

The Contact

FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH — NORFOLK

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NO. 3



Drawn to the Cross

Forty is an important number in the Bible. Mentioned over 140 times in the Scriptures, the number 40 is generally more symbolic than exact. Which is to say that “40” often becomes a kind of shorthand for: “a really long period of time that leads to something important or significant.” For example: It rains 40 days and 40 nights during the great Flood. Moses is on Mt. Sinai 40 days receiving the Law. The Israelites spend 40 years in the wilderness. Elijah travels 40 days to Mt. Horeb. The prophet Ezekiel lies on the ground for 40 days. And, as we hear each year on the first Sunday of Lent, Jesus spends 40 days in the wilderness after being baptized by John.

As you might guess, it is no accident, then, that the season of Lent lasts 40 days. Beginning on Ash Wednesday and concluding the Saturday before Easter Sunday (but excluding Sundays), Lent looks to Jesus’ own time of fasting and prayer before beginning his public ministry. Not only is this a time of transition for Jesus that will lead to a new phase of the story, but in his time of preparation and battle with temptation we also discover a pattern for our own journey as we prepare to celebrate the joy of Easter.

This year, we have chosen, “Drawn to the Cross,” as the theme for our Lenten journey together. In part, being drawn to the Cross reminds us that Jesus’ death was no accident. As we discover in the gospels, Jesus knew that both his battle with sin, death, and the devil, and his inauguration of God’s reign would lead to a showdown with the powers

that be. Jesus also knew that God’s ultimate victory would mean his own death. Nevertheless, in great faithfulness and love, “he set his face to go to Jerusalem.” (Luke 9:51)

Yet, being “Drawn to the Cross” also calls to mind that we do not come to the story of Lent and Holy Week as mere spectators. We are participants, as well. Not only is it for our sin and brokenness that Jesus is crucified, but, through the victory of that same cross, we are forgiven, made new, transformed! Ultimately, Jesus’ journey to the cross becomes our journey, too, as daily we take up our own crosses, living our lives in, and for, the reign of God.

I hope that you will join us this year as we walk together these 40 days of Lent. Let yourself be drawn to the cross by accepting Lent’s invitation to slow down a bit and to make time for prayer, Bible study, and fasting from things that draw your attention away from God. Join us for worship and fellowship on Thursdays and for the other opportunities for engagement and service that you find in the pages of this newsletter. Let these 40 days be a “long period of time that leads to something significant,” a renewed sense of God’s living presence in your life. Yes, I know that you are busy and that perhaps you do not feel you have the time to “do Lent”. But then again, you may just discover that allowing yourself to be drawn to the cross to be among the most valuable and sustaining moments of the week.

— By Pastor Scott Mims

Lessons on the Liturgy:

Why do we veil the crosses during Lent?

In short: tradition.

In long: the origin of this practice is debated among scholars, but a thread of consistency seems to run among them all. Some say it dates back to 9th century Germany where a large cloth (called the Hungertuch) covered the entire area around the altar and was removed during the reading of the Passion on Holy Wednesday at the words “the veil of the temple was rent in two.”

Others trace it to an ancient practice of church discipline where the notorious sinners (as they were called) were ritually expelled from the church and began a years-long process of restoration. This temporary excommunication led to the development of many practices which we still observe on Ash Wednesday.

In the early church, Lent was a time of preparation for baptisms at Easter, a focus now restored to contemporary understanding. From the Middle Ages and still today for many, the time of Lent is one of austerity, spiritual cleansing, and renewal. All the extra “stuff” is removed from our day-to-day life, and we focus on God’s provision for our basic needs. This is accomplished on the individual level by acts of denial (e.g. giving up sweets or alcohol

for Lent). In the church building itself, this was done by removing the flashy, ornate things (icons, banners, statues, etc) from the worship space. Some congregations today use terra cotta in place of their communion silver and replace their brass cross and candlesticks with wooden ones. Items which were too large or too heavy to be removed were veiled. At that time, the color for Lent was not purple, but unbleached linen, so the veiled items blended into the walls of the stone structures. (Curiously, the stations of the cross, often themselves elaborate depictions of the passion, are never included in this veiling.)

