave what I knew and become a foreigner. It gives me hope that God’s promise will be fulfilled. That someday none of us will be strangers in a heavenly country where we all feel we belong.

Contributor: [Dorcas Kiki](#)

The story of Sarah and Abraham reminds me of my aunty Lucy. I admire her Faith in God because despite what she has gone through, her faith in God was evident. Even to this day she still walks reciting rosary. My aunt was blessed with three girls when the tradition dictated that inheritance belonged to male children only. She was being ridiculed by her husbands' brothers because their wives had sons. My uncle was very comfortable with her daughters and he used to comfort my aunty by assuring her even if they did not have a male child, her daughters were enough. Unfortunately, her husband died through road accident. It was a great loss to us because he was the most loving, caring uncle from our mother's side. Just like many African men, the husband had not drafted a will. It is believed in the African culture that drafting a will is attracting your own death. Tradition instructed that when a brother dies and he has no male child, his wife and children will be inherited by the big brother left in the husband's family.

My aunty disagreed with their tradition and looked for a lawyer. She was determined to fight for her rights as a woman and also seek justice for her girls. The court fight started and along the way, money exchanged hands and the in-law's won the case. My aunty did not lose hope, she looked for another lawyer because she was told even her previous lawyer was compromised. The case was appealed at the high court, the process was exhausting as the case kept on being postponed. One day I even told her to just give up because she was being given death threats to drop the case. She told me she believes God will make her laugh one day just like she did to Sarah in her old age.

No one knew how my aunts case got the attention of media houses and a group that fights for women rights came to her rescue. She was presented for free in high court and she won the case. She went through a hard time fighting for justice but she became the sacrificial lamb to many women in Kenya. Today our constitution allows women to inherit properties.

Genesis 21: 6 Sarah said, "God has brought me joy and laughter. Everyone who hears about it will laugh with me."

When God chose to make you laugh, everyone will know it is God because your blessing will be extra ordinary. Let us be steadfast in faith because we have seen what he has done before. I believe in this God who gave Sarah a child at old age, I am also hopeful that one day Lgbtq+ persons will live out of the closet. They will laugh and the world will know because they will love and walk freely because Jesus' death on the cross was to set us all free.

Contributor: Sontaia Briggs

Faith Put to the Flesh Test: Book of Job, 1:1-22 ESV, MSG)

Do you find yourself complaining, not aloud but in your mind? Does your mind respond to challenges with these statements: why me, just my luck, and if God was a comedian look at my life for proof?

Not these exact phrases, but you understand what I am illustrating. Quietly in our minds, we question the harshness of life and rejoice in the joys. We say why us, why now?

I say look to the life of Job. Job is described as blameless, upright, and a man who looked away from evil. He was an ideal servant, and God still allowed for the devil to put him through the faith flesh test.

Job's life was an example of his faith. He was dutiful and abundantly blessed. Job was the 'faith,' in the word faithful. Job even prayed for his children and made offerings in anticipation of their errors. If Job was good, why would God allow him to be tested? If we are praying, studying, making positive choices, living our lives in service of the betterment of society, why do we still struggle? This question is older than time, why do bad things happen to good people?

Job's story can offer us answers. One day the devil and God were having a conversation and God was bragging about Job. The devil responded making this interesting observation and statement to God: "Does Job fear God for no reason? (Job 1:9 ESV) Job did everything to please God and was rewarded. The devil was asking an important question: What had Job suffered or lost in spite of his faith? Would Job withstand the faith flesh test?

Job's faith hadn't been tested, only rewarded. God's response to the devil, "Do your worse; I have faith in Job." This action at first glance could be perceived as cruel. Why would God permit the devil to test Job? Faith. Job's faith was being put to the flesh test.

Have you considered Faith and Blessings as a two-way street with God? There is an exchange, a highway. God provides, and we are required to show up and be faithful. Our faithfulness is required even when God appears to be on blessings hiatus from our lives.

When God chooses to put our faith to the flesh test. The flesh test is God's greatest act of devotion to us. The Faith flesh test is a God response to your life; that means I trust you and you've got this.

The next time you find yourself saying why me? Remember the two-way road you are one with God. Consider that God is testing you because you are equipped. Trials are messy, but in every setback, your faith, spirit and resolve are strengthened.

Here is a mental exercise: when you are having a hard today, consider you have already overcome what you perceived as a hard day before this day. Meaning you are stronger than you think, and your faith has been tested and approved.

Friday, March 1, 2024

Psalm 19; Exodus 19: 9b-15; Acts 7:30-40

Contributor: [Jacklin Wambui](#)

In every village, there is that one woman who is a darling to many people. In our village we had this woman who was admired largely by almost the whole village. She was the chairlady of catholic women association, there was no occasion that could have happened in our village without her being involved. She was trusted by politicians to gang up for their support in women groups. We admired her children because unlike us they were always smart. She always held her rosary in her hand as she walked reciting it along the road. She was very free with drunkards and she jokingly called them her sons, we thought she was preaching to them and no one could have suspected she had a business deal with them.

One Sunday afternoon as we were going home after church service, a police car entered the church compound. We were eager to know what a police car from a neighboring district had come to do in church. they asked for the chair lady and they were directed to her as people thought she was being asked for directions. To everyone's surprise, our chairlady was hand cuffed and police escorted her to her home where after a long search they found rolls of weed and chemicals that are used to make illicit brews. She was arrested and aligned in court where she was jailed for 10 years without bail.

To say the village was shocked is an understatement, no one believed that the "perfect" woman was in real life a drug trafficker. Her husband was the main supplier stationed in Kenya /Uganda boarder; he was tracked down by intelligence police officers because he always escaped arrest at the boarder by bribing. When the woman was arrested, her husband went to court to appeal for her release and arrest him in her place, but both of them were arrested. Later they were released after appealing the ruling but they were too ashamed to return in the village. They sold their properties and went away.

As I was going through todays scriptures, the only thing that came to my mind was repentance. Many times, we get very careless and sin deliberately, even if we sin in secret and we do not repent. Our sins will be exposed because we can lie to human but we cannot lie to God.

Psalm 19:12-13 But who can discern their own errors? Forgive my hidden faults. Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me. then I will be blameless, innocent of great transgressions.

Prayer

Dear God, reveal to me the hidden sins in my heart, I pray that you help me avoid messing up deliberately. Cleanse me and create in me a pure heart. I desire to be holy and clean before you. In Jesus name I pray, Trust and believe. Amen.

Saturday, March 2, 2024

Psalm 19; Exodus 19:16-25; Mark 9:2-8

Contributor: [Denise Hamblen](#)

Many years ago, I had the opportunity to serve a religious mission in southern Germany. In Bavaria, it was not unusual to be greeted at the subway stop, the store, or on the street with the greeting “Grüß Gott”, or “God bless you”. I found the practice a wonderful way to acknowledge, and be acknowledged, as one deserving of God’s blessings. And so, on this cold Utah morning, Grüß Gott!

Our theme for this series of Lent devotionals, Ashes Alive, was at the center of my thoughts as I studied today’s scriptures. And I am so grateful for the change in perspective it provided. The scriptures are so complex, simple, and multi-dimensional.

Transfigured – what a massive concept. Growing up, the stories of Moses on Mount Sinai and Peter, James, and John on Mount Tabor (or Mount Hermon, depending on your personal studies), were as distant and foreign as it could be. As a closeted, queer Mormon kid, the idea of being in the presence of God was unimaginable. Simply by the nature of my queerness, I was deemed an abomination by my church leaders. I grew up hearing that I was right up there with the sin of murder. Boy, was that a lot for a 12-year-old to carry.

And with that, every prayer was burdened by the thought that simply being myself excluded me from being with God. My prayers, rather than seeking for guidance in how I, as a disciple of Christ, could best serve Him, were weighted down with pleas to change me. And those prayers went unanswered for years.

Until I claimed my whole self, including my queerness, I could not hear the Lord. I didn’t feel His assurances. I was deaf to His expressions of love. I was much like those who drew near to Him with their lips, but whose hearts were far from Him. My heart was full of pain and shame that I couldn’t change and be who I was told He wanted me to be.

And then I experienced my own transfiguration. It was in the shower, one night when my soul was weighed down so heavily that I just wanted my life here to end. After decades of pleading to be changed, I was. But it did not happen as I expected. While I was not engulfed in a cloud, I clearly heard with my spiritual ears the words “you are asking me the wrong question.” As I let the water pour over me, I uttered a simple prayer, “Am I who You created me to be?” And then I listened for the answer. It washed over me with warmth I had never experienced. Gone was the thought that I was a disappointment to Him. Replacing that dark hole in my soul was an incomparable light that comes when God enters your heart.

It is my prayer, this Lenten season, that each of us gives up the thought that we are not enough for God. The abundance of His grace is all around. He is waiting for us to claim our place as His children. His love, His mercy surrounds us, and, with and in Him, we are made whole. As I look out my window, I don’t see much life. But I know, there is new life in the spring. And I know there is new life in Him. Amen.

Sunday, March 3, 2024

Exodus 20:1-17; Psalm 19; 1st Corinthians 1:18-25; John 2:13-22

Contributor: [Samuel Thrikwa](#)

A famous person always trends carefully to protect his image in public, we have seen famous families going extreme heights to guard their name.

My family has been known for being a clergy family. My great-great grandfather had a very big piece of land and when missionaries came, he gave them land to build a church. In our extended family we have more than 10 ordained pastors including my father.

When I was outed my father tried to cover it up by organizing an abrupt wedding, he had to protect our family name. He used my uncles to convince me that getting married was the only way our family name would be salvaged. I also felt guilty and I gave in to their demands, I started dating the girl that my aunty chose for me. I tried to love that girl with every fiber in me and I realized I cared for her so much and I told her the truth why my family wanted our marriage to rush. She also told she loved another guy but when she was approached by my aunty she could not resist because our family was financially stable.

We both agreed that she will be the one to break the news to my aunty and when my father heard the news, I was disowned. My father called me with a lot of bitterness and told me he will not suffer shame and humiliation because of me. He was determined to guard a family name at the expense of his son. The whole family distanced its self from me and no one wanted to be associated with me. I dropped out of school and that is how my street life started.

In Kenya we boast of 80% of our population being Christians. All of us have our faith based on indigenous churches like Catholic and Anglican where we go through catechism before we are baptized and later confirmed as full Christian. We knew the ten commandments and even recited them in our sleep. The things happening in our country do not reflect a country that has high population of Christians.

What if we practice what the ten commandments teaches us, what if we guard our Christian image as we guard our family image. I just imagine the peace we could be enjoying all over the world. We couldn't be having the senseless killings we are witnessing every day. We would be living in harmony with our neighbors and there would be no corruption.

God is merciful and we only live by his grace. We have made ourselves small gods in form of material wealth. We have exalted ourselves to a point the needy bow down to us before we assist them.

Let us return to God in repentance, let us draw near to God and purpose to live in a way that will glorify God.

Monday, March 4, 2024

Psalm 84; 1 Kings 6:1-4, 21-22; 1 Corinthians 3:10-23

Contributor: [Rev. Dr. Marian Edmonds-Allen](#)

1 Corinthians, 21b-23 “All things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas[c] or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God.”

All things are yours!

That is a bold claim, and one that is easily disproved. Even the most wealthy of this world cannot possess the present or the future, or life or death, never mind the entire world!

The more education I have and the more years I live, the more certain I am that these words, from the start of today’s Scripture are true: **1 Corinthians 3:18-21a: Do not deceive yourselves. If any of you think you are wise by the standards of this age, you should become “fools” so that you may become wise. 19 For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God’s sight. As it is written: “He catches the wise in their craftiness” [a]; 20 and again, “The Lord knows that the thoughts of the wise are futile.” [b] 21 So then, no more boasting about human leaders!**

I am convinced that each of us has wisdom to share, regardless of age, education level or any other symbol of wisdom or success. The experts say that Jesus was likely illiterate, and he was born to an unwed mother and lived in an undesirable neighborhood “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” (John 1:46). Jesus was laughed at, spat upon, and yet...we call Him the Son of God, the Most High, the second person of the Trinity - and more, because Jesus is our Savior.

I don’t know about you, but I have lived through ridicule. I have lived in places no one would ever want to live (a car) and for many of my adult years I was embarrassed to have not earned a bachelors degree. I felt less-than, and when I finally figured out (at the age of 40) that I am LGBT, I was quite sure that God had finally, fully abandoned me. I was quite sure that my life was over, and that if God didn’t love me, how could anyone else, and how could I ever love myself?

