

Lenten Booklet

2018



First Congregational
Church

Georgetown MA



The Magnolia Tree

When Iris was in Kindergarten, some twenty two years ago, she was very excited when she came home one day. For Arbor Day, each child received one “tree” for them to plant. When she revealed the tree her eyes were lit with anticipation. There, grasped in her small

hands was a twelve inch stick, bare and without any discernible root. I took it from her gently and ooo’d and ahhh’d over it like any parent would.

But deep in my heart, after years of fearless gardening I knew that this “tree” was unlikely to survive to maturity. And to make it even worse, it was marked as a magnolia tree, a type that really isn’t meant for New England’s harsh winters. But I looked at my daughter, and knew we had to plant it. I chose an especially sunny spot, close to a wind break, and had to mark it with a stake so no one would mow, walk or play over the short stick. I watered it, fed it, and prayed over that stick.

Other parents had put the “trees” from their children straight into their compost piles. And I wondered if it

was wrong to give Iris hope that the tree would survive. Was that hope setting her up for a fall?

First year, second year, third year, we kept counting. The stick started to have leaves, then turned into a bush, then kept growing. Some winters it was almost covered in snow. But somehow, it kept growing. And then I began to notice something as I watched it every season out my back porch. The magnolia actually would set its blossoms, like large pussy willow buds, in the fall. Before the winter set in, the magnolia would prepare for the spring. It had confidence that life would return to it, even before the winter.

I finally grasped the message that the magnolia taught me through the two decades of watching it grow into the double tree, twice as tall as me. That “tree” grew against the odds, certain of coming to life before it went to its winters sleep. It tells me this story every Lent, in the midst of the cold, leafless, gray, that it has prepared for the awakening, the alleluia of big, sweet and full blossoms that shouldn’t be possible, but are. This is the promise of Easter. Before we even are taken by winter’s sleep, Christ has prepared the Alleluia of the resurrection.

Grow in God this Lent-Pastor Lorraine

Jeremiah 29:11-13

11 *For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.*

12 *Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you.*

13 *You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.*

In chapter 29 of Jeremiah, God is sending words of encouragement to the Israelites who are living in exile. In this passage, God is saying that even though they are in exile, to go ahead and make a good life by building houses, planting gardens, getting married, and starting families. I think that at times we can feel like we are living in exile, a place that feels binding, uncomfortable, and not home. This passage reassures us of a plan and purpose that God has for us, a future of safety, prosperity, and hope.

In 2001, I moved in with my parents while going through a divorce. During this time, I learned about a loving, forgiving God who wants to live in my life. I was so excited about this newfound love that I encouraged my parents to join me in my faith journey. They appreciated the new changes in my life, but they wanted to keep to their usual routine, which included long hours of work. When in college, my mom, Diana, studied music and art in college but lacked time to do these things that she enjoyed. She sold BMWs, and she made meeting her customers' needs top priority. She was the best in her industry, and she loved her customers.

In 2005, she was in an accident that changed her life and those around her. After going through failed medical treatments, she learned to get around in an electric wheelchair and was able to drive short distances using hand controls. The year of her accident, I was distraught to think that a good and loving God could allow this tragedy to happen, virtually exiling her to a life of pain. As I saw Diana grow in her faith, accepting her circumstances with grace, I enlisted my small group bible study to pray, and we pleaded with God to heal her.

One Easter, shortly after my niece Kaila was born, Diana flew to Florida to help take care of the baby. Miraculously, her spinal pain went away. She was able to cook, clean, do laundry, and watch her granddaughter while my sister and brother-in-law got a few hours of sleep. But, it was short lived, and her last week in Florida she fell and her spinal condition returned as before. As I was on the plane flying to meet her and to take over baby duties for a week, I kept pleading again, "Dear God, please heal MY mom!" I felt like God was listening and providing an answer I didn't want to hear. It was as if a gentle voice whispered, "she's not YOURS, she's mine." I felt corrected, humbled and reassured, that whatever MY mom, or rather God's Diana, was going through, she was going to be okay.

After I finally accepted Diana's condition as her new life, I found myself growing closer to her by taking her to doctor's appointments and staying with her in Gloucester to help with the dogs when my stepdad Tom was traveling. When she moved away to Maryland, I wondered how she would get to her doctor's appointments or manage the dogs by herself. I had visions of getting on planes or driving 8-10 hours just for

a 30-minute doctor's visit. But, this was not realistic. I was heartbroken that she moved, but one of my friends gave me words of encouragement that unlike some moms, who are in heaven, she's only a phone call, flight, and car ride away. Having reassurance, I trusted God to take care of her.

Diana now has a reliable set of friends from her neighborhood and can find anyone to go with her to an appointment. She's gained enough strength in her hands that her friends usually let her drive, even on long car rides! One of her friends comes over to the house regularly to paint. Although she's unable to paint large paintings as she did in her early days, she now paints miniatures and just started selling them through a local merchant. I feel blessed to see that God is restoring her passions in life, singing in the choir, enjoying time with friends, and painting again. I now understand that Diana is no longer in exile and that she is God's Diana. Likewise, we are all set free from exile and belong to God, who desires a joyful and enriching life for each of us.

-Alecia Balduf



DO YOU WANT TO FAST THIS LENT?