What emerges from all these examples is an understanding of the holiness of God. Moses veiled his face after speaking to the Lord. St. Paul wrote about beholding the glory of God with unveiled faces. Each year, we begin Lent with an extended confession that recalls all the practices and intentions which we speak of as “separating us from God.” While we know that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ, we also know that there is a dross about us that keeps us from being our best selves. The Lenten rituals and disciplines help us to do some internal housekeeping, working toward restoration, and looking forward to the un-veiling of new and unending life in dazzling resurrection light.

40 for 40, a Lenten Challenge

Lent, a season of forty days that reminds us of Jesus’ time of temptation in the desert, has historically been a period of fasting and abstinence for Christians. For some, it is also a time to reflect on Christ’s suffering and the suffering of those in our world today. That reflection often prompts them to action - to give more generously of their time or of their resources.

With that call to action in mind, consider participating this Lenten season in a “40 for 40 challenge” to benefit our Grace Food Pantry. This means you, or your household, commits to bringing in forty food items during the forty-day season of Lent. Canned or boxed food, non-perishable, is acceptable. If you’d rather not shop, consider giving \$40 during Lent to the Grace Food Pantry, either through online giving or check, designated for the pantry.

Hunger is a reality in Ghent and our food pantry is heavily used by our neighbors. Unlike Tuesday meals and the Wednesday lunch program, it is not yet funded through our Spending Plan for Ministry. The food pantry relies totally on donations, which means this challenge could give a huge boost to our supply of food.

Remember, a “challenge” is “a call to take part.” Maybe for you, the challenge will be ten cans, or four dollars during Lent. The amount of your commitment is less important than your willingness to help those in need. Hopefully this challenge will also help us to remember the hungry and to develop a habit of giving to the Grace Food Pantry throughout the year.

Thank you.

Lenten Mid-week Series: *Prayer around the Cross*

Thursdays, 7:00 PM
3rd Floor

During Advent we lit candles and read the words of the prophets which offered us hope that the Prince of Peace would come among us. On Christmas Eve, we saw this light of peace and hope revealed to us and to all the world in the infant Jesus. On the Last Sunday after the Epiphany, we were taken with Peter, James, and John to the top of the mountain to see God shining through Christ in dazzling brilliance. But eventually everything changed: the voice from heaven was no longer audible, and the appearance of Jesus returned to that of any other human being. Jesus descended the mountain and began his journey to Jerusalem, and the apostles followed him on the way to the cross.

Everything is about to change for us as well. We, too, are descending the mountain and beginning our Lenten pilgrimage of penitence and self-examination. We trade the brightness of the Transfiguration for ashes and a cross and a reminder that we are dust, and to dust we will return.

But it is the Light that we have been carrying with us since Advent — and indeed the Light of Christ that was given to us at baptism — that illuminates the shadows of Lent; it is this Light that keeps the lamp of hope burning in our hearts. This hope foreshadows the end of our Lenten journey when, at the Easter Vigil, the light of resurrection enters the dark nave, scattering the gloom of Good Friday, and announcing that the Light of Christ is present and is growing brilliantly beyond the walls of our church, to our community, and the world.

In the meantime, we will journey with the disciples and each other, our feet guided by the light of Christ — the lamp shining upon our path. This journey will take the form of a contemplative service of word and prayer



known as *Prayer Around the Cross*. We will begin with the procession of light in a darkened room. We will then hear readings from scripture and non-biblical sources to prompt our guided meditation. Then, during a litany of silence and song, the assembly is invited around the cross in prayer. We will pray for the church; for the well-being of creation; for peace and justice among nations; for our community; for the marginalized and oppressed; and for those who suffer in mind, body, or spirit. The last service in the series will include the laying on of hands with special prayers for healing and anointing.

Those who are familiar with Evening Prayer and Taizé will recognize similarities to those services. Join us on **Thursday nights in Lent at 7:00 p.m. in the third floor Fellowship Hall.**

March 10	Hunger for God
March 17	Our Light and our Salvation
March 24	Be still and know
March 31	A Heart of Flesh
April 7	Healer of our every ill

Stewardship: Taking the Field

As I write this, we are poised for one of the most anticipated events of the year. After the long grind of the regular season and the wild excitement of the playoffs, it all comes down to this. That's right, it's almost time for Super Bowl LVI! This year the Los Angeles Rams will square off against the Cincinnati Bengals before an audience that will exceed 100 million people. By the time this newsletter makes it to your mailbox or inbox, the Super Bowl will be history, but at the moment the pundits and prognosticators are busy, balancing each team's strengths and weaknesses, hypothesizing about strategies, and considering the impact of possible contingencies. Yet in the end, all this talk won't matter much. What will matter will be what actually happens on the field.