But God didn’t stop loving me. When people ask me why I am “still a Christian” - that is my answer. God has never let go of me, through good times and tough times. And discovering that I am LGBT, becoming a laughingstock and a fool to others - that actually was what the author of our Scripture today was talking to me about. I had to become completely humbled to find my wisdom in Christ Jesus. Nothing else could teach me that priceless lesson. All of my education and experience could never teach me what humility finally did.

My life is in no way unique. Each of us has been on a hard journey, but a hard earthly journey is the journey that Jesus walked. Our God-who-became-man has walked in our shoes, and so we have the opportunity to step into his sandals. Especially during Lent and Holy Week.

And if you are reading this volume you have lived through tough things - either as an LGBT person or someone who has love in their heart for LGBT people. Know that your journey is a holy one. Your wisdom is hard-earned, and priceless.

The world may call us fools but we are fools for Christ. And Jesus walks *with* us, beloved, just as we are.

Every single step of the way.

Tuesday, March 5, 2024

Psalms 84, 2nd Chronicles 29:1-11, 16-19; Hebrews 9: 23-28

Contributor: [Lucy Wanijuru](#)

The first time I got a phone I was so excited to join Facebook, I was hoping to connect with old friends and probably get job opportunities. After a few weeks of being on Facebook, I realized it was affecting me negatively. All the people we were friends with while young were posting about how progressive they had become. I admired them and even tried to reach out to some of them but they could not help. I wondered why they were ignoring me and yet many of them knew my story but I later came to realize that most people live a fake life on social media. People post their photos with #blessed because according to them they measure being blessed by material things.

Before God blessed me with an epileptic child, I also counted material things as real blessings. We all admire to have a good life where by we do not have to struggle for food, shelter or clothes. When I gave birth to my son, my perspective towards life changed, everyday that my son is alive I count myself blessed. Doctors had told me that he had a maximum of two years to live, after the two years, we started living each day at a time, every minute that pass I count it as a blessing and that is what Psalms 84 is teaching us.

Psalms 84:11-12 for the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord bestows favor and honor; no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless. Lord Almighty, blessed is the one who trusts in you. (NIV)

Blessed are those who praise God, who find their strength in trusting Him. I always look back and reflect on the past, my journey has been painful and full of obstacles. The people I expected would help me failed and when I came to a point where I thought was the end, God gave me a new beginning. If you put your hope in God, he will never fail you and blessed you shall be.

2 Chronicles 29:11 My sons, do not be negligent now, for the Lord has chosen you to stand before him and serve him, to minister before him and to burn incense". (NIV)

My life has been full of challenges as a queer Christian but I choose to forget the past and move forward. God has chosen us to serve in different capacities and we should be very careful not to neglect our calling. It was hard to accept that my child was abled differently, I lived in denial praying for him to heal. But today I can post my son and say #blessed. God gave me enough grace to realize that it is a very big responsibility I was given to look after my son and I will always do it without a murmur.

Dwelling in the Lord's presence, trusting each step of the way is what makes me alive.

Wednesday, March 6, 2024

Psalm 84; Ezra 6:1-16; Mark 11:15-19

Contributor: [Naiomi Gonzalez](#)

How lovely is your dwelling place, LORD Almighty!
My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the LORD;
my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.-Psalm 84:1-2

I am opinionated, queer, non-binary, and Puerto Rican. And to many churches in the US, my mere existence is viewed as a threat. I am to be silenced at all costs. In Evangelical circles of any racial/ethnic background, I am viewed as an abomination because of my queerness and nonbinarness. I am treated as an affront to God, someone to be punished and condemned to hell. Not to mention, in white Evangelical spheres, white supremacy has gained a stronghold, so in those spaces both my queerness and ethnicity are viewed with disdain.

In many Mainline Protestant congregations, which tend to be predominantly white (though of course there are exceptions) my queerness is celebrated but my race/ethnicity is only valued for increasing the perceived diversity of their congregation. Furthermore, my outspokenness is not always appreciated and I am often reduced to the “fiery Latina” caricature.

And yet despite the disdain that many US churches have for me and for those who look and speak like me, I still find myself drawn to the Church and to a life of faith. “Why?” I am often asked by others who are on the margins and who have also been deeply wounded by the US church.

The answer is both simple and complicated: because I love the God and I love the Church. Because as imperfect as the institution is, I have been lucky to find individual congregations who have shown me the love of God. There was the small Moravian Congregation during my college years, that embraced me and all my questions as I rejected the fundamentalist faith of my youth.

congregations who have shown me the love of God. There was the small Moravian Congregation during my college years, that embraced me and all my questions as I rejected the fundamentalist faith of my youth.

There were the two United Methodist campus ministry groups, who although the official denomination (at that time) had taken a negative and largely non-affirming stance, bucked their denomination and unabashedly welcomed queer folk. There were the numerous congregations both online and in person, of various denominational ties, who gave me a platform to preach. There is the small, Episcopal church in rural Georgia, one of the few Mainline Protestant congregations in town, who welcome me and my queerness.

In other words, without denying the real harm and violence that too many congregations in the US inflict, I have been lucky to find individual congregations who have bene courageous enough to push back against the racism and bigotry of larger US society. While the Institutional Church in general has failed to nurture and protect, these individual congregations have stepped up.

Their love and courage in the face of hostility, including from others within their own faith tradition, has inspired me to shout for joy with the psalmist. These individual congregations have helped, on many occasions to resurrect my mustard seed of a faith, which so many others within Christendom have tried so hard to destroy. These small, struggling congregations, have demonstrated to me that those who preach hatred, violence, and oppression may be extremely loud, but they aren’t the only Christian voices available; that my voice and my life, as insignificant as they may be to the dominant culture, does matters.

Contributor: [David Mwaura](#)

The first time I experienced El Nino rains in Kenya was 1997, my village being located on a hilly place was not spared. There was a massive landslide that killed many people and livestock. We escaped death by a whisker and we had to relocate. Floods were all over and the country went in to a panic mode.

Many people preached about the end of the world, there rose many “prophets” all over telling people to sell their belongings and take all the proceedings in church as they wait for the rapture. it is very easy to use the bible to mislead desperate people and that is how many desperate Christians lost their properties. our grandmother was very old but she was a very stout Christian, she was not scared of the rains, she used to remind us that God made a promise never again to destroy the world with waters. Today I admire the faith of our grandmother, she held on to the promise of God even when the floods were ranging.

Genesis 9: 11 with these words I make my covenant with you; I promise that never again will all living beings be destroyed by a flood; never again will a flood destroy the earth.

As a gay Christian, I relate very well with the scriptures today. I grew up being told to believe that God hates gays and they will burn forever in hell. I hated the fact that I was gay because I feared Gods judgment. I tried to be a “normal” man, I hated other men and I just wanted to be close to women. Whenever a man approached me, I used to rebuke them and later feel guilty because the attraction was so strong.

I tried so much to avoid being gay and escape Gods judgment and I failed terribly; I became an empty shell living in a very dark cocoon. I believed I was created in the image of God but I needed a sign to assure me that I will not burn in hell forever.

Rainbow was the sign that God used to assure Noah of their covenant, even today when a rainbow appears we know that there will be no rain. As a gay Christian man, I needed a sign as an assurance and prove of God’s love.

Ephesians 1: 5-6 he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will. To the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the one he loves. (NIV)

Yes! Jesus Christ is the assurance that the Lgbtq+ community needs. Since the time I gave my life to Christ, I have this inner peace and confidence. Just like my grandmother was not afraid of the floods, I am no longer afraid of people telling me God hates me for living true to myself. Jesus Christ dying on the cross is enough prove of Gods love that endures forever.

Contributor: [Persis Luke](#)

When I read these passages a few elements (and challenges) of living a faithful life came to me. I am reminded that God's love can redeem and heal us from our troubles and sorrows. That living in Christ promises redemption and through faith and that Justice will come to fruition.

I am on the other side of 60 years, so I have been on this faith journey for a while. I came out at the age of thirty and met my wife at the age of thirty-five. We have been together for 30 years. I grew up in a Presbyterian church that was on the progressive side (in the 1960s) and was adept at openly and faithfully exploring the social justice movements of the time (Civil Rights, The Vietnam war and even the emerging feminist movement), but the issue of justice for non-conforming or LGBTQ+ persons was non-existent. I loved my church community and participated in youth choir and youth group. It balanced the chaos that was happening at home.

When I came out many years later, I was a member of a Presbyterian Church in Brooklyn, NY. It was during the late eighties and early nineties and there was a lot of passion and sometimes acrimony over the questions of accepting gay people into the life of the church. Many members still felt that same-gender relationships were an abomination. This was so hurtful to me since the church, up until that time, had only offered a loving community.

I thought about leaving the church altogether but then I met another seeker at my church, a gay man. We met and shared our grief. Out of this sharing of grief and our desire to remain faithful, we persevered and gave each other the strength to enter discussions with others. Our pastor was supportive but not wholeheartedly affirming, which added to our grief. After much prayer, I made a conscious decision to not give up and to not throw the baby out with the bathwater.

I stayed in the Church and got involved in working with affirming organizations which were faithfully pushing for justice for LGBTQ+ rights within the church itself. This was the test in which I realized that faith is much bigger than the church. I maintained my faith in a loving God and a life in Christ.

I came to believe that I am loved just as I am. And I believed that in time, the church would come along (or not) but this did not have to impact my faith in a loving God. Today, my denomination ordains and marries LGBTQ+ persons. But this is a precarious position and there are those that oppose this. I know that I must continue being faithful amid this doubt and sorrow. I have come to firmly believe that we are all children of God and that we are loved unconditionally. I try to witness this for others.

It's a wonderful journey! God will always love us out of trouble, sorrow, and doubt.

Saturday, March 9, 2024

Psalm 107: 1-3, 17-22; Numbers 20:22-29. John 3:1-13

Contributor: [Boniface Waweru](#)

When I read this book of Psalms 81, I feel good because one of the things I like doing is praising my creator, my loving Father! God almighty. Worshipping God is a thing I like so much that nothing can separate me with.

Being in rural area most of the time I worshipped while doing other activities because nobody wanted to be associated with me for being gay. This good God sent His angels one day and I got a fellowship led by pastor Megan who have tried her best to bring Lgbtq+ persons in the rural areas together for a fellowship.

We find it safe and lovely to worship together as a community because each one of us understands what we are and the fact we are gay does not mean God does not love us, thus making us praise Him. He is God our savior, by his grace we are saved from all homophobic attacks.

Today on 11th January I woke up to a shock when I read from a twitter handle of an MP called Mohammed Ali calling for arrest of al Lgbtq+ persons. "Let us not waste time discussing LQBTQ or whatever name they call it. It's illegal, God doesn't like it and we should not entertain it. On this one democracy my foot! Jail them." This is a leader chosen to lead people and he is so homophobic. When a member of the Lgbtq+ dies, our society display its level of homophobia in the social media. They say we deserve to die but let us continue praising this good God because he remains our strength.

The death of our own Edwin Chiloba has been negatively published, he was a model and an Lgbtq+ advocate who lived his life openly as a gay man.

His parents knew their child was a Christian, the Lgbtq+ community knew Chiloba as a worshiper and thus many called him pastor. But the society is saying you can not be gay and Christian, this is the world we are living in. sometimes I try to imagine if Jesus was here with us today, what would he have said about the death of Chiloba?

John 7:24 Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous Judgment (KJV)

JEREMIAH 2;4-13

Israel became worthless as the false gods that the nation worship, we see God calling on the heavens to witness this sad state of affairs in which the Israel forgot about their God and started worshiping idols.

This reminds about a neighbor we had long time back in the village. They were blessed with a good family and everyone admired them. In a span of one year, their lives changed completely and they became untouchables because of the wealth they accumulated in a short time. They acquired a big car and their kids were taken to good schools but after two years things started falling apart in the family. Their kids started to die after just a short illness and in a span of 5 years we had buried their 4 children. When the mother realized what was going on, she called a pastor and confessed that his husband had been recruited in a cult in order to get riches. Even before the pastor left the compound, their house caught fire and nothing was saved from the inferno, the same night as the husband was driving home, he was involved in an accident and died.

This true story encourages me to trust only God almighty, in His own time He will remember you and give you all that your heart desires.

Sunday, March 10, 2024

Numbers 21:4-9; Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22; Ephesians 2:1-10; John 3:14-21

Contributor: [Rev. Tom Baynham](#)

“From Death into Life” -Ephesians 2:1-10

I am a black, bi-sexual pastor. For the majority of my life, I have hidden my sexuality from some of my closest friends; members of my family; and clergy colleagues. It has only been in the past several years that I have come to terms with my sexual preferences. I chose this passage because it is my hope that those who read this scripture will accept it, not as a passage of shame, but as affirmation of who God created and gifted you to be.

