

# A Lenten JOURNEY



---

A COLLECTION OF DEVOTIONS  
VOLUME XIX



# Prologue

beginning with ashes  
and ending with  
neatly folded grave clothes,

Lent is  
not so much  
a burden,  
as a blessing;  
not so much  
a desert,  
as an oasis;  
not so much  
a season,  
as a spirit;  
not so much  
sackcloth,  
as service;  
not so much  
a complication,  
as a companion;  
not so much  
a destination,  
as a journey.

(c) Thom M. Shuman, used with permission

Lent is a time when we remember the 40 days of prayer and fasting that our Lord Jesus Christ experienced in the wilderness. Remembering that Jesus Christ shares in our suffering because he was a human being like us may ease our pain, and living in a supportive community may bring us comfort.

We thank those who have contributed devotions to this 2016 *Lenten Journey*. We are all on the journey together. May these offerings of reflection and experience be a blessing to you, as we move along the path from the ashes of sorrow to the joy of the resurrection.

— Pastoral Care Staff

# Acknowledgments

Doris Cannon, Lolly Hetherington,  
Lee Perkins, Flo Sthreshley  
LENTEN JOURNEY COMMITTEE

Elizabeth Franklin  
PASTORAL LEAD

Vanessa Perry  
TYPIST

Earle Dunford, Betty Stallings  
EDITORS

Elizabeth Franklin, Vanessa Perry  
BOOKLET DISTRIBUTION

COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTOR  
The Reverend Dr. James G. Somerville  
SENIOR PASTOR, FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

COVER ART  
Jo Ann O'Hara  
Westminster Canterbury Richmond Garden

PASTORAL STAFF  
Kathy Berry  
Charlotte Evans  
Elizabeth Franklin  
Kayla Lennon  
Katie Lovelace  
Lynn McClintock  
Vanessa Perry

# Introduction

One day a young Indian woman came to see me, so broken-hearted that she was contemplating suicide. Things hadn't worked out the way she had hoped. The young man she had been seeing had broken up with her. Her job wasn't all that challenging or all that rewarding. "Maybe it would be better," she sniffed, "if I just wasn't around."

It was the bleak midwinter, when (as the old carol puts it) "frosty wind made moan, earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone." It was an easy time to be depressed. But I knew something that I thought might make a difference, and I shared it with that young woman.

"Do you know that apartment building just up Massachusetts Avenue, what's it called, the Bay State?" She nodded, still wiping tears. "Well," I said, "I happen to know that in the hard, frozen ground in front of that apartment building some tulip bulbs are buried, and when things begin to warm up a little in the springtime—when the sun begins to shine and the rain begins to fall—those bulbs are going to push their sturdy green stems up through the earth, and one of these days their silky red blooms will unfurl, and you will walk up the street and see them there, nodding to you, reminding you that the way things are is not the way they will always be."

That was nine years ago, but I just looked at her Facebook page, and there she is, standing in front of a church with her husband, as they both kiss the beautiful daughter they've just christened.

Lent is that season of "lengthening days," when the sun shines and the rain falls and the way things are begins to change. It is that time when tulip bulbs begin to push their sturdy green stems up through the warm earth. Who knows what could happen in your life—by God's grace—in a season like this one?

— James G. Somerville, Ph.D.  
PASTOR, FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

## SEIZE THE MOMENT

Lent begins with the ashes of Ash Wednesday. The priest puts the ashes on the forehead of the worshipper and says: “Remember you are dust and to dust you shall return.” The ashes remind us of our mortality. We are given the gift of life for a time and then it returns to God. The challenge is to be good stewards of the gift which has been given to us.

The ashes remind us of our dependence on God. No one controls the moment of his birth or chooses his parents, or controls the circumstances into which he is born. We arrive and there we are. Hopefully, we receive the nurture and support of loving parents, get an education and find significant employment. Hopefully, we develop fast friendships and find activities which give our lives meaning and purpose. Hopefully we find a faith which nurtures and sustains us – strengthening our connection to God. We strive for broad involvement and seek balance and perspective. We seek a connection between the inner journey and the outer journey.

So many people don't have the opportunities and privileges we enjoy. We live in a world in which the forces of darkness are strong- poverty, mental illness, terrorism, racism, and human brokenness. Our calling is to heal God's fallen creation, to use our gifts and talents to make a difference in the world. Each one of us has been created by God, unique and special. Each one of us has different gifts. Each one of us has been placed in a unique set of circumstances where only you and I can make a difference. Seize the moment.