In the words of Pope Francis

- Fast from hurting words and say kind words.
- Fast from sadness and be filled with gratitude.
- Fast from anger and be filled with patience.
- Fast from pessimism and be filled with hope.
- Fast from worries and have trust in God.
- Fast from complaints and contemplate simplicity.
- Fast from pressures and be prayerful.
- Fast from bitterness and fill your hearts with joy.
- Fast from selfishness and be compassionate to others.
- Fast from grudges and be reconciled.
- Fast from words and be silent so you can listen.

pietrafitness.com



Submitted by Mary Dougherty

A single crocus bloom
ought to be enough to
convince our heart that
springtime, no matter
how predictable, is somehow
a gift, gratuitous, gratis, a grace.

-David Steindl-Rast

Submitted by Emily Knapp



Mother Teresa's *Anyway* Poem

People are often unreasonable, illogical and self-centered; - Forgive them anyway.

If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives; - Be kind anyway.

If you are successful, you will win some false friends and some true enemies; - Succeed anyway.

If you are honest and frank, people may cheat you;
Be honest and frank anyway.

What you spend years building, someone could destroy overnight; - Build anyway.

If you find serenity and happiness, they may be jealous;
Be happy anyway.

The good you do today, people will often forget tomorrow; - Do good anyway.

Give the world the best you have, and it may never be enough; - Give the world the best you've got anyway.

You see, in the final analysis, it is between you and your
God;

It was never between you and them anyway.

Submitted by Mary Dougherty

Why Do People Say "Keep Your Fork"?

This passalong will lift your spirit and fill you with hope.

There was a young woman who had been diagnosed with a terminal illness and had been given three months to live. So as she was getting her things in order, she contacted her Pastor and had him come to her house to discuss certain aspects of her final wishes.

She told him which songs she wanted sung at the service, what scriptures she would like read, and what outfit she wanted to be buried in. Everything was in order and the Pastor was preparing to leave when the young woman suddenly remembered something very important to her.

"There's one more thing," she said excitedly.

"What's that?" came the Pastor's reply.

"This is very important," the young woman continued. "I want to be buried with a fork in my right hand."

The Pastor stood looking at the young woman, not knowing quite what to say.

"That surprises you, doesn't it?" the young woman asked.

"Well, to be honest, I'm puzzled by the request," said the Pastor.

The young woman explained. "My grandmother once told me this story, and from that time on I have always tried to pass along its message to those I love and those who are in need of encouragement. In all my years of attending socials and dinners, I always remember that when the dishes of the main course were being cleared, someone would inevitably lean over and say, 'Keep your fork.' It was my favorite part because I knew that something better was coming... like velvety chocolate cake or deep-dish apple pie. Something wonderful, and with substance!"

So, I just want people to see me there in that casket with a fork in my hand and I want them to wonder, "What's with the fork?" Then I want you to tell them: "Keep your fork ... the best is yet to come."

The Pastor's eyes welled up with tears of joy as he hugged the young woman goodbye. He knew this would be one of the last times he would see her before her death. But he also knew that the young woman had a better grasp of heaven than he did. She had a better grasp of what heaven would be like than many people twice her age, with twice as much experience and knowledge. She *knew* that something better was coming.

At the funeral people were walking by the young woman's casket and they saw the cloak she was wearing and the fork placed in her right hand. Over and over, the Pastor heard the question, "What's with the fork?" And

over and over he smiled.

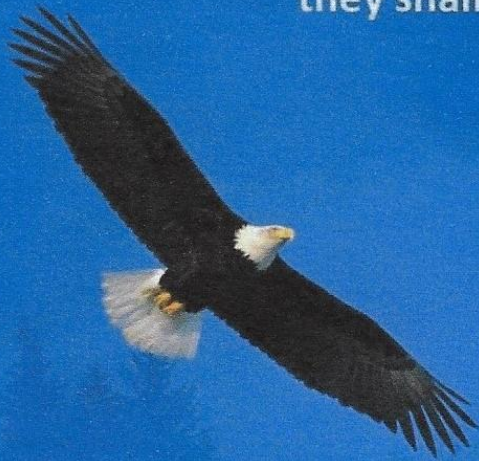
During his message, the Pastor told the people of the conversation he had with the young woman shortly before she died. He also told them about the fork and about what it symbolized to her. He told the people how he could not stop thinking about the fork and told them that they probably would not be able to stop thinking about it either.

He was right. So the next time you reach down for your fork let it remind you, ever so gently, that the best is yet to come.

Submitted by Gladie Kneeland

“But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.”

Isaiah 40:31



Comfort for God's People

Isaiah 40

Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.

² Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins.

³ A voice of one calling: "In the wilderness prepare the way for the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

⁴ Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain.

⁵ And the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all people will see it together. For the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

⁶ A voice says, "Cry out." And I said, "What shall I cry?" "All people are like grass, and all their faithfulness is like the flowers of the field.

⁷ The grass withers and the flowers fall, because the breath of the LORD blows on them. Surely the people are grass.

⁸ The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God endures forever."

⁹ You who bring good news to Zion, go up on a high mountain. You who bring good news to Jerusalem, lift up your voice with a shout, lift it up, do not be afraid; say to the towns of Judah, "Here is your God!"

¹⁰ See, the Sovereign LORD comes with power, and he

rules with a mighty arm. See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him.

¹¹ He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young.

¹² Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, or with the breadth of his hand marked off the heavens? Who has held the dust of the earth in a basket, or weighed the mountains on the scales and the hills in a balance?

¹³ Who can fathom the Spirit of the LORD, or instruct the LORD as his counselor?