For many in the LGBTQIA+ community, words like trespasses, sin, disobedient; or phrases “living in the passion of flesh”, “children of wrath”, would sense condemnation, shame, or spiritual separation from God. If we view and discern the passage from a “queer” perspective, the sin is not in our gender choices; the sin is separation from God. We become separated when we don’t spend time in prayer and study with God and God’s Word; we follow the “course of the world” when we spew racial slurs at persons with a different skin complexion. We “follow the desires of the flesh” when we claim allegiance to a nationalism that focuses more on idolatry, and not on the acts that are penned in verses four and five...”

But God, who is rich in mercy” ...”out of the great love with which God loved us” ... “made alive together with Christ- by grace you have been saved.” Regardless of how we choose to live our lives through God’s gift of love and sexuality, our relationship with God is founded on our faith and the grace given because of our faith.

In my spare time, I engage in the other joy and gift of my life, music. This past weekend, I sang a song entitled, “I Am His Child”, by the late Moses Hogan. The song has been rumbling around in my head while writing this devotion. The text of the song is the “Amen” to verse 10; “For we are what (God) has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.”

“I Am His Child”- Moses Hogan

“I may not be all that you are, I may not a shining star but what I am I thank the Lord for making me God’s child.

Thank you Lord for hearing every prayer.

Thank you Lord for just being there.

Thank you Lord, thank you Lord,
for I am not worthy of Your love.

I may not be all that you are,

I may not a shining star but what I am

I thank the Lord for making me God’s child.”

Monday, March 11, 2024

Psalm 107:1-16; Exodus 15:22-27; Hebrews 3:1-6

Contributor: [Jemima Mugo](#)

Exodus 15: 24 So the people grumbled against Moses, saying, what are we to drink?” (NIV)

We are just humans and our nature is to grumble, there is no human who can get to a point of saying they are fully satisfied with the current happenings. When it is sunny, we complain it is too hot and there will be hunger, when it rains, we still wish we can get some little sunshine and go outside our houses. I just realized that, if we are not careful, we can live a life of grumbling and this prevents us to see the bigger picture of God's grace.

Year 2007 December taught me how quickly circumstances in life can change, Kenya had just gone through general elections and we were waiting for the winner to be announced. At this time, I just had finished my high school education and I was helping my mother with farm work, this year we had a great harvest, we had just finished drying the maize and it was ready for the market. I was working so hard to make sure the maize was stored perfectly because its sale was to take me through college.

The evening election results were announced, ethnic crushes began and my tribe was the target. We fled the area with the only clothes we were wearing, we left our homes and everything that we had worked so hard to get. Many people were killed and millions worth of property destroyed.

Post election violence made me and my family relocate to central Kenya where we started a new life. I didn't get the chance to go on with my education but I survived the violence and it is in this place I have found my LGBTQ+ family and now I am participating in writing this devotion. I have enough reasons to thank God despite the circumstances. There are blessings that come with pain and we are tempted to blame God. We have seen what God can do in **Exodus 15: 22-27**.

God healed their water and also provided for them in abundance. **Psalm 107:1 Give thanks to the Lord for he is good; his love endures forever.**

We all have enough reasons to be grateful to God. Sometimes we use material things to measure our level of blessings, you might be wondering why you are not driving a big car like your friends but also you should thank God because you have two legs and you can walk. I have learnt to be positive and be contented in whatever situation I may find myself in because I know God is with me. I believe each one of us has experienced their own wilderness, mine has encouraged me to trust God more and always be thankful.

God bless us all. Amen

Contributor: [Lois Anne DeLong](#)

As I initially read through today's texts on a day that is almost at the mid-point of Lent, I first latched on to a common theme of "hunger and thirst." After all, those who follow the spiritual practice of giving something up during these days, the object surrendered is often food—sweets perhaps, or maybe meat or starches—or drink, be it coffee, diet soda, or our favorite single malt scotch. So, yes, a statement on being hungry and thirsty would make sense. And, as a point of dramatic interest, what could be better than a rock gushing water, as described in Numbers 20:11 to provide some relief from the stressors of doing without as we stumble through a dark and cold winter desert of darkness?

Yet, writing only about this single image, struck me as a bit lazy. It lets me off the hook from dealing with the very real conflict between the divine and the human that connects these ather harsh passages. In Psalms 107, the Israelites are crying out in pain, while in Numbers 10, they are grumbling about the solution that God provides. Moses hits the rock and God deems the action as evidence of a lack of faith and excludes Moses from the promised land. Meanwhile, the Corinthians passage seems to assume we will screw up, and reminds us of the punishment to come. All three texts seem to suggest our relationship to God is one long endless audition in which one misstep leads to the inevitable voice from a darkened theatre saying "Thank you. Next."

Since my entree into the LGBTQIA community was through good friends met on my somewhat limited journey as an actor and writer, an audition analogy is an apt and a welcomed description of where we stand at this point in our Lenten. Truth be told, as a straight ally, I found myself at something of a loss as to what my contribution to these devotions for a Queer community might be. I honestly feel that I have gained so much more from the LGBTQIA community than I have ever given back. Lessons in resilience, in enjoying the here and now, in how to turn insults and jokes inside out all were learned under the tutelage of my queer brothers and sisters.

So, as we stumble through this doldrums portion of the Lent, what can I add? Perhaps nothing. Perhaps all I can do is to fall in step and dance through this endless audition with you all. Maybe along the way I can lend a willing shoulder to cry on, or a cold drink when the thirst becomes too great. Mostly, I believe I can remind my fellow travelers that the sun will shine again. 1 Corinthians 10:13 assures us that "God is faithful, and...with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it."

Hang on my dear comrades, smile a big smile, and keep on dancing. I'll do my best to keep up.

Contributor: [Edwin Kiragu](#)

All my life I have known that I was different. Since my childhood, my preferences were different from those of the boys my age. This made me go through a lot of bullying to a point I decided to lock myself in a cocoon. I went through my teen years with esteem issues which really affected my relationships with people. I became a loner. The only company I loved was my own as it was the only company that never judged me.

After high school I went to the city to continue with my studies. By then, technology had started taking shape. Through it I was able to meet people who were like me. Little by little I started accepting myself and loving myself. Throughout my teen years I had become this rebellious teen and wanted to hear nothing about God. I blamed Him for making me gay. I cursed the day He created me.

I met Jakes on Facebook. He was gay and at the same time was a man of faith. I could not understand how he could dedicate his life to serve God yet He created him to be hated by others. He explained to me that no matter how people treated me, I was special to God and he loved me. One evening he tagged me along to a Bible study session in his congregation. Since then my perspective about God changed. My Bible became my armor. I experienced joy and peace that I have never experienced before.

Being an LGBTQ person of faith has not been a smooth path to walk. But the great word of God has filled my life with immeasurable joy to overcome all hurdles. **Psalms 107:1-16** talks of giving thanks to God for He is good. This scripture gives me hope and joy. Verse 5-6 says, **‘They were hungry and thirsty and their lives ebbed away. Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble and He delivered them from their distress.’** Whenever I feel lost I remember these words call upon Him and he always answers. What joy to know that there is one who is a prayer away and is ready to help. Verse 15-16 says, **‘Let them give thanks to the Lord for His unfailing love and His wonderful deeds for mankind. For He breaks down gates of bronze and cuts through bars of iron.’** These words remind me how good and loving our Father is.

Isaiah 60:15-22 gives more hope. It encourages me every time I feel attacked, hated and maltreated. Verse 15-16 reminds me no matter how I feel hated and forsaken, God will make me an everlasting pride and the joy of all generations. People of the LGBTQ community experience all manner of attacks but God says no matter all that, we will be nursed at the royal breasts and drink the milk of all nations. May our good God protect us all the time.

Thursday, March 14, 2024

Psalm 51:1-12; Isaiah 30:15-18; Hebrews 4:1-13

Contributor: [Rev Dr. Brett Mitchell](#)

“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. 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” (vv. 10-12).

There are certain songs and Bible verses that can become “ear worms.” These “ear worms” or “stuck tune syndrome” find their way, usually through hearing, that resonate deeply within a person’s heart, mind, and body. Others say they get “stuck” in your brain.

Psalm 51:10-12, is an ear worm for me when sung to the tune recorded by John Michael Talbot and his brother Terry in the 1970s. This text is often found in Hebrew poetry, in which the first verse centers on positive actions. The second is on avoidance of negative actions; the third on providing an improved spiritual condition (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, Glory to God, Hymn 423).

In the 1970s, I was younger, married to a woman, even though I knew I was gay. Being out and gay in my conservative town of Portland, Oregon was a no-no. I was also applying to attend Princeton Seminary, feeling “the call” to be a Presbyterian pastor. Neither of these institutions were open to out-LGBTQIA+ people. I chose to stay in my closet. This song quickly became an ear worm for me. It is considered one of the penitential psalm, uttered on Ash Wednesday.

My penance? Because my community of faith was anti-LGBTQ+, I was caught in the conflict of knowing I was gay since I was a young boy, yet was hidden, not knowing what to do with my attractions because there was no narrative or storyline to say that my gay self was created in the image of God, and that my very being was good.

Yet if the church knew I was gay, I knew I would be called out and denied answering the call because being gay was a sin. I felt and thought I was unclean, carrying this secret burden of being gay.

When I was alone on a daily run or driving in my car, away from anyone within hearing distance, I would sing the Talbots’ rendition of Ps. 51, “Create a clean heart, O God, let me be like you in all my ways. Give me your strength, give me your song, shelter me in the shadow of Your wings. For we are Your righteousness, if we’ve died to ourselves and live through Your death, and we shall be born again, to be blessed in Your love.”

My prayer then, and now?

Create in me a clean heart, O God. Let me be sheltered in your wings, and be blessed to feel, and know, the love of God, now out and gay.

Friday, March 15, 2024

Psalm 51:1-12; Exodus 30:1-10; Hebrews 4:14-5:4

Contributor: [Anthony Lemeiyan](#)

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:6–7 NIV

This verse reminds us that even in the face of adversity, we can find hope and strength in the knowledge that God is always with us, ready to guide and support us through any challenge.

Psalms 51 made me remember of a story before about a friend, whom I lost track of years ago, named Nahshon. He was serving five years to life in a certain prison in our country. One night, in desperation of soul, he wandered into the prison chapel, read a gospel tract, and got saved. He later learned that at the very moment he trusted in Christ, his godly mother was praying for her wayward son.

He often would say, “I’ve been forgiven much, so I love Jesus much.” As you know, that comment comes from the story of the sinful woman who anointed Jesus’ feet with her tears and wiped them. Nahshon’s comment used to bother me because I was not a notorious sinner. I grew up in the church. I’ve never used illegal drugs. I’ve never been drunk. I don’t have a police record. So I thought, “How can I say, ‘I’ve been forgiven much, so I love Jesus much,’ when I don’t have a long list of flagrant sins?”

Psalm 51 makes us think seriously about our sin and therefore to think seriously about the Savior.

Nahshon’s story taught me a lot about Jesus’ teachings that whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. We’re told to draw near in our time of need. While we know that because of Jesus we have full access to the Father at any point of time, and with any issue, this verse mentions one time where we especially can and should draw near. We should not hide from him in our struggles, sorrows, or sinfulness. Instead, the author says those times you feel least fit to approach God’s throne, come to “receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

My encouragement is to not let hard days push you away from God but lead you to him. Leverage these lonely, frustrating, or painful moments to draw near to God. Jesus is especially tender.

What is your time of need today? How is the challenging season making you weak? Dwell on the tenderness of Christ and go to him in your time of need.

We are all waiting for something--for a dream to come to pass, to meet the right person, for our health to turn around. When it’s been a long time, it’s easy to get discouraged and think it’s never going to work out. But God says, “When the time is right, I, the Lord, will make it happen.”

Right time will come and our community (LGBTQ) will be accepted in.

Contributor: [Cynthia Vacca Davis](#)

Growing up in evangelical churches, I instinctively knew the rules: think, speak and do as everyone else in the congregation, and you are welcomed into an inner sanctum of love known as “church family.” Having church family offered an illusion of security. It came with perks like a full calendar and a built-in network of people to “do life” with—provided you operated within the rules.