The ashes help us to see life from God's perspective. On Ash Wednesday, we begin the Lenten journey. Where will that journey take us? What will we learn in the process? Lean into life!

A Holy Lent to All!

— Robert G. Hetherington, RESIDENT

## THE PRESENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

While I was on a weekend retreat over a year ago, the presence of the Holy Spirit was within me. Saturday evening I was sitting with friends across the street from the house in which I occupied a room. Suddenly, an urge came upon me to leave and go up to my quarters. While ascending the outdoor stairs leading to my accommodations, I passed the porch, where a father and his son, part of a family staying in other rooms of this home, were sitting. The father had his head in his hands, appearing very upset and distressed. His son was crying and shaking. The father said to me that his seven-year-old son, who is usually very quiet, was having an emotional tantrum, screaming, crying loudly and whining and the father did not know what to do. At that moment, a small voice said to me, "Sit beside the boy. Console him and bring him back to normalcy." From what I learned in my pastoral care experiences, I was able to express my thoughts to this child.

Within seven minutes, the boy was bright eyed, quiet and smiling. The father was amazed of the transformation of his son, thanking me many times.

At breakfast Sunday morning, the child's mother approached me to extend her sincere gratitude for the healing of her son. I was called by God through the Holy Spirit. I listened and reacted accordingly. I believe that everything happens for a reason. I was there at the retreat to resurrect a person in need.

Always listen to that voice within you. Believe in the Holy Spirit, as it is guided by God.

— Sal Anselmo, PASTORAL CARE VOLUNTEER

*Friday*

ISAIAH 58:1-9A  
PSALM 51:1-10  
MATTHEW 9:10-17

## A LITTLE CHILD SHALL LEAD THEM

ISAIAH 11:6

Recently my great granddaughter, aged seven, asked her pastor if she might be baptized. After a meeting in his office, he agreed and it was arranged.

That was, as you can imagine, a very special occasion for the entire family.

During Vacation Bible School, she was involved with sending Bibles to other countries and she was deeply touched. It called to her attention a friend who did not have a Bible and she arranged to give her one.

There are three jars in her bedroom. One is called her Giving Jar in which she puts her allowance and from which she tithes and gives gifts. It is possible others in her church may learn of her ministry and want to be involved.

I am so proud of her! Actually, it is humbling to see a child committed to acting on an idea and resolutely making it happen!

Is this also about a mustard seed?

Thanks be to God!

— Trigg Archibald, RESIDENT



## CELEBRATION OF LIFE!

I recently did some research on Lent.

Some believers feel Lent is a season of the Christian Year where Christians focus on simple living, prayer, and fasting in order to grow closer to God. According to the Catholic Encyclopedia, “the real aim of Lent is, above all else, to prepare men for the celebration of the death and Resurrection of Christ....the better the preparation the more effective the celebration will be.”

Let's think about the celebration of the death and Resurrection of Christ. What does that really mean to you?

For me personally, I know, one day when I leave this earth, I will be celebrating in heaven because of my beliefs. I hope my family will be celebrating for me. At Westminster Canterbury Richmond, I have the opportunity to attend many celebrations of life. Losing someone we love is really hard for all of us to accept. I think if we consider death as a celebration and also an opportunity to be with God we would embrace death as it occurs around us.

I recently attended a memorial service at which the following poem was shared, and I think it says it all.

*God saw you getting tired  
When a cure was not to be  
He closed his arms around you  
And whispered, "Come with me"  
In tears we saw you fade away  
You fought so hard to stay  
But when we saw you sleeping  
So peacefully, free from pain  
We could not wish you back  
To suffer that again,  
Treasure him Lord in your garden of rest  
For here on earth he was one of the best  
Author Unknown*

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF FAITH

I was on a flight to Italy to teach a course on the Italian Renaissance at the University of Foreigners in Perugia in 1984. Passengers were seated, and the Boeing 747 appeared ready to depart from JFK Airport. True, I did think it odd that on an otherwise fully-loaded plane there were two empty seats directly across the aisle. Word spread that the flight was awaiting the arrival of the passengers to fill those seats. After a half-hour delay, a strange sight—a young man working his way down the aisle, carrying a frail, old man in his arms. He gently placed the man in his seat and took his place on the aisle directly across from me.