¹⁴ Whom did the LORD consult to enlighten him, and who taught him the right way? Who was it that taught him knowledge, or showed him the path of understanding?

¹⁵ Surely the nations are like a drop in a bucket; they are regarded as dust on the scales; he weighs the islands as though they were fine dust.

¹⁶ Lebanon is not sufficient for altar fires, nor its animals enough for burnt offerings.

¹⁷ Before him all the nations are as nothing; they are regarded by him as worthless and less than nothing.

¹⁸ With whom, then, will you compare God? To what image will you liken him?

¹⁹ As for an idol, a metalworker casts it, and a goldsmith overlays it with gold and fashions silver chains for it.

²⁰ A person too poor to present such an offering selects wood that will not rot; they look for a skilled worker to set up an idol that will not topple.

²¹ Do you not know? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not

understood since the earth was founded?

²² He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth, and its people are like grasshoppers. He stretches out the heavens like a canopy, and spreads them out like a tent to live in.

²³ He brings princes to naught and reduces the rulers of this world to nothing.

²⁴ No sooner are they planted, no sooner are they sown, no sooner do they take root in the ground, than he blows on them and they wither, and a whirlwind sweeps them away like chaff.

²⁵ "To whom will you compare me? Or who is my equal?" says the Holy One.

²⁶ Lift up your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one and calls forth each of them by name. Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing.

²⁷ Why do you complain, Jacob? Why do you say, Israel, "My way is hidden from the LORD; my cause is regarded by my God"?

²⁸ Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom.

²⁹ He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.

³⁰ Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall;

³¹ but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

A STAR NOT FAR

Sitting on the wrap around porch of an early 1900's hotel, we don't have to do anything but rock back and forth in old wicker chairs. Peace and serenity surround us, and we are lulled by the rugged beauty of sun-soaked rocks and the glittering blue-greens of harbor waters. If we're young, we sit with feet outstretched on ancient spiny rocks to meditate and absorb the cacophony of crashing waves and bird cries.

This is Star Island.

In years past, many of us from First Church went there on day trips; some of us went for youth and adult conferences and retreats. Lillian Sanford and I went on two separate occasions for a three-day retreat. It was early fall, off-season. There were only a few planned activities in which we could participate or not. It was intended to be a reflective time, a time for renewal. I remember ...

It is evening. The bell calls us to worship. We gather at the base of a rocky hill, on top of which sits a tiny stone chapel. We are given a lantern, and one by one we climb the hill with our lantern. The line of candlelight gradually lengthens, wavering in the darkness. The chapel begins to grow brighter as each person enters. We hang our own lantern on a peg, and it throws a shadow on the wall that forms a cross. It is a moving

and spiritual moment. It reminds us that we have God's light within us, and it is meant to be shared with others.

My island memories are of light: the brightness rising out of the sea's mist in early morning, the silver of light blanketing the ocean during day, the always fiery spectacular at sunset, and best of all, the light of new and renewed friendships.

This is Star Island, not far!

Addendum: Star is one of nine islands, together known as the Isles of Shoals, off Portsmouth, NH. There are funds available from the Philip H. Southwick Memorial Scholarship Fund to help our teens and adults with the cost of attending programs on the island. The week-long high school-age conferences offer teens wonderful opportunities to meet and make friends from many places near and far. Together they enjoy comradery through planned activities relative to the teen world and also through the peace of downtime. Rev. Lorraine is very familiar with Star Island. Talk to her. Experience an island adventure. You won't regret it!

Joan Chatterton

Scripture tells us we are to “spread” the news of the redeeming grace of God, we are the workers in the field. I am thankful that years ago certain people in my life took God’s message seriously. Because of a tragedy, I chose not to believe in God but when a neighbor came by, she told me about the Sunday school program for children and invited mine. Not wanting to prevent the kids from going, I allowed it and of course because of different functions, went with the kids to church. So gradually, as I listened to the minister, I became interested; but he would say “you just have to believe in God as your Lord and Savior”. I remember thinking there has to be more than that. I was looking for a specific task to perform. As the weeks went on I did not seem to be getting any closer to understanding, so that night I said “That’s it, I am not going to try and understand this any longer, I give up”. As soon as I said those words it was like a dam opened up. I understood that I did not have to do anything. Jesus had already done it for me and when I stopped trying to figure it out, I allowed the Holy Spirit to work within me. For the first time I understood the victory of the cross. Praise God for his patience. Praise God for his everlasting unconditional love.

- Evelyn Noyes



Keep
your face always
toward the sunshine
and the shadows
will fall behind you

A framed copy of this reminder is in my
kitchen.

Jean R. Perley

Good Tidings of Salvation

Isaiah 61

The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners,

² to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn,

³ and provide for those who grieve in Zion— to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor.

⁴ They will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated; they will renew the ruined cities that have been devastated for generations.

⁵ Strangers will shepherd your flocks; foreigners will work your fields and vineyards.

⁶ And you will be called priests of the LORD, you will be named ministers of our God. You will feed on the wealth of nations, and in their riches you will boast.

⁷ Instead of your shame you will receive a double portion, and instead of disgrace you will rejoice in your inheritance. And so you will inherit a double portion in your land, and everlasting joy will be yours.