From a young age, I knew the cost of straying outside the perimeters was steep. I’d seen members of “church family” disappear seemingly overnight: out of the pews, off the calendar, erased from the fold. It’s difficult to grow into the most authentic version of yourself when you are steeped in a culture of conditional love. The fear that people will leave if they know the “real you” slowly dissolves into a pervasive shame—the conviction that you aren’t truly worthy.

Evangelical church is a hard enough environment for a straight kid to grow up in. I can only imagine the impact that fear and shame has had on countless of my LGBTQI+ peers.

Psychologists tell us that shame is the antithesis of authenticity. Shame tells us to stuff away the parts that don’t conform; the ways we see differently—in short, everything that makes us unique and alive.

But psychologists also make a distinction between healthy shame and harmful shame and I think the scriptures in today’s liturgy illustrate the point.

Psalm 51 chronicles David coming to terms with harm he inflicted on others. His feelings of shame are from a place of self-evaluation and remorse, and that can be healthy if it leads to growth and change—or, in other words, if it ultimately becomes life-giving.

By contrast, harmful shame comes to us from the outside. It’s put on us by others, often with self-serving intent. In John 12 1-11, we see Judas attempting to shame Mary for bathing Jesus’s feet in costly perfume.

Many believe the perfume was intended to be part of her eventual wedding ceremony. Valued at a year’s wages, it’s reasonable to assume it was the most valuable item in Mary’s possession. And she poured it out freely as a sign of her love and devotion for Jesus.

Mary’s action was unprecedented and unorthodox and Judas’s all-too-common response was to denigrate what he did not understand. Evoking the plight of the poor was a way to make Mary’s expression of love appear foolish and wasteful. If this was the extent of the slight, it would be bad enough. But the added knowledge that his true concern was not for the oppressed, but for his own stealthy gain reveals another too-common truth: words intended to shame say more about the speaker than the intended target.

Mary did something unusual and unorthodox. Her expression of love was unique and authentic, and Jesus did not allow it to be criticized, devalued, or to become a source of shame. Jesus’s love for us is not tied to conformity or piety. It is, rather, a place—the only place—where the truest and least orthodox parts of ourselves can thrive.

Sunday, March 17, 2024

Jeremiah 31:31-34; Psalm 51:1-12 or Psalm 119:9-16; Hebrews 5:5-10;

John 12:20-33

Contributor: Levy

LGBTQ+ is a community that is not really accepted by the community at large especially when it comes to the Christian community. They are quick to judge on how one dresses, talks, walks, behaviors etc, however, only He that is above all, the Judge of judges can judge me. Thus, **Psalms 51:4 Against you, you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight; so you are right in your verdict and justified when you judge.**

When I came to terms with the fact that only God can judge me, I accepted myself as He created me in my mother's womb
Psalms 51:6 Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb; you taught me wisdom in that secret place.

Today I can wear my skinny jeans with no shame or fear that someone will judge me or question me on why it is too tight and I will walk with my head held high, **Psalms 51:10 Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.**

There was this time I had gone for our family gathering where the whole extended family was present. I decided to dress up for the occasion to look good and feel good about myself; my parents were all supportive by telling me how good I look. Not until we got to the occasion that I felt all the harsh eyes from my relatives, they judged my outlook. One was bold enough to call me out in front of family, but by then I new whose judgment I should be concerned about, The Almighty.

I live by faith, guided by Psalms 51:4. Today I am happy to be me. **Psalms 51:8 Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice.**

Sometime back I was invited to a bachelor's party and every man had come with his girlfriend but as for me I decided to invite my partner. As the party continued all sorts of questions were being brought up till I decided to man up and tell the truth that didn't end up quite well. We faced very negative comments and insults almost mobbed by them. We decided to leave the party and prayed that God may forgive their souls for casting us out and judging us harshly.

Out of those friends that were in the party two of them approached us before we left and told us that they were aware of the love that we have for each other and surprisingly they acknowledged it and appreciated seeing that there can be love in the LGBTQ community as love is the greatest commandment of all.

Jeremiah 31; 33 "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God and they will be my people.

Monday, March 18, 2024

Psalm 119:9-16; Isaiah 43:8-13; 2 Corinthians 3:4-11

Contributor: [Anonymous](#)

Something to Delight In - Psalm 119:9-16

How can young people keep their way pure? By guarding it according to your word. With my whole heart I seek you; do not let me stray from your commandments. I treasure your word in my heart, so that I may not sin against you. Blessed are you, O Lord; teach me your statutes. With my lips I declare all the ordinances of your mouth. I delight in the way of your decrees as much as in all riches. I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways. I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word. - Psalm 119:9-16 (NRSV updated)

WELCOME - I am glad you are reading with me and thank you for joining me in sharing these verses. I hope you find a glimmer of encouragement from a gem of truth that touched me as I meditated over these verses and looked at my past.

As with any passage I read in scripture, there is so much background and cultural depth that I wish I had time to share. But for now, there is a principle that I believe we can all cling to - whether we are young in years, young in faith, or even just in a time of questioning ourselves.

These verses are about someone learning to see God's word as a source to purity, joy and strength. And I love how "delight" is repeated. Within the purity, and strength that God wants for us, there is also a desire for us to have delight. And the source of that is to first "delight" in just absorbing God's promises to us.

That is so far from what our world teaches. If we want to be happy, we must become acceptable to someone else. Wear the right clothes. Stay in tune with the latest music trends. Vote for the right party. Date the right person. Or worst of all - measure up to all the right religious rules.

That is how it was for me growing up. Trying to think like, talk like, act like and look like what my church upbringing was telling me I needed to be only served to trap me into feeling like I wasn't good enough. Ever. To anyone. And was I forever miserable. I knew in the depth of my being that something wasn't right. Sadly, I thought that "something" was me.

It was only after years of trying to be religious enough that the simplicity of God's promises began to sink in for me. The instructions of God are about love and kindness and justice. The promises of God are about forgiveness and belonging and mercy. God doesn't want me to delight in my religiosity. God wants me to delight in the promises that are in the word for forgiveness and belonging and mercy. That is why we see such a spectrum of people being blessed and honored by God in scripture. Kings and Queens and Prophetesses alongside Servants and Handmaids and the Outcast - they all find that in God's plan they have a place. A place of delight.

When the burdens of measuring up begin to weigh heavy upon you - read these verses again. Follow their instruction to meditate upon God's promises of forgiveness and belonging and mercy. Delight in how God loves and accepts you regardless of how someone else does - or doesn't. And how God loves and accepts you - even if you are struggling with loving and accepting yourself. Then scripture will be your delight, and you will find those gems of how God delights in YOU.

Tuesday, March 19, 2024

Psalm 119:9-16; Isaiah 44:1-8; Acts 2: 14-24

Contributor: Jay

Prayers do miraculous things in my life; the scripture gives me strength I need every other day. Living in a homophobic country, I have never known better how to live without prayers and reading the bible, for guidance, assurance whenever everything seems to fall against me. The book of Isaiah assures me that he formed me in my mother's womb with a purpose and I should never be afraid

Living in a rented residential space in an overpopulated city, rumors got around my neighborhood that I was homosexual - I never had female friends, I hugs my male friends whenever they came or going, which is not a really accepted thing socially. Waking up and facing hostile neighbors always broke me with exception of my best friend Jonathan who also came from adjacent apartment. We could share my evenings together, cooking, watching movies and other chores in my house or his. All this happened without us talking about our sexuality or even our love lives. It was heartwarming and encouraging to have him around until he was confronted and told that he should avoid me because I was gay.

Reading the bible in the morning is my daily thing, psalms advise about doing what's right and staying on ways of purity. Sometimes when Jonathan was not working, he would find me reading the bible and this morning was not exceptional, since he is also a spiritual person, we would interpret the scripture together. He looked me direct into my eyes saying he wanted to ask me something. " Are you gay". It took me a while before I could answer him but eventually, I found no reason to lie having had him for more than two years for a friend. He cooled down after some time he said everything would be fine.

In the New Testament in the book of Acts I read about when a spirit of God comes a person, he starts prophecy or doing God like things. Jonathan drew close to where I was sited, hugged me and said we would do something about what was happening with our nosy neighbors. He told me he had realized I had started to look troubled and he was about to ask what the problem was.

The hostility in our neighborhood never ended it actually got worse with even kids being warned never to accept anything from me nor talk to me. Jonathan secretly without telling me looked for a house for two of us in a more private location, we moved out and started living together.

Life has really changed for us, waking up beside Jonathan gives me much joy, especially in our safe private house we found. To say the least Jonathan is love of my life and we keep the love always lit by reading the word of God together so that we can live in purity.

Wednesday, March 20, 2024

Psalm 119:9-16; Haggai 2:1-9, 20-23; John 12:34-50

Contributor: [Juliana Boerio-Goates](#)

Visiting Yellowstone National Park after a forest fire, I saw green shoots poking up from the black ashes of burnt trees. I learned that seeds of some tree species lie dormant until the heat of a fire cracks their coats. Only then does germination begin. Nature provides a way to arise from ashes.

In my faith tradition ashes are a potent symbol. On a Wednesday in February or March, folks wear black cross-shaped smudges on their foreheads. Christians adopted the Jewish custom of wearing ashes to signal mourning or repentance to mark the opening of their own time of repentance. However, the ashes worn by Christians come from palm branches carried in the previous year's Palm Sunday service.

Arising from ashes describes a path undergone by many LGBTQ+ folks. Let me offer two illustrative stories.

A student, having hidden his identity at the university where I was a professor, contacted me shortly before graduation. He wanted to share his story; it mattered that at least one person on campus knew him for who he was. Isolated on campus, shaken by conversion therapy, he hurt. Later, in a new, supportive environment, he came alive again, found love, married happily, and is blossoming in his profession.

My queer son battled crippling depression coming to grips with his sexual identity while growing up in our conservative community. With family support and acceptance by a local LGBTQ+ group, and others, he emerged from depression, able to finish high school and college. He is now training as a counseling psychologist with a goal to provide affirming services to the LGBTQ+ community.

The growing acceptance of LGBTQ+ individuals has been met with backlash by groups who want to return them to the closet. Rejection, fear of violence, uncertainty about the future and just longing to be loved can destroy people, but there is a promise of arising from this.

In today's Old Testament passage, the prophet Haggai speaks to the people of Judah. They have returned home from years of forced exile, but they came back to the rubble of their beloved Temple. Through Haggai, the Lord tells the people to rebuild the Temple. He promises that the second Temple will be greater than the first. The people will be restored and find peace. It is an ancient promise that to arise from ashes stronger and better is possible. Our challenge as individuals today is to be the loving, supportive presence for all of God's children who grow out of the rubble, to be the seed whose protective shell is allowed to open.

Contributor: [Josephine Wambui](#)

Philippians 2:5-6

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus; who being in very nature of God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

We live in a world full of discrimination, some people feel they are better than others because of how they look, the money they have, their level of education. All these dictates their power to influence others. Recently there was a clip trending on social media of a Kenyan female aged 22 years. She had taken her friend to a public hospital where she found other patients in the waiting line, she wanted her friend to be attended to immediately ignoring the others waiting inline.

The nurse in charge told her to be patient and she will be served shortly. She started shouting that if the hospital knew who she was, they would serve her first. she told them she has the phone number of a high ranked minister in government and she will tell him they were refusing to serve her first. she paralyzed the operations at the front desk of the hospital demanding that she be served ignoring all the other patients. The nurse was even afraid to serve her as she was threatening, she will have all the staffs at the hospital sacked.

The lady had no idea that she was being recorded on camera and she was surprised when security officers arrested her. this scene portrayed the kind of society we live in where people think they are more deserving than others.

I love Jesus because, while he was in this world, He didn't elevate himself. He came down to our level. Jesus served with love and compassion. He walked with people who according to human perspective were sinners like Zacchaeus the tax collector and the Samaritan woman. the whole of Jesus ministry began and ended with love.

Sometimes I just try to imagine if Jesus was physically present in our world today, He would be holding a trans child hand, and share a table with Lgbtq+ persons. All these imaginations keep my hope alive because our savior Jesus Christ views us as equal, therefore let us not lower ourselves even if the world views us as not equal.

Let us all praise this God with a song by Maranatha music, who cared enough to become human and save us.

Lord, I lift Your name on high,

Lord, I love to sing Your praises

I'm so glad You're in my life I'm so glad You came to save us

You came from heaven to earth, to show the way,

From the earth to the cross, my debt to pay,

From the cross to the grave,

From the grave to the sky,

Lord, I lift Your Name on high.

Friday, March 22, 2024

Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29; Jeremiah 33:1-9; Philippians 2:12-18

Contributor: [Tori Allen](#)

Psalm 118: 1-2 NIV

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever. Let Israel say: “His love endures forever.”