Now I will be the first to admit that I am not a super sports guy. I do enjoy watching football, but I am a casual fan at best. However, what I do find fascinating - and relevant to what we are about as church - is all the analysis. How you play the game not only depends greatly upon your players' gifts, talents, and abilities, but upon how all these things come together. Simply put, you play to your strengths and run the plays your players can run.

You run the plays your players can run. This is not only a good sports strategy, but a good reminder for how to do church. Like football (or any other sport, for that matter), the "game" has evolved over the years. In terms of being

the church, the sorts of plays that used to work well for us 10...20...30 years ago no longer prove effective. The world around us is changing more rapidly than ever, and we must learn to adjust if we wish to be both faithful and fruitful in our ministry together. But here's the catch: we do not simply want to "analyze" - to only talk and ponder such things - we also want to act. After all, in faith as in football, it is not the analysis and all the talk that matters. What matters is what happens out on the field - in this case, on the mission field that God has planted us in.

And so, I invite you to join us. I invite you to take the field along with all whom God has brought to First Lutheran, because being the church in the world today is not merely a spectator sport. All of us are invited to play. All our gifts are needed...all our strengths that, together, we may play our best game possible. To be sure, we are not playing before an audience of over 100 million. Nevertheless, we are engaged together in something infinitely more important. For long, long after Super Bowl LVI has passed into the history books, the connections that we help and encourage people to make in their relationship with God will endure. This is the "game" in which we are involved: the mission to connect people forever to the love and grace of Jesus Christ.

— By Pastor Scott Mims

Ash Wednesday, March 2

Holy Communion with Imposition of Ashes

1:00 p.m. & 7:00 p.m.



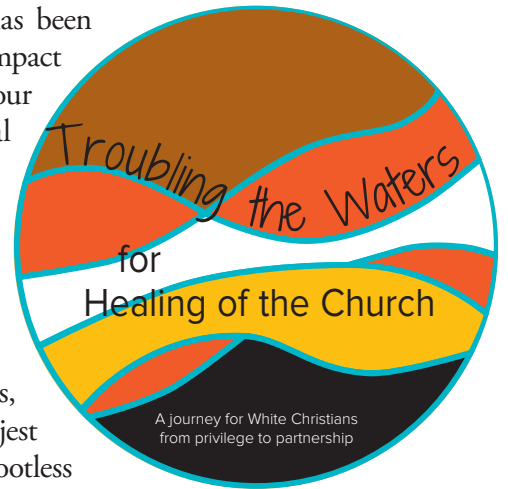
Ash Wednesday is a solemn day of prayer that begins the season of Lent. On this day we confess our sin in a litany of repentance. During Lent's forty days we are invited to carry out the Lenten discipline: practices of fasting, prayer, and works of love. On this day we will receive ashes. This ancient symbol of repentance reminds us of our mortality. Returning to God's mercy and grace, marked with the cross of Christ, we make our way through Lent, longing for the baptismal waters of Easter, our spiritual rebirth.

"Troubling the Waters"

As Black History Month draws to a close, our thoughts turn once again to words of our nation's Nobel Peace Prize recipient, Martin Luther King, Jr. Few of our nation's heroes have been so eloquent in lifting up the goals of justice and peace than this Christian pastor and activist. His words continue to remind us that "True peace is not merely the absence of tension; it is the presence of justice."

Our congregation's membership in Bread for the World is our witness to the truth of this statement. Founded in 1974 by a Lutheran pastor, Arthur Simon (who once preached from our pulpit!), the goal of BFW is the eradication of poverty and hunger, both here and abroad. That is a daunting task, to be sure, but by summoning Congress to pass legislation that combats root causes of poverty, there has been remarkable progress in reducing its impact, both nationally and internationally. There is hardly a more significant way to achieve justice and peace than to provide opportunities and access for everyone to a job and earning a decent living. As Martin Luther King helped us to understand, among the more formidable obstacles to

this happening has been the destructive impact of racism in our society. In his usual graphic manner, King states the problem: "It's all right to tell a man to lift himself by his own bootstraps, but it is a cruel jest to say to a bootless man that he ought to lift himself by his own bootstraps."