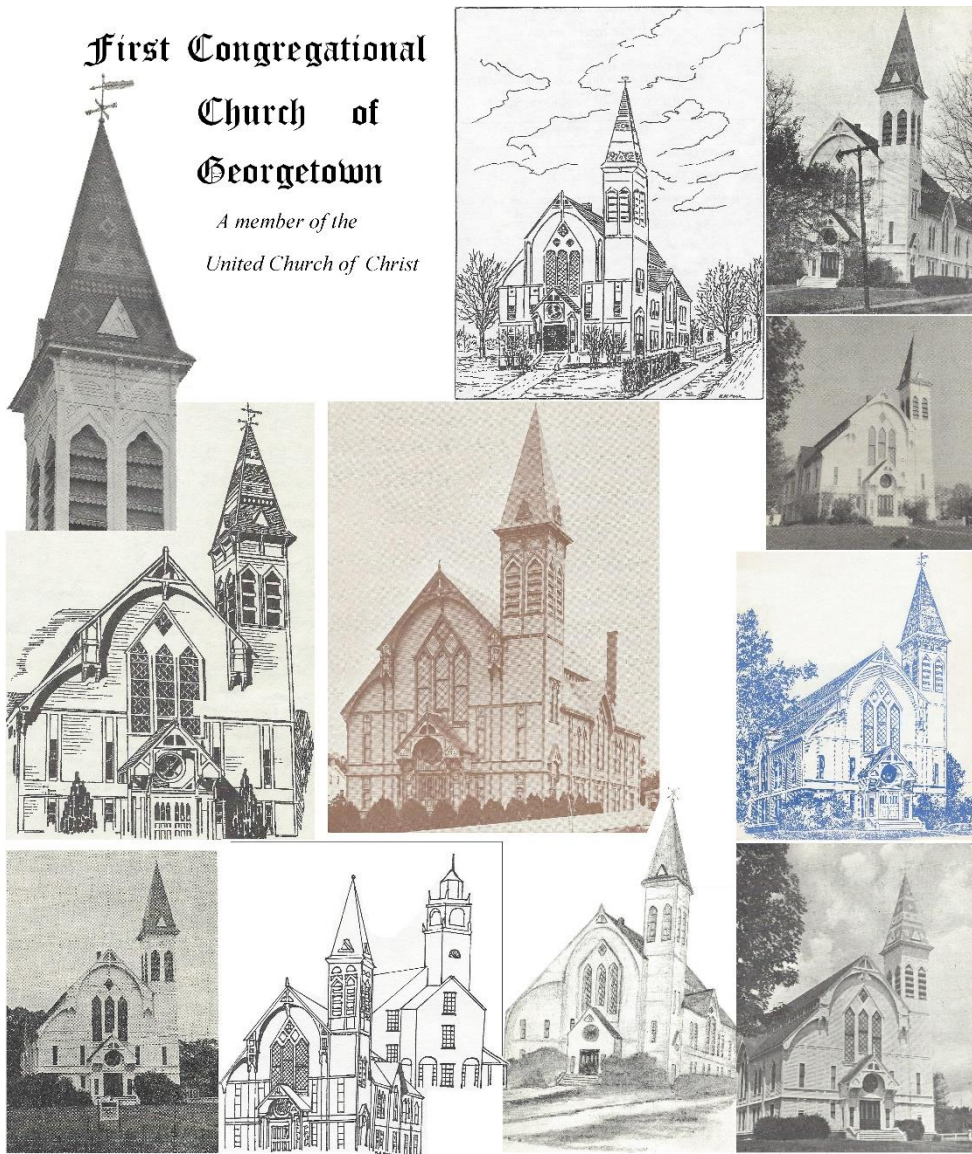
⁸ "For I, the LORD, love justice; I hate robbery and wrongdoing. In my faithfulness I will reward my people and make an everlasting covenant with them.

⁹ Their descendants will be known among the nations and their offspring among the peoples. All who see them will acknowledge that they are a people the LORD has blessed.

Submitted by Mary Dougherty

First Congregational Church of Georgetown

*A member of the
United Church of Christ*



FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD THAT HE
GAVE HIS ONE AND ONLY SON, THAT
WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM SHALL NOT
PERISH BUT HAVE ETERNAL LIFE.

John 3:16

Favorite Bible verse submitted by JoEllen Fielding

Traveling with Jesus

Luke 24:13-35 New Living Translation (NLT)

The Walk to Emmaus

¹³ That same day two of Jesus' followers were walking to the village of Emmaus, seven miles from Jerusalem. ¹⁴ As they walked along they were talking about everything that had happened. ¹⁵ As they talked and discussed these things, Jesus himself suddenly came and began walking with them. ¹⁶ But God kept them from recognizing him.

¹⁷ He asked them, "What are you discussing so intently as you walk along?" They stopped short, sadness written across their faces. ¹⁸ Then one of them, Cleopas, replied, "You must be the only person in Jerusalem who hasn't heard about all the things that have happened there the last few days."

¹⁹ "What things?" Jesus asked.

"The things that happened to Jesus, the man from Nazareth," they said. "He was a prophet who did powerful miracles, and he was a mighty teacher in the eyes of God and all the people. ²⁰ But our leading priests and other religious leaders handed him over to be condemned to death, and they crucified him. ²¹ We had hoped he was the Messiah who had come to rescue Israel. This all happened three days ago.

²² "Then some women from our group of his followers were at his tomb early this morning, and they came back with an amazing report. ²³ They said his body was missing, and they had seen angels who told them Jesus is alive! ²⁴ Some of our men ran out to see, and sure enough, his body was gone, just as the women had said."