A common phrase around my house is “a thankful heart is a happy heart” from the genius that is Veggie Tales. Some days a thankful heart seems to come naturally as I am surrounded by supportive friends and family and a job I enjoy and find purpose in.

On other days I find myself focusing on the difficult parts of life and my happy heart disappears. When I find myself overwhelmed by the reality of life, one of the best cures for me is to go outside and immerse myself in nature. Whether it is a ski day up in the mountains or a short walk around the neighborhood with my wife and Vizsla, the fresh air and beauty of the world remind me that there are so many things to be thankful for.

In nature, I find peace, gratitude, and evidence of a higher power. Sitting with my feet in the sand listening to the crashing waves, my worries seem more manageable. Watching the sunlight coming up over a snowy mountain peak, a sense of peace and gratitude replaces doubt and fear. Perhaps it is the change in focus, less on myself, and more grounded in nature.

Last year I had both of my kneecaps replaced with the hopes of many more years of pickleball, skiing, and mountain biking. After surgery, I started physical therapy. I am an optimist, but the difficult and slow recovery was draining. In time, I started to realize something was missing. I had been spending the majority of my time inside and had lost the connection to my main source of spirituality- nature.

I began taking short walks in our neighborhood with the help of my wife and crutches. The sunlight on my face filled my soul with hope. Each week, we would walk a little farther, and I began to see progress.

8 months later when I clicked into my skis and headed down the mountain, I felt an incredible sense of gratitude for the opportunity to breathe the cold air and look out at the snowy terrain. I was once again in my sacred space. I had a thankful, happy heart and felt connected to something much bigger than myself.

For me, mountain trails and sunny ocean days fill my spiritual tank. My hope is for each of us to find that sacred space where we can feel God’s love and give thanks.

Contributor: [Rahab Wambui](#)

Our grandfather was just a typical African man who believed many wives and children were a symbol of wealth. He had three wives and 27 children and over 200 grandchildren. He used to assemble all of us in his homestead every Christmas.

Our grandfather had taught us that, family members should support each other and cover up each other's sins to protect the family image. The family kept on growing bigger as our generation started getting their own children. When our grandfather passed, the meetings stopped and we could only meet during relative's funeral. The extended family kept growing and everyone was lost in their businesses.

The wake-up call came when cousins introduced each other as fiancée. They had met in a very far town, fell in love and planned to wed. This surprised our parents and it was decided that in our grandfathers compound a family tree must be drawn to show all the descendants.

Every Christmas all the new comers in the family were included. All my cousins age mates got married, added their spouses and children in the family tree. I started avoiding going home to avoid questions of being single at my age and as fate would have it, one of my cousins came to know that I am a lesbian.

The news spread like wild fire to all family members, I had to hide because they are typical homophobic extended family. And to surprise you, there were two cousins who were gunned down for robbery with violence but the family covered them so well and accorded them a very decent burial.

I am sure if they had gotten hold of me, I would not have escaped alive.

I thank God for social media because I got a hiding place in Pastor Megans fellowship. Here I made new friends who loves me for who I am. I found a place to announce my identity without fear and I was received with great joy. I was welcomed in their family just as broken and empty as I was. I accepted myself and my faith in God was renewed, I believe it is God who has ordered and planned our lives, including the very nature of our sexuality.

The angel announced with great joy the birth of the savior of the world, similarly when we accept the plan which God has for us there is great rejoicing in heaven. It is so unfortunate that when we come out to our friends and families, many do not know how to react. It is my prayer that God will calm their hearts and they will rejoice with us as we purpose to live as God intends.

Dear God, I pray for the lives of all LGBTQ+ persons in the world, may they find peace in knowing you are their beloved creator. In Jesus mighty name I pray. Amen.

Contributor: [Cathy Callow-Heusser](#)

My dad and his brothers were raised in Butte, Montana, in a staunchly Catholic family. I was born in the 50s when my parents were 19. While growing up, Uncle Kevin visited occasionally. He lived in numerous places on the west coast, working as an educator, scuba salvage operator, and city planning engineer. My uncle was funny, loving, and kind—and we enjoyed him when he visited, always by himself.

At some point early on, I realized Uncle Kevin had boyfriends. We never met them, but it was clearly normal and accepted in my parents' household, despite their conservative upbringing. Sadly, other family and community weren't so accepting. Fast forward to my young adulthood. I had many LGBTQ friends and thought this was everyone's experience. I continued to see Uncle Kevin occasionally. My parents regularly talked to and visited him.

Uncle Kevin passed in May 2021, alone in a senior community where everyone clearly loved him. I wish I'd had the opportunity to see him again, but as I've reflected on his life and relationship with our family, I realize how blessed I was to grow up knowing and being loved by Uncle Kevin.

My son is bisexual and lost his partner to suicide, my business partner is gay, I still have many LGBTQ friends and students, and I've learned how much more challenging their lives can be than mine.

As an educator in Utah, far too many of my students who were openly or closeted LGBT ended their lives. Given these experiences, I actively volunteer with organizations serving LGBT youth and adults and at shelters for the unhoused where a disproportionate percentage are LGBT. I believe if people just took time to truly get to know people who are LGBT, we'd quit trying to pass ridiculous laws and cherish everyone--just the way they are.

While only about 7% of older adults identify as LGBT, about 20% of Gen Z do. I hope this means that we, as a society, are normalizing gender identity, and youth are more comfortable expressing their sexual orientation. Yet, suicide rates in Utah among LGBT youth remain high. As Father Greg Boyle who runs the largest gang intervention and rehabilitation organization in the world says, "We need to stand in the margins so we can erase the margins...there is no them and us, only us."

I'm grateful for my Uncle Kevin. I'm sad he never felt comfortable coming out, even to us who loved him. His rejection by family and others clearly caused immeasurable harm. As Psalms 118:22 says, "The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone." Kevin was a cornerstone in my life; he established a loving foundation that influenced my relationships with others and a focus for my giving back. I hope for the day that we can all say, "This [person] is the Lord's doing; [they are] marvelous in our eyes" (Psalm 118:23).

Monday, March 25th, 2024

Isaiah 42:1-9; Psalm 36:5-11; Hebrews 9:11-15; John 12:1-11

Contributor: [Lisa Whitesell](#)

Monday of Holy Week

Once upon a time... I enjoyed the love of an extremely tight-knit family. For many decades I overlooked and ignored mistreatment from my closest kin because I wanted to be the one who kept the peace. I would avoid conflict at every cost, even when it cost me my own peace and physical health. It felt right to put their opinions a little more central than my own. This was my wilted interpretation of harmony in the family. Going along to get along. I am 61 years old now and I am still learning how to love those who do not have the same definition of love as the type I try to express.

Recently, my only niece gave birth to twin girls. After many years of fertility treatments and heartbreaking losses the family was blessed with a pregnancy which we all followed with cheers at every incremental step. Because of her delicate health and the fragility of the twins everyone was told NOT to come to the hospital during the scheduled c-section. No one would be allowed to see or hold the babies due to hospital Covid guidelines. This was the edict handed down to ALL family. NO VISITORS. My sister repeated this instruction sternly to all of us for weeks before the births would take place. My wife and I obediently submitted to this protocol. The day finally came for the babies to be born. We carefully watched and waited by our phones for any tidbit of progress with the soon-to-be mommy and babies. As the birth news finally came to our phones—what a thrill! No baby had been born in our family for 30 years! Now, after all the obstacles and risks had been traversed twin girls had arrived. One twin spent a few hours in the NICU and my niece had some severe hemorrhaging due to eclampsia but all three are very healthy and happy now.

At this point I should say that my sister and her daughter (my niece) have been wonderfully supportive of my slow journey toward coming out and living as a Proud Out Queer Elder. I have relished this seemingly unconditional embrace from them. Midway through the pregnancy I hosted a lavish baby shower as I felt it to be a fitting and appropriate celebration as the Aunt. My parents, may they be well, do not share this unconditional love for me. They will tell you that they love me but their actions clearly do not indicate that my life should ever be considered equal to that of others in the family. I have carried this pain for more than 50 years. I do my best to honor my parents. What they do with my honor is their responsibility.

Returning to the fateful day of the twins birth with me dutifully waiting by the phone for any news from the hospital. Picture it...presumably all of the other family members waiting to hear any news, each in their own homes and at work because no one was allowed at the hospital except the parents-to-be. Photos and texts were flying thick and fast once the babies were born. One of the photos turned out to include a short video.

I remembered to turn up the volume on my phone so I could hear the first cries of these two tiny voices. To my shock I heard my mother's voice and my sister and brother-in-law's voices. They were all at the hospital in the birthing suite with the babies! As it turned out, all of the close and even other extended family members attended this birth at the hospital. My spouse and I were uninvited and with forethought and collective agreement we were omitted from this historic moment. No one ever said specifically in ugly words as to why we were not welcomed. It was a deliberate, pre-planned way of editing my life out of the family chess board. I was crushed. I felt hurt and angry.

Later that evening I was summoned to drive my elderly mother home from the hospital. On the drive I indicated my hurt in being side-lined during the day's events. She was cold and indifferent to my plight.

As humbling as this realization has been I am choosing to open my eyes each morning with two powerful statements at the forefront of my thoughts. These two twin declarations are the Modeh Ani (I give thanks) and the first portion of the Shulchan Aruch. The Shulchan Aruch has three guiding meanings in Hebrew; a table, reconciliation, and a lamb's skin. I will offer the Modeh Ani and the first statement of the Shulchan Aruch here. These Jewish thoughts have provided the primordial essence of the lectionary scriptures which have held my inner lamp steady through this season of challenge.

Modeh Ani in English; I give thanks to You, Adonai, that, in mercy, You have restored my soul within me. Abundant is your faithfulness.

Shulchan Aruch in English; Yehuda Ben Teima says: "Be bold as a leopard, swift as an eagle, fleet as a deer and strong as a lion, to fulfill the will of your Father in Heaven."

Reciting these life-affirming statements each day reminds me that I am here for a divine purpose.

Awkward though it may be, there is no tidy little bow that I can tie on the end of my story. The truth is I do hurt less now. For the most part I have laid down my anger. Maybe it is just scar tissue forming over the wound. I choose to believe that G_d faithfully restores my life to me each day with unique opportunities for learning more about my blessed strength in the midst of challenges.

Tuesday, March 26th, 2024

Isaiah 49:1-7; Psalm 71:1-14; 1 Corinthians 1:18-31; John 12:20-36

Contributor: [Steven Maina](#)

Tuesday of Holy Week

When the word “cross” is used in a statement, it literally means that you are being punished for your mistakes. And that is what many preachers have made us believe. We cannot talk about easter without mentioning the word “cross”. As a gay man living positively, I have had my share of “carrying my cross” with fear and shame.

I have been told so many times that professing to be gay and Christian is putting Jesus Christ on the cross again, I was made to believe that the blood that Jesus shed on the cross was to wash away the gay in me and my confession of being gay was crucifying our savior again. I believed these words coming from a senior pastor in our church, the statement affected me negatively because I loved Jesus so much and my desire has always been to be Christ like.

I refused to take my Arv’s because I was ready to take up my “cross”, I prayed for the angel of death to kill me. I was ready to die but I feared what would happen to my soul after death, I was afraid of hell. My friend came looking for me as they missed me in our usual drinking joint for a whole week.

I was so weak even to stand or speak and he dragged me to the nearest public hospital. This was the time HIV stigma was so high such that patients who were positive were placed in one ward. The first night I spent in that hospital, two men died and it was just like a horror movie. As much as I wanted to die, I didn’t want it to be that way. I had to go back to the streets and I had to survive which meant that I had to take my medication faithfully.

My will and desire to live made me survive my one week stay in that hospital. I was ready to carry my “cross” without shame, I accepted the fact that I was gay and HIV+ and there was nothing I could do to change that fact. My friends were surprised by my sudden change of attitude, I became their motivator in overcoming fears, doubts and short comings.

The lesson I learnt from my own ordeal is that, never go to people for approval or love. It is my sole responsibility to love myself and if I love myself and accept my existence, then I will focus on bringing love to the world.

Commitment to change the world with love is the true cross I will carry even if the world does not understand us.

Proverbs 3:5-6

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.

Contributor: [Edward Moran](#)

Wednesday of Holy Week

Social distancing, mask-wearing, self-quarantine—these are terms that became quite familiar to us during the coronavirus pandemic. But for queer folk like myself, they'd been part of my vocabulary long beforehand: *Am I the only one? Should I mask my true self? Should I absent myself from a community that only shuns me as somehow unclean?*

The Scripture passages for today offer a hopeful answer, especially Hebrews 12:1, which proclaims “Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us.”