So, the next time we have a Bread for the World letter writing campaign to our Senators and Representatives, let's remember the broader picture in what we are doing. May it give us still further incentive in doing this good work.

March Birthdays

1 Mar	Chris Holbach	9 Mar	Nathan Pitsch	15 Mar	Caroline Boykin	23 Mar	Maggie Utecht
1 Mar	Roman Ruggiero	9 Mar	David Redilla	15 Mar	Bert Burckard	24 Mar	Jake Weeks
5 Mar	Wyann Kaiser	9 Mar	Alex Vera Cruz	16 Mar	Ellie Porter	25 Mar	Hope Fischer
6 Mar	Stephen Griffin	10 Mar	Ellis Curran	17 Mar	Frances Halcrow	25 Mar	Jeanne Walters
6 Mar	Esther Williams	10 Mar	Riley Shea	17 Mar	Lynn Utecht	26 Mar	Sarah Ammons
7 Mar	Kat Foster	11 Mar	Charlene Loope	17 Mar	Mike Westerveld	28 Mar	Julia Callahan
7 Mar	Jay Gill	12 Mar	John Poston	20 Mar	Deb Thompson	28 Mar	Grasea Pulliam
7 Mar	Lorna Moss	13 Mar	Chuck Baynard	20 Mar	Steve Velotas	30 Mar	Zachery Posey
7 Mar	Norma Moss	14 Mar	Caroline Asam	22 Mar	Tony Echea	31 Mar	Gary Weeks
9 Mar	Christian Asam	15 Mar	Sylvia Bourcier	23 Mar	Mandy Affeldt		

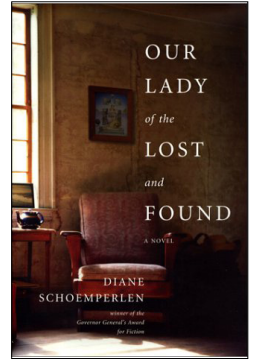
Connect with Others

FLC Book Discussion Group

Book Discussion Group will meet **Sunday, March 6th, 2022 at 6:30 PM** to discuss *Our Lady of the Lost and Found: A Novel of Mary, Faith, and Friendship* by Diane Schoemperlen 384 pp.

One Monday morning in April, a middle-aged writer walks into her living room to water the plants and finds a woman standing beside her potted fig tree. Dressed in a navy blue trench coat and white Nikes, the woman introduces herself as Mary. Mother of God.... You know. Mary. Instead of a golden robe or a crown, she arrives bearing a practical wheeled suitcase. Weary after two

thousand years of adoration and petition, Mary is looking for a little R & R. She's asked in for lunch and decides to stay a week. As the story of their visit unfolds, so does the story of Mary—one of the most complex and powerful female figures of our time—and her changing image in culture, art, history, as well as the thousands of recorded sightings that have placed her everywhere from a privet hedge to the dented bumper of a Camaro.



Thank You Note

Reverend Cathy;

The Ghent Area Ministry is supported by YOU and 18 other churches and congregations on the west side of Norfolk. It provides bus tickets (local and home bound), prescription support, home fuel support, application support for VA benefits, identification cards and social security card replacement. GAM also has a coat closet. Of special benefit to the community is our ability to connect people with food kitchens, employment services and job opportunities through our relationship with Eggleston Services, Gateway Services, and others. We help people fill out job applications and point them in the right direction.

Our mission is to help people find a home or keep them in their home.

As one of our Supporting Congregations, we thank you for your continued support!

Bob Heely, President

BLOOD DRIVE

FLC's Red Cross Blood Drive

Calling ALL Blood Donors!! Wednesday March 9th, 1PM to 6PM, FLC will be hosting OUR annual Blood Drive. This is the one time each year that we host the Red Cross in collecting the Gift of Life for so many in need. The Red Cross is currently reporting a dangerously low blood supply....the worst in over a decade.

YOU are somebody's blood type. Please sign up to donate at www.redcrossblood.org using the sponsor code GHENT, or contact Bob Ritchey at 962-8921 or ritchey.bob@gmail.com for sign up or any questions.