²⁵ Then Jesus said to them, "You foolish people! You find it so hard to believe all that the prophets wrote in the Scriptures. ²⁶ Wasn't it clearly predicted that the Messiah would have to suffer all these things before entering his glory?" ²⁷ Then Jesus took them through the writings of Moses and all the prophets, explaining from all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

²⁸ By this time they were nearing Emmaus and the end of their journey. Jesus acted as if he were going on, ²⁹ but they begged him, "Stay the night with us, since it is getting late." So he went home with them. ³⁰ As they sat down to eat, he took the bread and blessed it. Then he broke it and gave it to them. ³¹ Suddenly, their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And at that moment he disappeared!

³² They said to each other, "Didn't our hearts burn within us as he talked with us on the road and explained the Scriptures to us?" ³³ And within the hour they were on their way back to Jerusalem. There they found the eleven disciples and the others

who had gathered with them, ³⁴ who said, "The Lord has really risen! He appeared to Peter."

Jesus Appears to the Disciples

³⁵ Then the two from Emmaus told their story of how Jesus had appeared to them as they were walking along the road, and how they had recognized him as he was breaking the bread.

I am an unpleasant traveler, and this has always been the case in my life. I often get motion sickness and restless when sitting in the car. As a child, having these traits posed a challenge for my parents as they enjoyed driving for long periods of time. I remember we would travel from Southern Arkansas to Northwest Arkansas for 8 hours, on hilly and windy country roads, to visit my grandparents. One trip my parents stopped at least once an hour for me to take a break due to nausea or needing the bathroom.

The need for breaks while traveling persists even through adulthood. On my honeymoon with Shayne, he got the full experience of my motion sickness and bathroom breaks when we traveled the road to Hana, a long country road in Maui, Hawaii

that promised beautiful beaches and excellent scenery. On the way there, I kept telling him, "Drive slower! Drive slower!" as my stomach did a few turns. Then on the way back, I needed to use the restroom, of which there were none in sight, and I kept saying, "Drive faster! Drive faster!" So, when I took a job where I have a long commute five days a week, three of which are commuting with Shayne, I felt very fortunate that he's still willing to ride in the car with me.

Before accepting this job, I was affected by a layoff from my work-from-home employer. Thinking back on my time at home, I used to say to myself, "I'll be able to grow in my faith at home because I can stop and pray anytime." There were many lovely and treasured times, where I could work from a sister's home or a parent's home. But, work was more of a priority and time with God (and Shayne) was secondary. Before the work-from-home position, I went into an office and had a daily routine of breakfast with a bible reading and prayer time. With the work-from-home job, that routine became replaced with whenever breakfast, prayer or devotion might happen.

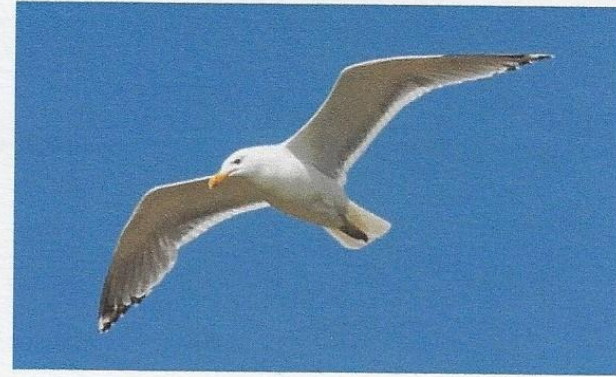
Taking this new job with a commute, I am reminded of the advantage of having a daily routine. Along the route to work, I find myself growing closer to Shayne and God. In the car, I have an opportunity to listen to Shayne's thoughts, hear an uplifting spiritual message on the radio, offer prayers, and think about how to relate to God. Through the radio program, I understand the many blessings that God wants for our lives, and that we are not alone through life's struggles and joys. The commute gives me an opportunity to learn about God's will in our lives, to grow abundantly with love.

When the car takes the corner too sharply or stops abruptly, and I feel a little rumble in my tummy with motion sickness, I may desire a shorter commute. But knowing that God placed me in the car at this time in my life, to grow closer to Shayne, and to develop more in faith, I feel thankful for the opportunity to build these relationships. Similar to the two travelers going to Emmaus, from the passage in Luke, learning God's plan and purpose for Jesus, I am also traveling and discovering God's plan and purpose for Jesus within my life.

Alecia Balduf

My Heaven

**I carry my heaven around with me,
In it I thrill to the sight of a young birch tree,
Of a gray gull skimming over the sea,
To the music of a glorious symphony.**



**At times my heaven is quiet and calm,
There, if I grieve, I always find balm.
I find sweet peace after pain's alarm.
There friendship and love grow deeper in charm.**

**My heaven is made, too, of little things,
When I'm in it my heart soars and sings,
For my heaven with it always brings
The presence of Him who is King of Kings.**

**This poem, submitted by Joyce Greene,
was written by her mother, Ida Corbin Chadwick**

Easter Remembrances

Growing up, Easter was always a wonderful occasion at my house. My grandmother would come out from New York City, armed with hot cross buns from Babka. Easter morning breakfast usually consisted of scrambled eggs with those delicious warmed up hot cross buns. My father always heated them up in a brown paper bag in the oven.



All of us would sit down and dye Easter eggs, so many bright and wonderful colors, with special greetings written to each other with crayon.