To me, this verse affirms that we find our authentic selves in the communion of others who cheer us on in life's race by their own witness to the astonishingly good news—*no, you are not the only one...come, let us be alone together* (apologies to Rilke). If there is any close-clinging sin hereabouts, it is the sin of omission—not living into your own truth—which leads only to isolation and erasure.

In the 1970s, I joined the Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church in Brooklyn, where I became its first openly gay elder. The congregation was then embarking on the process that led to its becoming one of the first More Light churches in the denomination.

At the same time, this community of faith decided to proclaim its openness in a very graphic way, by commissioning muralist Hank Prussing to embellish the bare walls of our historic sanctuary with “Cloud of Witnesses,” a larger-than-life series of murals that depicted dozens of community residents, including church members as well as queer folk and other marginalized people often considered to be “outside the walls.”

During those fervent years of youth, I also learned to cherish the poetry of Marianne Moore, who died in 1972 after having been a faithful member of Lafayette Avenue's “cloud of witnesses” for thirty-seven years. I've often been privileged to sit in the tiny pew she occupied with her mother and meditate on her queersome imagery. In her poem “The Sun,” she writes simply and unapologetically “You are not male or female, but a plan.” And in her stirring poem “In Distrust of Merits,” she turns the notion of isolation upside down by writing “As contagion of sickness makes sickness, contagion of trust can make trust...trust begets power and faith is an affectionate thing.”

Surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us all persevere in living deeply into ourselves and into Christ, which is ultimately the same thing in an incarnational world so achingly transgressive. As Marianne Moore's mother once remarked to a friend who hesitated to pay a rainy-day visit because she and Marianne were recovering from colds: “Come, let us put away the umbrellas of our contagion!”

Thursday, March 28th, 2024

**Exodus 12:1-4, (5-10), 11-14; Psalm 116:1-2, 12-19;
1 Corinthians 11:23-26; John 13:1-17, 31b-35**

Contributor: [Pastor Megan](#)

Maundy Thursday

Maundy Thursday, we reflect on the night that Jesus was betrayed, denied and abandoned by his disciples. And on this very night, Jesus washed his disciple's feet, he offered his body and blood in sacrificial love and shared the grace so intimately with them.

Jesus knew he had come from God and he was going to God. His whole ministry was full of compassion and love. As Christians we are the body of Christ and just like Jesus we should serve in humility and love.

At the beginning of this year, I had written down only one prayer item and that is restoration. as a queer child, youth and even now in my adult life I have suffered betrayal and abandonment. people that I have trusted so much have betrayed me to an extent of plotting evil against me. I have never understood why family members choose to please the society than care for their siblings just because they are gay. Allow me to say this because the worst homophobia I have faced is from my sisters.

As the last born in our family, I have served as their house help. I have looked after their children without payment, when they needed an extra hand, I was always available. I genuinely volunteered to be there wherever I was needed to fill a gap. I loved our family so much and I cared for all of them from the depth of my heart.

The drift came when I was outed to them and from that time, they have been the constant source of pain in my life. I have accepted the fact that, no matter how I try to reconcile with my family, they will never accept me as a lesbian. This has opened my eyes and have given me a chance to experience pure love.

I realized I have so much love to give but I have been giving it to the wrong people who judged me by my sexuality. This betrayal has pushed me to accept my calling as a pastor, my prayer is that I will spread love and compassion to all Lgbtq+ Christians in the rural areas and there will be "Hope in The Village".

God has blessed me with queer family whom we fellowship together, their love gives me the energy to move on. There was a time I was wondering what would happen to me in old age, I feared being an old lonely lesbian. But not anymore, we are just one big family. Yes, all of us are wounded, but we stick together as each of us heal one at a time, in the fellowship the youths call me mom and I know they look up to me for guidance. They are the reason I wake up and strive to move forward.

Our God in his faithfulness has connected me with Parity ministry and together we can change the world through love.

Friday, March 29, 2024

Isaiah 52:13-53:12; Psalm 22; Hebrews 10:16-25
or Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9 • John 18:1-19:42

Contributor: [Rev. Ian Carr McPherson](#)

Good Friday

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

Queer people know the feeling of divine abandonment.

Churches that proclaim God’s love but exclude us. Families that promise unconditional love but reject us. Friends and lovers whose untimely loss undoes us. As the psalmist vividly describes in today’s reading, all human lives are marked by visceral, embodied sufferings. Though encircled by particular threats, queer people know the terror evoked by this text:

“I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted within my breast; my mouth dries up like a postherd; and my tongue sticks to my jaws; you lay me in the dust of death.”

Jesus himself could find no better expression of his physical and spiritual agony on the cross than the invocation of this passage. Christ’s embrace of this text is a radically vulnerable act. It is also a reminder that God is on the side of those who suffer, even (perhaps, especially) when in our suffering we decry God’s absence.

The good news for queer people this Good Friday is that God takes our suffering seriously; indeed, in Christ, God takes on our suffering as God’s own. It is a holy act to name our hurt. Like Jesus before us, and the psalmist before him, we can give voice to our pain even as we hold fast to a hope beyond agony’s reach.

This a hope inherited, the text reminds us. One rooted in the faithful witness of our queer ancestors whose very lives proclaim God’s love for us.

Even as the evils of homophobic and transphobic policies surround us, even if our bodies seem to betray and mock us, even when divine love seems to have abandoned us, we can cling to the stories of survival, resistance, and liberation of those who came before us.

Even in the depth of our pain, as followers of Jesus we can lean on testimonies of God’s solidarity with those who suffer—a solidarity embodied ultimately by Christ on the cross. While Jesus recites the opening line of Psalm 22, his crucifixion bears witness to the tensions shot through the entire text, a tug of war between past accounts of God’s faithfulness, the embodied nature of present suffering, and the promise of liberation yet fulfilled.

The faith of our forebears, of the psalmist, and of Christ himself, does not ignore the harm we carry as queer people; yet neither does it allow such harm the final word in our story. As queer people living in the tensions of the cross, our lives bend ultimately toward the promise found in the final words of Psalm 22: **“[F]uture generations will be told about the Lord and proclaim his deliverance to a people yet unborn, saying that he has done it.”**

By God’s grace, this present suffering will not be our legacy. Our lives will be marked instead by our testimony to divine love and faithfulness, a legacy that will sustain our queer descendants and point them to the hope of God’s solidarity with us.

Saturday, March 30, 2024

Job 14:1-14 or Lamentations 3:1-9, 19-24; Psalm 31:1-4, 15-16; 1 Peter 4:1-8;

Matthew 27:57-66 or John 19:38-42

Contributor: [Paul Nderitu](#)

Holy Saturday

I am humbled to be on this platform sharing with other Christians around the world about Holy Saturday. As a gay Christian, I relate my life well with this day. After Jesus was crucified and his body taken to the tomb, his disciples had no choice but to wait.

I can imagine the scenarios that surrounded them, their hearts were heavy, mourning and confused. I can imagine those tedious hours of that Saturday as Jesus followers waited to see what would happen on Sunday. They were expectant and looked forward with anxiousness.

I grew up with inferiority complex, I remember people asking my mother if I am a boy or girl. In our African societies, boys are just supposed to be dark, ugly and very hardened. A real boy should not cry even when hurt and it was believed boys don't just get sick or even die. If a boy died, there was a ritual to be performed because it meant that "gods" were angry.

I was the total opposite of their "typical boy child", I always kept clean and loved my mother's company. This didn't go well with my father who always rebuked me for "behaving" like a woman. My mother loved me and she would tease that "this is the daughter I never had". As I grew older this had a very negative effect on my self esteem as my peers started to joke about my body.

I wanted to be a real man not a "man" trapped in a woman's body. One Sunday afternoon I attended an open-air crusade and they preached about Jesus, who is able to change life's and I wanted that change so much that I went forward and gave my life to Christ.

The spiritual child in me was full of expectations, little did I know that God was not changing the physical me. there was a time that I almost gave up believing in God but Grace has been sufficient, it has been a long journey to self-acceptance, unlike Jesus followers, my Holy Saturday seemed to be unending.

I know many Lgbtq+ Christians can relate with me. yes, you are living in a shadow of yourself and you just want to be seen and to have your pain validated. I write this to encourage you that God will see us through in our suffering. A time will come when we will live and love freely. Easter Sunday gives me hope and courage to trust our God more.

I am patiently waiting to see the hand of God in my life, I have hope and all I can do is to rest and abide in his presence.

Prayer:

Dear God, as we observe Holy Saturday, please help us to be still and rest in your presence. Help us not to focus on our desires and needs but help us to know your heart more. In Jesus name we pray, trust and believe. Amen and Amen.

Sunday, March 31, 2024

Acts 10:34-43 or Isaiah 25:6-9; Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11
or Acts 10:34-43; John 20:1-18 or Mark 16:1-8

Contributor: [Moses Njoroge](#)

Easter Sunday

We cannot talk about Easter without mentioning death and sacrifice. Many Lgbtq+ persons have been killed as a result of homophobia in our society but their deaths do not go unnoticed. I was a secret fan of Edwin Chiloba, a gay Christian man who lived his life openly as an LGBTQ+ activist. He was killed in cold blood but what shocked me was that, instead of the media concentrating on the grisly murder, they were dwelling on the fact that he was gay.

His friends and relatives were interviewed on how they related to him as a gay man and what they had to say about his murder. It was so scary to watch people on social media justifying murder because it happened to a gay man. Living as an out Lgbtq+ person in Kenya is a form of sacrifice because you know you can be attacked and get killed anytime. But we have brave souls that have walked the path courageously and some have gone to be with the Lord. Let's always remember to light a candle for them.

Mark 16: 3 and they asked each other, “who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?”

I had grown hearing derogatory statements about homosexuality and coming to realization that I am gay was so frightening, I had never heard of any affirming message and so I considered my self sinful and abnormal. I lived in this internal torment for decades, I tried to live like a “normal” man who dates women and I loved it when my girls thought I was a womanizer.

All along I was trying to create an image that would be loved and accepted by the society. my mission was to kill the “gay Moses” and I did everything I could have possibly done until I gave up. I had no energy left to pretend, I was too tired to try again and I just wanted it all finished. The stone at the tomb was too big for me to roll alone.

One Sunday afternoon I gathered enough courage to reach out for help. I had this internalized homophobia that was draining my energy. The false image I had of a “straight Moses” had to die.

I started searching for gay friends around me in social media and by the grace of God, I found myself in safe hands at a Christian Lgbtq+ fellowship that I never thought existed. Here I was able to express myself freely without shame.

For the first time in my life I received an affirming message, I knew I was not a broken shell that needed fixing, I knew I was not sick and in need of healing. My self-hatred was transformed in to self-love, my pride was resurrected.

Acts 10: 34 Then peter began to speak; “I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accept from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right”. (NIV)

Easter symbolizes new beginning. It is a time to celebrate. He is risen!

He is risen, indeed. Amen!



Pastor Kim serves as minister at Immanuel United Church of Christ, Wright City, Missouri.

Previously she has served in the Church of the Nazarene as associate pastor and co-pastor in Kansas, Florida, and Missouri.

Pastor Kim has a B.S. from Trevecca Nazarene University; M.Div./Religious Education from Nazarene Theological Seminary; and D.Min. from Eden Theological Seminary.



My name is Marie Nganga, and I am a Kenyan of African origin. I am 38 years old. I am a Christian lesbian woman. I love God with all my heart and I love serving God through humanity.

I have a passion for writing and studying the Bible.

I am a woman of faith and I look forward to the day when all of the LGBTQ+ community will feel safe at the Lord's table.

Author:
Liggera Edmonds-Allen



Liggera Edmonds-Allen (they/them) is a graduate of Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Their work revolves around transgender activism and queer joy.

Author:
Anthony Lemeiyan



Tony Lemmy

A Kenyan gay Christian 28 years.

I believe we are all valid in the eyes of God.



I am a biracial woman and the history of this, taught by my father, was in hiding.

My father hid his identity as a black man, and we appeared to be normal Christian family. But the violence, abuse and addictions challenged me.

I spent years overcoming the pain, isolation, fear and shame of being Karen. As someone who personally experienced faith-based conversation therapy (in 1990s) I have lived and work to overcome the burden of religious judgements to embrace my own value and a relationship with a loving God.

I became an ordained clergy woman, theologian, and registered psychotherapist, journeying with people from all walks of life. After living in England for 26 years, and returning to the country of my birth, Canada, I have enjoyed working with people from different ages, genders and sexual identities, including people from all marginalized populations and cultures.