Blood Drive
Ghent Churches
First Lutheran Church

Strickler Hall
1301 Colley Avenue
Norfolk, VA 23517

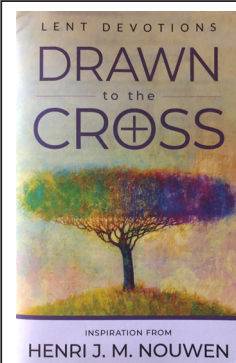
Wednesday, March 9, 2022
1:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.



Martha Circle

Join Martha Circle on March 1 at 7:00 PM in the FLC Reception Room for a fun night of service. Under the guidance of Pam Baynard, we will be tying quilts to help the Service Committee and Quilting group who have already done the sewing part.

Enjoy an evening of conversation as we work together on this project.



Lenten Devotionals

Lenten devotionals for adults will be available at the Welcome Center desk the week before Ash Wednesday. Children will receive their Lenten activities in their Sunday School classes.

March 2022

Office Hours: 9 AM—4 PM Monday-Thursday, 9 AM - 1 PM Friday
Men's Bible Study: 7 AM, Wednesdays, IHOP, 114 E. 21st, Norfolk, VA 23517
Women's Bible Study: 2 PM Tuesdays online, please contact Pastor Mims for more information.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
General Deadlines: 12 PM Tuesdays—Life Together Weekly Edition 3 PM Tuesdays—Altar Flowers 4 PM—March 15th—The Contact Email kminnick@flcnorfolk.com with your articles & information.	7	1 11 AM Lydia Circle 2 PM Women's Bible Study 5:30 PM Dinner Ministry 7 PM Martha Circle	2 Ash Wednesday 7 AM Men's Bible Study 12 PM Lunch Ministry 1 PM Ash Wednesday Service 6 PM Faith & Racial Equity Group 7 PM Ash Wednesday Service	3 7 AM Men's Bible Study 12 PM Lunch Ministry 1 PM Red Cross Blood Drive 6 PM Faith & Racial Equity Group	4 Pastors' Day Off	5 10 AM Fay Rogner's Funeral
6 9:00 AM Sunday School 10 AM Worship 6:30 PM FLC Book Club	8 10 AM Quilting Group 2 PM Women's Bible Study 5:30 PM Dinner Ministry	9 7 AM Men's Bible Study 12 PM Lunch Ministry 1 PM Red Cross Blood Drive 6 PM Faith & Racial Equity Group	10 7 PM Prayer Around the Cross	11 7 PM Prayer Around the Cross	12	13
13 Daylight Savings Time Begins 9:00 AM Sunday School 10 AM Worship	14 7 PM Congregation Council	15 Contact Deadline 2 PM Women's Bible Study 5:30 PM Dinner Ministry	16 7 AM Men's Bible Study 12 PM Lunch Ministry 6 PM Faith & Racial Equity Group	17 5:30 PM Laundry Love 7 PM Prayer Around the Cross	18 7 PM Prayer Around the Cross	19
20 9:00 AM Sunday School 10 AM Worship	21 10 AM Quilting Group 2 PM Women's Bible Study 5:30 PM Dinner Ministry	22 7 AM Men's Bible Study 12 PM Lunch Ministry 6 PM Faith & Racial Equity Group	23 9:30 AM Christian Service 7 PM Prayer Around the Cross	24 7 PM Prayer Around the Cross	25	26
27 9:00 AM Sunday School 10 AM Worship	28 2 PM Women's Bible Study 5:30 PM Dinner Ministry 7 PM Martha Circle	29 7 AM Men's Bible Study 12 PM Lunch Ministry 6 PM Faith & Racial Equity Group	30 7 PM Prayer Around the Cross	31	32	33

Community Groups (Strickler Hall): Mixed Groups—Sun. 7:00-9:30 PM; Happy Hour AA Home Group—Mon. 4:30—6:30 PM; Happy Hour AA—Mon. 5-7 PM; SAA—Mon. 7-8:30 PM; Thur. 7:30—9:30 PM; Just For Today—Tue. 10-11:30 AM; Continuing Quest—Fri. 12-1 PM; Candlelight—Fri. 8-9 PM; SNL AA—Sat. 7-9:30 PM

Connect with Word and Body

Prayer Concerns for March

Living God, in Christ you make all things new. Transform the poverty of our nature by the riches of your grace, and in the renewal of our lives make known your glory, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