Every year, my mother would take my sister Isabelle and me into New York and buy us special Easter outfits, completed by those magical Easter bonnets – usually

white hats banded with fake flowers or fruits (I seem to remember cherries) on them. In those days, someone (probably my mother) thought it was cute if Isabelle (five years younger) and I wore identical outfits. Since all of my old clothes were handed down to her, Isabelle had the dubious pleasure of having to wear the same outfit again five years later.

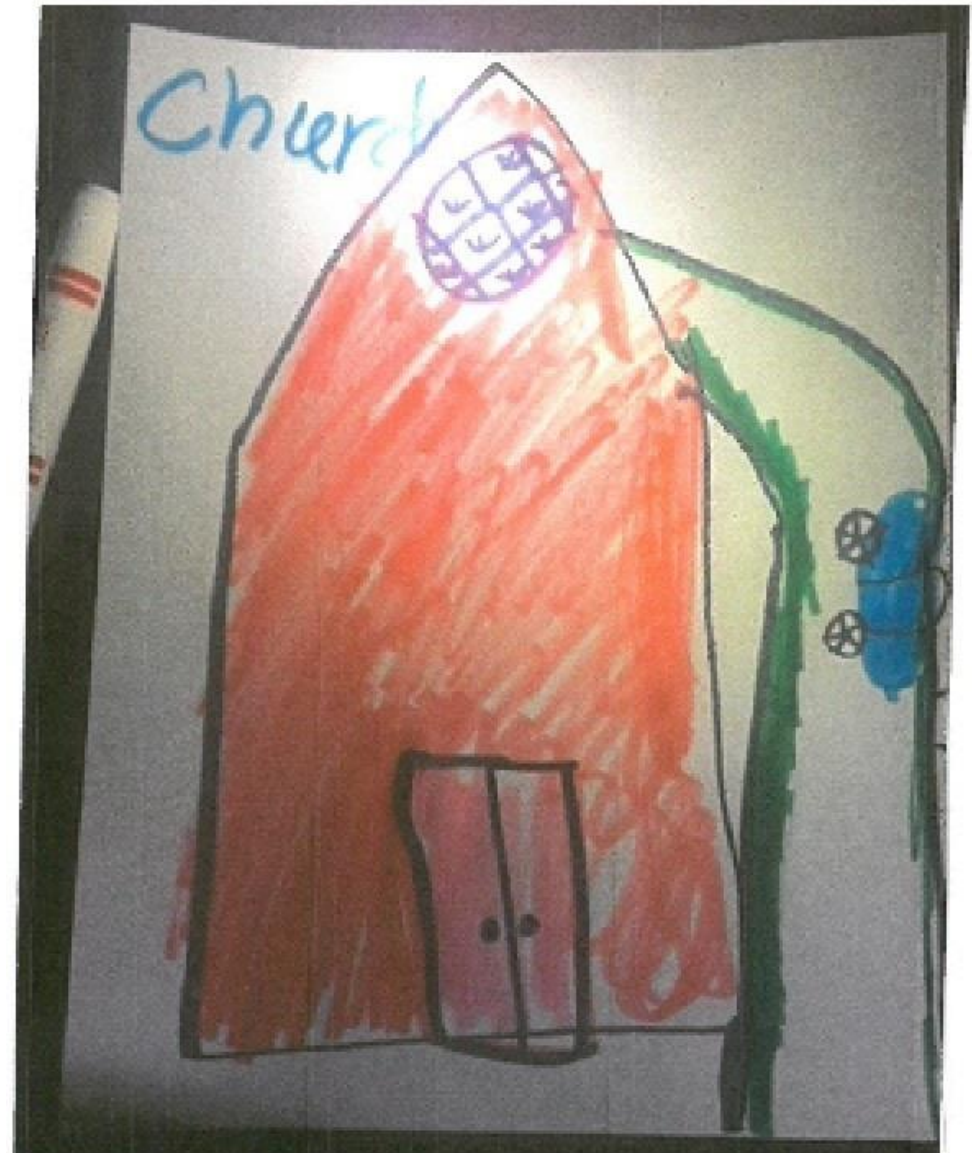
What shoes I wore with the Easter outfit was a struggle. My grandmother always lived in a city – she grew up in Boston, and later moved to New York City – and she considered my parents' little farm about an hour outside of New York to be on the outer reaches of civilization as she knew it. I dreaded when she took me shoe shopping, because she would march me into the store and say, "now I want a sensible pair of shoes for this little girl. She lives out in the country, you know." And the salesperson would nod wisely, and bring out lace-up shoes – never white, and absolutely never patent leather. From about the age of 10 on, it became my life's ambition to own a non-sensible pair of shoes.

After our Easter morning breakfast feast, dressed to the nines in our Easter splendor, we would all pile into the car and go to church – Christ Church of Ramapo in Suffern, New York. I loved it. The sun would come pouring through the stained-glass windows, and the clergy, parishioners and organ would unite on a very joyous "Christ the Lord is risen today." Lined up in front

of the railing by the altar area was a long row of purple, yellow and pink hyacinths in little pots. At the end of the service, each child marched up to the front of the church to pick up their own hyacinth. I was so proud! I loved my little hyacinth. Every year, my father would plant them out in the garden for the following spring, and we had quite a collection. When my parents retired and moved up to New Hampshire, my father brought those hyacinth bulbs with him. They were added to over the years, but I would love to think I still have some out in my garden!``



-Marie Birdsall



Our Church - drawn by Emily Harris-Corcoran
Emily drew this while the power was out during the 3/2018
snowstorm

Create in Me a Pure Heart, O God

Psalm 51

For the director of music. A psalm of David. When the prophet Nathan came to him after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba.