In England I worked with people from all social groups and faith communities, with special focus on past and present abuse. In Canada I have developed many services and outreach to people online and in person. We stand together, in care and community.



Zaweria Hunyu

Kenyan. African, Kenyan/kikuyu

Non-binary

Lesbian

Born again Christian

Business woman

Teacher



Sontaia P. Briggs is a Queer Faith Activist working at the intersection of LGBTQ+ and Faith.

A consultant with nonprofits and churches, Sontaia authors youth and young adult programs and workshops.

She is a sought-after LGBTQIA inclusion trainer and motivational speaker who has worked with PARITY NYC, Blanton-Peale Institute and Counseling Center, Park United Methodist Church, and NMAC Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority.



My names are Daniel Kihara. 45 years old. Non- binary.

Born again Christian who is saved only by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I am a small-scale farmer, and I live alone with my fur babies.

I believe in serving God through humanity.



Cynthia Vacca Davis is an adjunct professor with a trunk full of ungraded papers and snack wrappers.

If you come to her house, expect dogs at the door, wine on the table, and medium roast in her Industrial Bunn coffee maker. She is serious about beverages. She loves cameras, New Orleans, and stories. She overuses the word “community” because she thinks you can never have too much of that.

Cynthia is the author of *Intersexion*, a story of faith, identity and authenticity published by Lake Drive Books.

You can reach her at <https://www.cynthiavaccadavis.com>



Moses Njoroge

35 years Kenyan

Gay Christian

A wounded healer who loves serving God through humanity.



Tori Allen is an educator in the juvenile justice system.

She played college basketball at Weber State University and is an enthusiastic skier, swimmer and pickle ball player.



My names are Nancy Wanja Mwangi.

I am from Kenya, and I love nature.

A single mother of two boys and a born-again Christian lesbian woman.

I am a human rights activist and I advocate for LGBTQ+



Stephen V. Sprinkle is Emeritus Professor of Practical Theology, after holding the office of Director of Field Education and Supervised Ministry since 1994 at Brite Divinity School in Fort Worth, Texas. A native of North Carolina, and educated with a B.A. from Barton College, an M.Div. from Yale University Divinity School, and a Ph.D. in Systematic Theology from Duke University Graduate School, he is an ordained minister of the Alliance of Baptists and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). He is the first openly LGBTQ+ scholar on the faculty of Brite.

Dr. Sprinkle was named 2010-2011 Hero of Hope by the Cathedral of Hope United Church of Christ in Dallas, Texas for his advocacy on behalf of the LGBTQ+ community. He currently serves as Theologian-in-Residence for the Episcopal Church of St. Thomas the Apostle, Dallas, Texas. Dr. Sprinkle is a human rights advocate, a widely sought speaker, and is an internationally recognized authority on anti-LGBTQ+ hate crimes.

Dr. Sprinkle is the author of three academic books, *Disciples and Theology* (1999) and *Ordination* (2004), both published by Chalice Press, and the award-winning *Unfinished Lives: Reviving the Memories of LGBTQ Hate Crimes Victims* (2011) by Resource Publications. Throughout his career, Dr. Sprinkle has been involved in the life and witness of the church. He has served five congregations including three in North Carolina, one in Connecticut, and one in Texas. He also serves on the National Board of Parity NYC, a faith-based organization that works to reconcile the secular and sacred world with the LGBTQ+ community.



Call me Mitch. A Kenyan gay man who once felt hated and rejected.

But by meeting people like me who had found their shelter in God, it renewed my faith and trust in God. I feel like a new being and will use any avenue I have to spread the word of God and to encourage those of my kind that God loves us all.



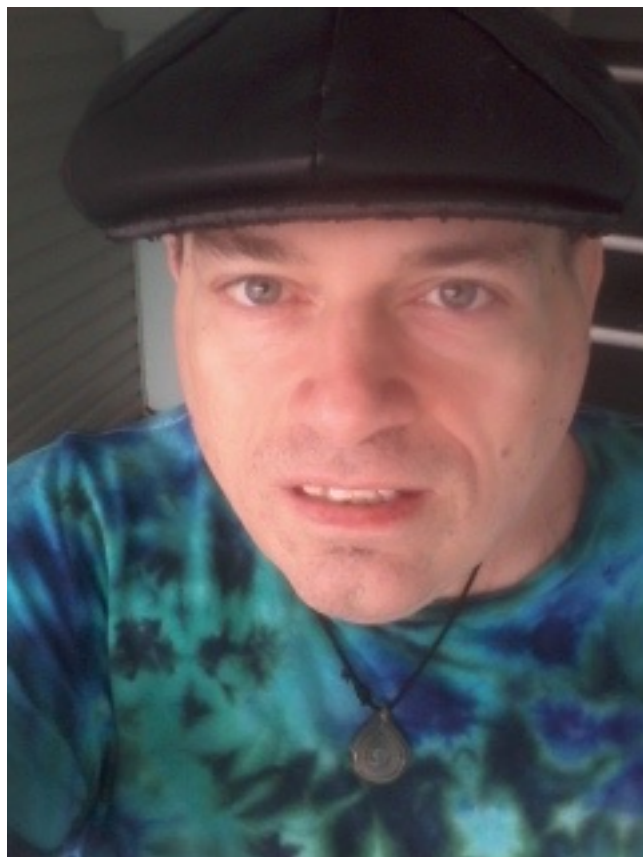
I'm Diana Laskaris and I moved from the United States to Portugal where I live with my wife and two spoiled cats. I like cooking, traveling, and meeting people from different cultures, especially when we get to enjoy a meal together. I share recipes and stories about tasty travels on the foodtravelist.com website.

As an author and personal development specialist I help others regain their individual power. Together with my wife, I wrote *What Should I Do Now? A 14-Day Jumpstart Program To Get Unstuck Make Decisions, And Take Control Of Your Work And Your Life.*

My next book, *Embracing Imperfection*, is scheduled for publication later this year.

My Christianity is a personal quest for greater understanding of God, the world, and myself

I look forward to the day where the only label anyone has is human being.



Adrian Slonaker resides in downtown Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada in an apartment shared with a multicolored plush unicorn called Blaze.

Having completed university studies in linguistics and literature, Adrian works as a language consultant. In precious moments of free time, Adrian enjoys swimming, rock 'n roll records, naps during thunderstorms, horror films and extremely spicy vegetarian dishes.

Adrian's theological background and beliefs are somewhat eclectic and syncretic, with elements of Anabaptism (Mennonite), Anglicanism, Reform Judaism and Unitarian-Universalism in the mix.

Adrian also writes poetry, stories and essays and has been published extensively in journals and anthologies. In addition, Adrian is a fan of iced non-alcoholic beverages, especially if they are bright blue.

Author: Jemima Mugo



My names are Jemima Mugo.

I am a 25 years old a born again Christian lesbian and Kenyan.

Author: Naiomi Gonzalez

Naiomi Gonzalez (she/they) is a queer, nonbinary, Puerto Rican who proudly claims the title of “professional nerd.”

She has an MDiv from Brite Divinity School, an MA in Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies, and an MA in History.

They have a passion for theology, the Bible, and advocating for a faith that advocates for a more just and equitable world.

Author: Stephen Maina



My Names are Stephen Maina.

I am Kenyan aged 26 years.

I am a born again gay Christian.

Author: Zipporah Nyaga



Zipporah Nyaga 28 years

Transgender Christian

Human rights activist.

Author: Kennedy Mwangi



38 years heterosexual

I am ally to the Lgbtq+ Community

A man humbled by the grace of God.

Author: Boniface Waweru



I am a gay christian and I love God.

I have 30 yrs and I fellowship with pastor Megan in Kenya.



My journey began in Ogden, Utah and I love hailing from the "rough" part of Utah.

I grew up a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of latter-day Saints (often referred to as the Mormons). At the age of 21, I left home to serve a proselyting mission for the church to southern Germany.

My faith foundation was shattered when, at age 40, I could no longer deny my orientation and gender identity. When I walked out of the closet, I also thought I was walking away from God.

I struggled reconciling my relationship with God and I am grateful He never gave up on me. I will always be grateful for the wonderful people at the United Church of Christ congregation I found during this time.

It was in that chapel I was reintroduced to God, who loved and accepted me, just as I was. My faith journey continues and I am so grateful for experiences, such as this, that allow me to rejoice in the word of God and worship Him.



Rev. Tom Baynham, or “Pastor Tom”, has served as the Senior Pastor at Friedens United Church of Christ since January 2020. He previously served as its Associate Pastor for Music, Worship, and Church Vitality and Acting Senior Pastor from May 2018 until January 2022.

He is a native of Richmond, Virginia having served congregations in that state as well as in Kentucky, Indiana, New Hampshire, and Missouri. Tom holds graduate degrees from Eden Theological Seminary, the Boston University School of Theology, Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and Bluefield University.

Tom is the father to Daniel, a social sports coordinator, and daughter Lindsey, an ordained United Methodist Elder in Virginia. He is known as “Poppi” to his grandchildren; Teddy, Bronwyn, Maxwell, and Myles. He is a member of the SLSO IN UNISON Chorus, and enjoys, reading, conducting, the Chiefs, Cowboys, Braves, and Cubs.



Lois Anne DeLong is a semi-retired writer and editor from Queens, New York City, a long-suffering New York Mets fan, and a lover of other people's dogs.

Since leaving full-time work, she has reactivated several creative writing projects, indulged her love of theatre, fed her wanderlust, and hopefully made a difference in the lives of others through the outreach projects of her church, First Presbyterian of Forest Hills.

Author: Samuel Thirikwa



Samuel Thirikwa

Kenyan

Gay

30 years

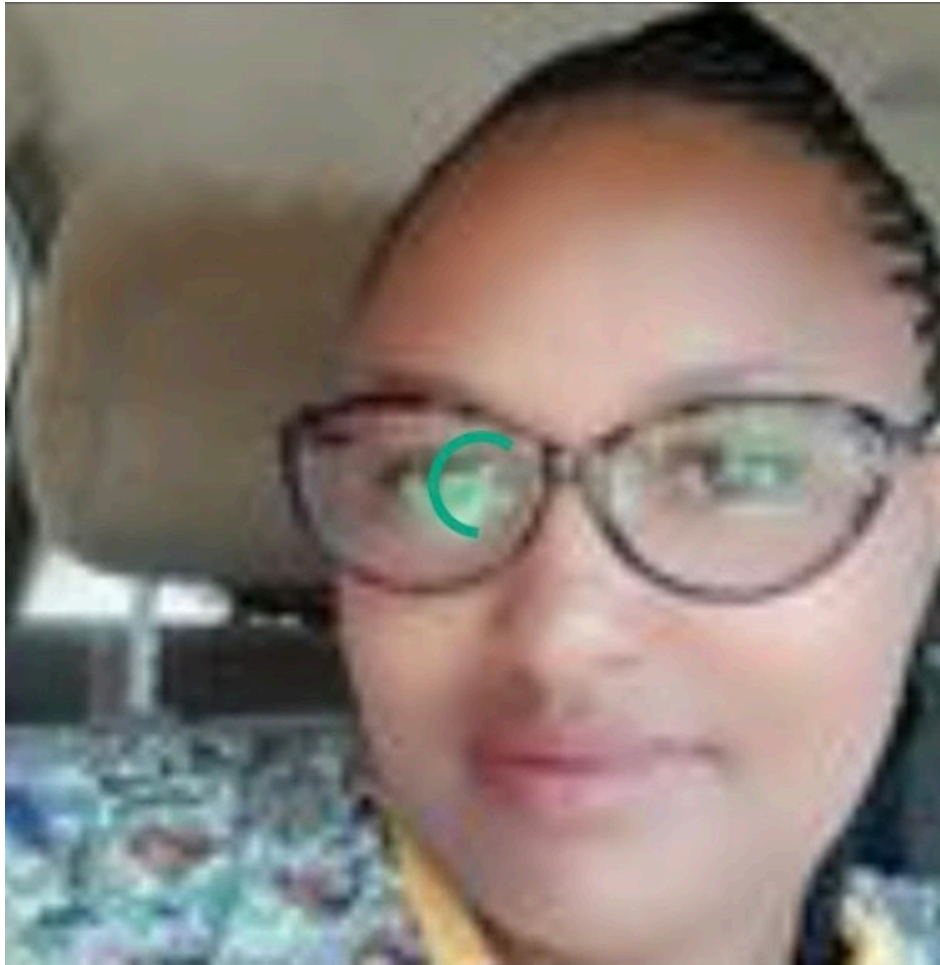
Author: Idah Gitau



Idah Gitau

25 years lesbian Christian

All I know is that my redeemer lives.