Give joyful thanksgiving

...For the gifts of your creation which sustain us

...For the birth of Jesus who came among the poor to bring the riches of your grace

...For everyone who embodies servant leadership, that they may be encouraged

Help us

...Encourage leaders of nations that they may be moved to work with wisdom and integrity for peace and justice for all

...Gain awareness, repentance, and healing from the prejudice, racism, and fear that keep us from recognizing one another as full and fellow members of Christ's body

...Experience and know your blessings even when our days are difficult and anxious

Pray for

...**Jennette Franklin** on the death of her brother

...All those affected by violence and the communities of Blacksburg, Virginia and of Bridgewater College

...Codi Bigsby (missing four-year old)

...Family of Amir Locke

...First responders and military personnel who risk their lives in service of others

...Peace and comfort to Leslyn Henry & family on the death of Leslyn's sister

...Peace and comfort to the family of Fay Rogner

...Peace and comfort to the family of Pete Kelly

...Peace and comfort to the **Hogan** family

...Blessing and protection of children, the elderly, and the sick who cannot be vaccinated

...Justice for the victims of racial oppression & violence

...Those who are dying, that they are secure in knowing that God loves them & will welcome them into everlasting life.

...People fleeing dire humanitarian situations for a better life.

...The sick, that they are comforted and the despairing, that they receive hope.

...Those struggling with addiction and mental health issues.

...Those mourning the death of loved ones.

...For all who cry out to God in any need.

Margaret & Ronald Ackley, Gail Anthony, Alvene Buckley, Don Buckley, Olivia Christianson, Barbara Cordrey, Jennette Franklin, Roger Fuller, Joelle Griffith (mother of Paula Barwick), Valerie & Jim Harvey, Marion Ingersoll, Joann Klotz, Kelley Minschke, Lorna Moss, Bill Newlon, David Perron, Betty Phillips, Gail Simos, Shirley Skees, Nancy & Jack Smith, Bill Wattai, Melissa & Ken Zaletski, Aaron Core, Betty Lou, Bill & family (nephew of Mary Bissey), Charlotte & Lee Peglow, Cynthia Moll, Cynthia Olson, Dave, George "Brick" Hill, Gert, Harriette & Dave Wheatley, Jake, Jimmy, Katrina, Kevin, Heather, & their family, Margie Baker, Mark, Megan (niece of Melissa & Ken Zaletski), Rema, Rob, Sue & Jim Webb, Vickie Zelasko

Those dealing with cancer

Alissa (friend of **Dorothy Shaffer**), Bob, James Collier, Iris Corbin, Dave Guelcher (father of Beth Zaletski), Harriette Wheatley (friend of the **Grogans**), Jenn, David Kelly, Chris Jones (nephew of **Karen Siegel**), Vickie Mack, Mark, **Melvin (Jack) Smith**, Phil, **Randall R. Wiele**, Rob, Sandy, Andie Seagraves, Gerald Stover, **Dallas Williams**, Jess WineKing

Military and their families:

All military personnel around the world.

Fox family, Tom Douglas, Kyle Hefner, Bobby Masters, Nano Masters, Nick Masters, Ted Peterson, Inga Schaus, Nathaniel Schaus, Brian Becker, Amy Hardbower, Nicolette Huntley, Tim Kelly, Eli Jones, Ian Logan, Kelly Mackenzie, John Marfield, Nikki Parkman

Since we have such great hope in your promises, O God, we lift these and all of our prayers to you in confidence and faith; through Jesus Christ our Savior. — **Amen.**

Readings for March

March 2nd Ash Wednesday

Isaiah 58:1-12

Psalms 51

II Corinthians
5:20b--6:10

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

March 6th Deuteronomy 26:1-11

Psalms 91:1-2, 9-16

Romans 10:8b-13

Luke 4:1-13

March 13th Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18

Psalms 27

Philippians 3:17--4:1

Luke 13:31-35

March 20th

Isaiah 55:1-9

Psalms 63:1-8

1 Corinthians 10:1-13

Luke 13:1-9

March 27th

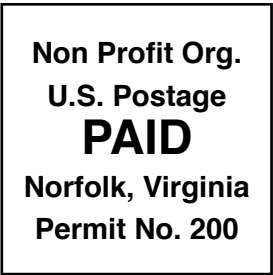
Joshua 5:9-12

Psalms 32

2 Corinthians 5:16-21

Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

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