- ¹ Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions.
- ² Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.
- ³ For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me.
- 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.
- ⁵ Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.
- ⁶ Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb; you taught me wisdom in that secret place.
- ⁷ Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.
- ⁸ Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice.
- ⁹ Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity.

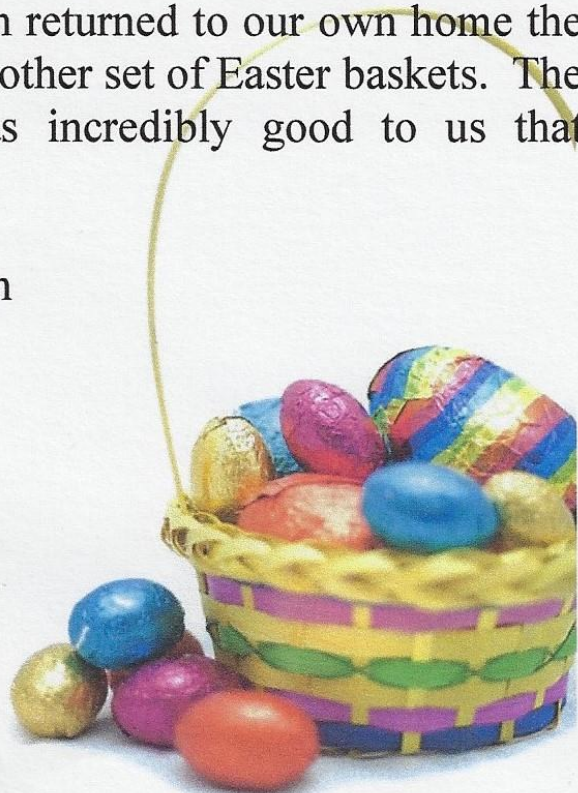
- ¹⁰ Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.
- ¹¹ Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me.
- ¹² Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.
- ¹³ Then I will teach transgressors your ways, so that sinners will turn back to you.
- ¹⁴ Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, you who are God my Savior, and my tongue will sing of your righteousness.
- ¹⁵ Open my lips, Lord, and my mouth will declare your praise.
- ¹⁶ You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings.
- ¹⁷ My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise.
- ¹⁸ May it please you to prosper Zion, to build up the walls of Jerusalem.
- ¹⁹ Then you will delight in the sacrifices of the righteous, in burnt offerings offered whole; then bulls will be offered on your altar.

Submitted by Mary Dougherty

My Favorite Easter

One year when I was very young, my parents, my three older brothers and I spent the holiday weekend with my aunt and uncle who had no children. My aunt was very excited about finally being able to play "Easter Bunny". She prepared 4 baskets and hid them on a high shelf in the back porch of their tiny 2nd floor apartment. On Easter morning I noticed nothing out of order in their apartment, so I went directly to their back porch where I immediately saw the baskets. She was heartbroken because it took no effort on our part to find the baskets. We, however, enjoyed our candy and then returned to our own home the next day to find another set of Easter baskets. The Easter Bunny was incredibly good to us that year!!

- Mary Ann Nelson



On Easter Day

Easter lilies! Can you hear
What they whisper, low and clear?

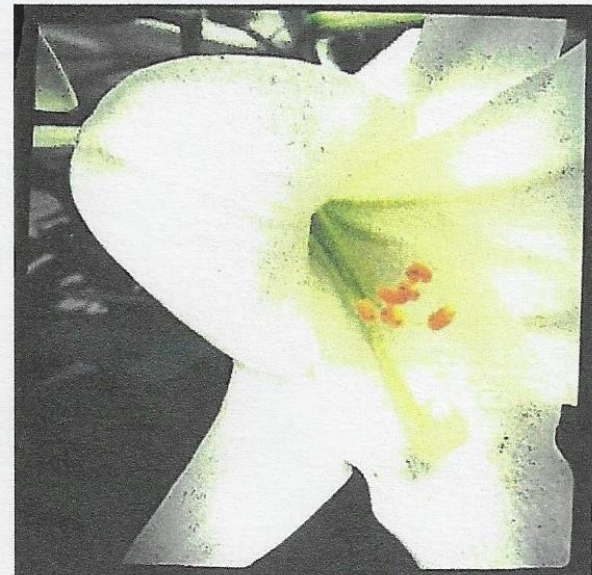
In dewy fragrance they unfold
Their splendor sweet, their snow and gold.

Every beauty-breathing bell
News of heaven has to tell.

Listen to their mystic voice,
Hear, oh mortal, and rejoice!

Hark, their soft and heavenly chime!
Christ is risen for all time!

By Celia Thaxter 1835-1894



Submitted by Sylvia Johnston

Easter Remembrances

In the mid-1960s, I was a minister in South Dakota. When I was doing my Easter sermon one year, I thought of a way of describing my own understanding of the meaning of the resurrection of Christ through a story about a beloved dog of mine, Dinky, who had died recently. I wanted to stress that the resurrection needs to have an important place in everyone's life, and everyone should put it into their own experience as to its meaning.

As I talked about my experience with Dinky, I felt that upon burying him he perhaps would live again and join others in dog heaven. I felt that the story would connote the experience everyone goes through upon the loss of a loved one – person or pet – and express what the resurrection was all about.