Author: Jacklin Wambui

My names are Jacklin Wambui from Mukurweini and I fellowship with Pastor Megan whom I was introduced to by Nancy our youth group patron.

I was so lonely and am happy with my new family now.

Author: Giacomo Liggera



I am a queer Utahn.

I believe in love and
interconnectedness.

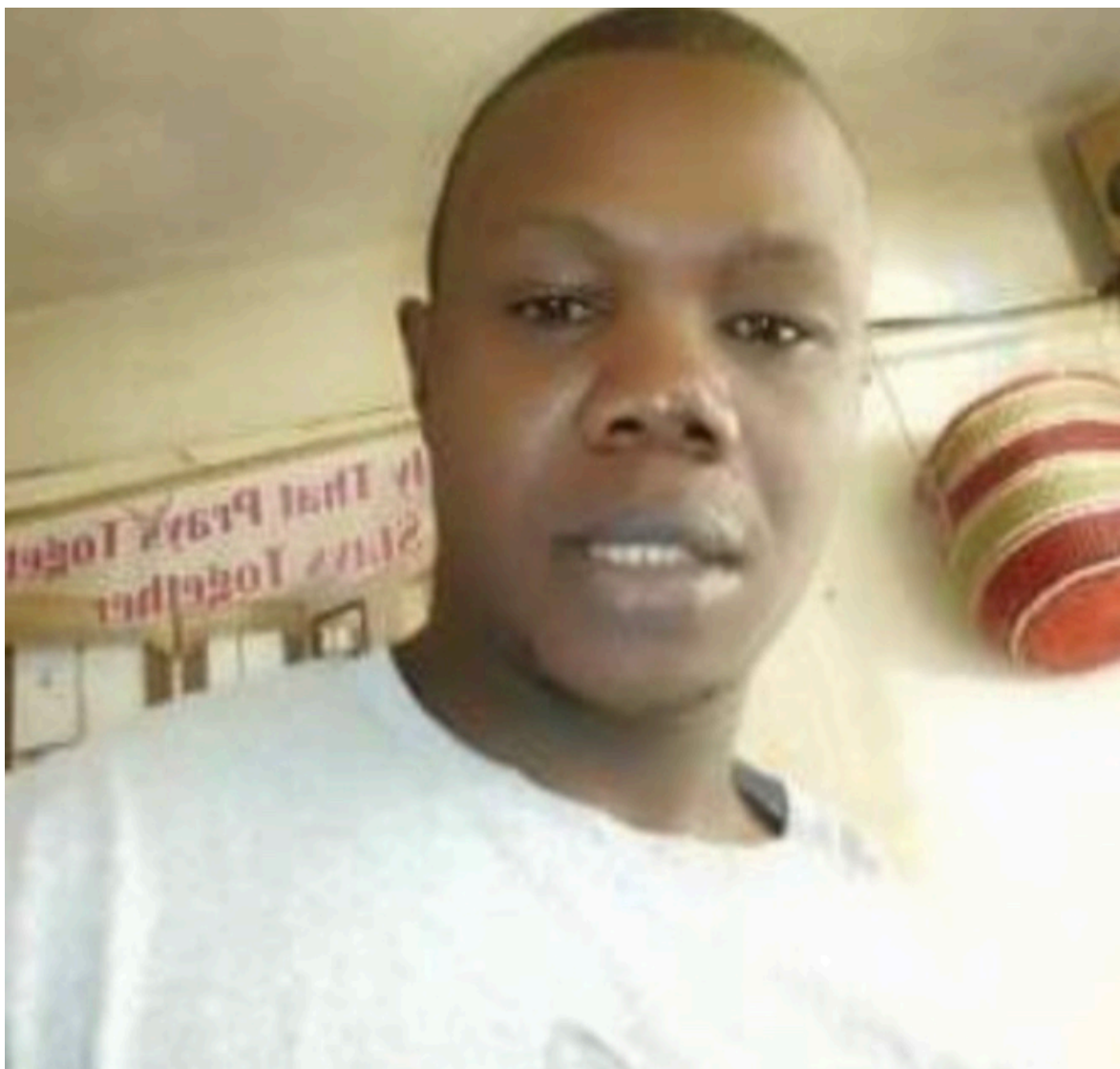
Author: Rahab Wambui

Rahab Wambui

Kenyan

22 years

lesbian

Author: David Mwaura

My names are David Mwaura. I am 30 years old.

A Kenyan of African origin. I am a born again gay Christian man. I love God and I love serving Him.

Author: Persis Luke

Persis is a lesbian and lifelong Presbyterian and a member of Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, where she has served openly as a Deacon and Elder.

Persis recently retired from a NYC Career in Environmental Protection and Employee Health and Safety.

She lives in Queens, NY with her spouse, Nancy, a beloved cat and bird (yes, they get along!).

Persis loves gardening, fiber arts, bicycling and being outdoors. She is doing a cross country motorcycle trip in the summer of 2024 and will spend 2 weeks in Glacier National Park, hiking and camping.

Author: Cathy Callow-Heusser



Cathy Callow-Heusser is the mother of biological and adopted children who were wards of the state of Utah, grandmother, partner, educator, mentor and volunteer.

She firmly believes that everyone has value and should be cherished, there is no them and us—only us, and that as people of faith, we must strive to share God’s love and ensure everyone whose paths we cross feels loved and accepted.

Her happy places include hiking, skiing, quilting, and traveling with her husband Val.

Author: Rev Dr. Brett Mitchell



Rev Dr. Brett Mitchell is an ordained Presbyterian Church (USA) pastor, Benedictine oblate, art docent, a teacher, writer, speaker, pilgrimage, LGBTQIA2S+ activist, dragon boat paddler, parent, grandparent, pet lover, and is married to Christian Halstead.

Along with being the pastor of La Mesa Presbyterian Church, he is also founder of the religious non-profit School of the Pilgrim (www.schoolofthepilgrim.org), leading church groups on pilgrimages here and abroad.

He has authored ten books, the latest three books on pilgrimage.

Brett started a PCUSA 1001 New Worship Community (Community of Pilgrims); pastor Portsmouth Trinity Lutheran Church; was the LGBTQIA2S+ Advocacy Coordinator in the OR-ID United Methodist Church Conference; has been pastor or interim pastor with eleven churches, and taught at North Carolina Central University and Duke University in Durham, NC for over fourteen years combined.

He is currently writing a daily devotion, A Daily Devotion for Ordinary Pilgrims on an Extraordinary Pilgrimage; Dragon Boat Church; and his memoir, Everyday Superman: A Gay Critique on the Decline of American Christianity.

Author: Dorcas Kiki

I am Dorcas Kiki, a Kenyan transgender woman who loves God with all my heart.

Author: Lisa Whitesell

Lisa was born and raised in Oklahoma. Retired professional musician and teacher. Cresting at the time of her retirement, she taught public school music for 28 years along with adjunct teaching at an urban community college for 18 years and more than 30 years of service as a part-time minister of music in suburban mainline denominational churches.

Lisa describes her experience of the Holy as being grounded in biblical roots and polished by writings of mystics from many faith traditions. Inspiration from experiencing great art, literature and music send her spirit soaring.

A fierce lover of dogs, mountains, trees, and all bodies of water, Lisa is blissfully married to the kindest woman in the universe.

Author: Josphine Wambui



I am Josphine Wambui aged 38 years from Kenya.

I am part of the fellowship which is led by our Pastor Megan.

I must confess the hope and love we get in that fellowship is just wonderful and may God keep us together as each others keeper.

I am a lesbian Christ is my personal saviour and I believe in God's protection and powers.

Author: Rev. Robert Van Ess



Pastor Rob is the Pastor & Teacher at Pilgrim Church United Church of Christ (UCC) in Fond du Lac, WI.

They graduated from Eden Theological Seminary in St. Louis, MO and is a trained clinical chaplain having served a residency at The University for Arkansas for Medical Sciences in Little Rock with The College for Pastoral Supervision and Psychotherapy.

Pastor Rob is an ordained minister in the UCC. (UCC).

Having grown up in Green Bay, they have served churches and hospitals in Missouri, Indiana, Arkansas, Tennessee, and now “back home” in Wisconsin. They carry a passion for all things discovered at the intersection of queerness and faith.

Rob (he/they) and their husband Nicky (he/him/his) just celebrated 19 years together and enjoy spending time with their two cats DeeDee and Dexter.

Author: Lucy Wanjiru



I am Lucy Wanjiru, A Kenyan of African origin.
born again Christian lesbian woman.

I love God and I trust Him with my life.

Author: Anonymous



Three decades of Pastoring background as well as Senior Management experience in a variety of secular firms. His business management skills, combined with his education, have been a blessing in equipping him to encourage others to great growth.

He was raised in a very conservative upbringing, but throughout his calling to ministry he has constantly worked with an ecumenical approach to magnifying the work of the Kingdom across denominational and cultural boundaries.

He holds:

- DMin in Christian Counseling
- MA in Pastoral Counseling
- BA in Religious Education

Currently he works with a mission group and travels overseas extensively. In addition to this, he is in the groundwork to develop an online Pastoral Counseling, Support ministry.

He has been asked to create a series based on lessons learned in 30+ years of ministry.

Author: Jimmy

Jimmy has lived and loved in the Washington, DC, area for 17 years but his hometown is Tucson, Arizona.

His day job is a pretty basic federal employee that aspires to be like Leslie Knope. Otherwise, his days are spent enjoying people, food, tv/movies, music, languages, and teaching spin classes (come visit me at VIDA Fitness)

Author: Jane Wanjigi

My names are Jane Wanjigi, 45 yrs Kenyan.

A lesbian woman who loves God with all my heart.

I love traveling and meeting new people.

Author: Rev. Ian Carr McPherson

Ian is the Minister of Social Justice and Students at Pullen Memorial Baptist Church in Raleigh, NC. Previously, Ian served as Associate Pastor of Faith Formation and Social Justice at United Church of Chapel Hill. Before returning to their home state, Ian served in youth and children's ministry at West End Collegiate Church in New York City, where they studied Christian Social Ethics at Union Theological Seminary. Ian is also a graduate of Saint Louis University (M.A., American History) and Campbell University.

An ordained minister of the United Church of Christ, Ian accompanies communities that are inspired by ancient wisdom in their pursuit of personal, communal, and societal transformation. They are a Christian educator and organizer called to equip the church in its pursuit of the just social order Christ envisioned; civic formation is their watchword and vocational lodestar. Like their spiritual forebears, the Charismatics and Pentecostals, Ian's call weaves together deep attentiveness to personal spiritual gifts and fiery devotion to the Spirit's transgressive work through (and for the sake of) community.

Author: Juliana Boerio-Goates



Juliana Boerio-Goates is wife to Steve; Mom to two, and Grandma Julie to three.

A life-long Catholic, she taught chemistry at Brigham Young University while serving her local Catholic parish in ministry and administration.

Currently, she and a gay Catholic priest coordinate a support group for LGBTQ+ Catholics in the Salt Lake City area.

Author: Edward Moran

Three of Edward Moran's hymn texts were included in *Songs for the Holy Other: Hymns Affirming the LGBTQIA2S+ Community*, published in 2019 by the Hymn Society of North America. He has long been a member of the Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church of Brooklyn, New York. He is pictured here sitting in the pew of poet Marianne Moore, who was also a member of that congregation. *Photo by Alison Cornyn.*

Author: Paul Nderitu

My name is Paul Nderitu
Gay man from Kenya.
I love Jesus.

I enjoy traveling and outdoor activities.



Rev. Marian Edmonds-Allen is the executive director of Parity, an NYC-based national nonprofit that works at the intersection of faith and LGBT concerns, director of Blessed by Difference, and author at Family Christian.

Marian attended Western Theological Seminary and Eden Theological Seminary and has served in many pastoral capacities, including church planting, parish ministry, and chaplaincy. She is a Doctor of Ministry candidate at Eden Theological Seminary (2023) with the topic Covenantal Pluralism and Mission: Evidence for Healing the LGBT and Faith Divide. Marian is married, has four children, and is a passionate skier and outdoor enthusiast.

Thank you for joining us during this Lenten Season!

If you have questions, comments, need help - or would like to write - please be in touch. We always want to hear from you - that is the spirit of Holy Dialogues. Be in touch by emailing marian@parity.nyc

We also have wonderful Converge Groups for you to be part of.
Everyone is welcome. EVERY one.

Remember, God loves you!