Because my parishioners knew how much I love dogs, I felt the story would resonate well.

-Tom Chaffee

Appeal for Steadfastness and Unity

Philippians 4 (NIV)

Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends!

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

⁵ Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.

⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

⁸ Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.

⁹ Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

Submitted by Mary Dougherty

A Ruffled Easter

Matthew 6:25-34

25 "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? 26 Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? 27 Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?"

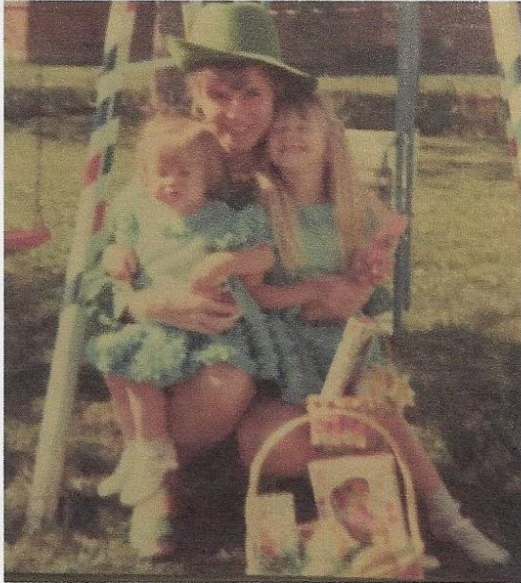
28 "And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. 29 Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. 30 If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? 31 So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. 33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. 34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

Each evening before work, I gather my clothes for the next day and plan what to bring for lunch and snacks. Getting ready goes quickly some evenings

and others nights I find myself worrying because the laundry needs washing, I do not want to wear what I have, or I didn't make it to the grocery store for food. All this worrying about what to eat and wear reminds me of the passage in Matthew 6 and how God promises to provide for us. When I think of God as taking responsibility for what we need, such as food and clothes, I think of a loving earthly parent such as a Father or Mother taking care of a child's needs.

I am fortunate that as a child, my Mother provided for almost all of my sisters and my needs for food, clothes, shelter, and protection. She worked hard at making holidays special for us, especially around Easter. My Father was a schoolteacher and earned a meager salary. As a result, he gave my mom a small allowance for the household. She stretched the money as much as she could by making things at home such as bread and clothing. Around Easter, she made braided sweet bread with colored hard-boiled eggs in the middle. We girls would wake up early on Easter to Chocolate bunnies and the fragrant aroma of homemade bread, warm out of the oven, and ready to melt in our mouths. At church, we received abundant compliments on the beautiful ruffled matching dresses that our mom made for us.

This picture is of my sister Katrina (age 3), my Mom Diana, and myself (age 6) on Easter.



One Easter, I apparently had a growth spurt. My mom started the Easter dresses before my spurt, and my dress ended up very different from my sisters' dresses. I was very distraught, jealous that my sisters' dresses were so pretty, worried what people would say at church, and not wanting to wear the dress as the ruffles went up to my chest! She apparently kept adding ruffles at the bottom as I kept growing! My Father gave me a lecture about how hard my mom worked, and there was no negotiating about wearing it. So, I hung my head low in embarrassment and pretended to ignore the ruffles working their way up like a pyramid. Today, my sisters and I still laugh about the ruffles on my dress and how funny I looked that Easter. Looking back on the Easter dress experience makes me appreciate all

the hard work my mother put into raising us girls and the valuable lesson to accept gifts made with love. This picture is of me with the ruffled dress (age 9), my sister Katrina (age 6), and my sister Heleena (age 3) on Easter.



Like my experience with the Easter dress, God may see us through rough (or ruffled) times without showing us precisely why. We may be placed in an embarrassing situation, such as this, to learn appreciation, humility, and a good sense of humor. As I continue to get ready for work in the morning, slipping on shoes, grabbing my lunch bag, snacks, and coffee, I rush out the door with the reassurance of a loving Heavenly God that provides for us like a loving parent.

-Alecia Balduf

I'm in my car, the early chill still keeping my muscles knotted. I drive through the countryside, lit only by my car lights in the dark. Turning, and moving through the dark I finally come to a driveway that jumps out of the dark. Taking it, the gravel crunches under my tires, the potholes of spring shaking my car until I pull to a stop.

Stepping out, I follow a trail up the hill, the fallen tree branches and leaves crunching beneath my feet. A small golden light escapes up in the darkness ahead. I crest the hill and hear the crackling of the campfire beyond and below. Faces of those gathered around the flame look up and smile, lit by the fire in golden haloes. I come close to the warmth, and the sunrise begins to be full of streaks that match the flame and the light washes across the pond.

This is Easter morning, sunrise service at Camp Leslie. I know that this light is just a small taste of the light from Christ, but even

the small taste brings the joy of celebration, because:

In Jesus was life, and that life was the light of all humanity. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not over come it.

John 1:4-5

Live in the Risen Life! Rev Lorraine Edwards



Sunrise service 2017 at Camp Leslie - Photo by Janice Murphy

"Hello.....Easter Bunny?? Are you there??"



Harper Fielding

Submitted by JoEllen Fielding

Thank you to all who contributed to this Lenten Booklet. We hope that you will enjoy the poems, stories, photo contributions, drawings and special thoughts that have been shared.

Blessings to you all during this Holy Week,

**Alecia Balduf, Kristen Arsenault, Marie Birdsall, Rachel Angerhofer, Emily Knapp
Your Diaconate Team**