After some time had passed for the younger man to settle his companion, I leaned over and asked if the old man was his father. Here is the remarkable answer that I received. “No, he was the father of a friend. The old man was mortally ill with cancer, and wanted to see his relatives in Rumania one more time before he died. His son had arranged the trip and was planning to take his father to his Rumanian family. However, at the last moment, there was a crisis at work that made it impossible for him to leave the country on the scheduled date. I told him that I thought I could get off from my job for two weeks to take his dad. So here we are.” “Do you speak Rumanian?” I asked him. “Have you ever been to Rumania?” “No, I’ve never been out of the country. This is my first overseas flight.” Astounding, absolutely astounding.

There was not a scintilla of pride in the deed, nor any hint of hardship or inconvenience that the trip might have caused. While the young man was not literally “laying down his life for his friend,” his self-sacrifice ranks high among examples of “no greater love than this.” I have often wondered about the course of that journey. I will never forget the tremendous spiritual impact it made upon me.

— William E. Blake, Jr., RESIDENT

## IT BEGAN IN SUNDAY SCHOOL

My faith journey began in Sunday school, then church and all of its activities as a Presbyterian.

The greatest hours were spent around the piano played by my mother. My two sisters and I were singing songs as early as I can remember from the hymnal. It was the sacred music which fueled my faith all these years. Classical and Pop will always have their place in history, but the sacred songs still enhance my will to continue a deeper faith through music.

Over the years we have experienced many periods of wars. When we sing “Let There be Peace on Earth,” it gives me comfort. A feeling of loss can give us hope as we sing “God Will Take Care of You,” and “My Faith Looks Up to You.” A joyous occasion brings to memory “Joyful, Joyful We Adore You” and “Joy to the World.”

Westminster Canterbury has given me a chance to sing in groups now. “God Be With You Till We Meet Again,” because I know “He’s Got the Whole World in His Hands.”

— Isabella S. Bryant, RESIDENT

## *Tuesday First Week of Lent*

ISAIAH 55:6-11  
PSALM 34:15-22  
MATTHEW 6:7-15

### THE PRAYER, “DEAR GOD”

It was New Year’s Day 1945, and he struggled up the frozen, snow-covered Vosges Mountains in Southeastern France, an M-1 rifle strapped to his back. The twelve-man rifle squad of which he was a member, with the rest of the Infantry Company, had been over-run at the southern tip of “The Battle of the Bulge.” With many from the Company already dead or missing, the last order came, “every man for himself.”

The face of the 19-year old’s mother flashed before his eyes and the look of a broken heart receiving the dreaded telegram being sent to so many mothers. Tears came to his eyes and he cried out, “Dear God.” This said it all, and asked all. This was a prayer.

He spent 3 or 4 days and nights in the frozen wilderness listening and following the pounding sound of guns in the distance, hoping to reach the re-established lines. He had going for him newly-issued snow packs and other warm clothing to deal with the 1944-45 winter—one of the coldest on record in Europe.

More than 60 million people died in World War II. Russia was the greatest loser of all participants—36.6 million. Germany lost over 7 million. 6 million Jews were killed in the Holocaust. China lost 4 million, and Japan lost 2 million. The Brits lost a half-million, and we had over 400,000 killed.

There were 95,532 American POWs in Germany.

It was the 16<sup>th</sup> of April, 1945, when a group of 148 American POWs being held in the town of Werda, Germany, were liberated. I was one of them. Freedom rings! Lent and Easter have come and gone.

— Bob Buntin, RESIDENT

## JESUS IS A HEALER JEHOVAH-RAPHA

Exodus 16:26: “And said, if thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the Lord that healeth thee.”

Last year around this time I was hospitalized for a week due to diabetic complications, which required surgery. I was really in serious condition in the Critical Care Unit of Henrico Doctors Hospital. My condition was treated and I was healed, thanks be to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

When Jesus died on the cross for our sins and diseases, we are healed by his stripes. I know it is true, because, if he did it for me, Jesus can heal you, too. It is God's will that everyone be healed also. The Lord wants us all to be healed. Sickness is from the devil. and he wants to destroy us. We must believe in our hearts that we are healed. We must have a relationship with God, by praying and putting our trust in Him. If we sin, we must ask the Lord for forgiveness. The Lord forgives us, just repent. Get back on track and read the word, which is the Bible. The Bible is God's medicine for the soul.

The healing service at Westminster Canterbury really works. Please come to the Healing Anew Service at 10:30 a.m. on Tuesdays. It is written in the Bible in James 5:14, “Is anyone sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church: and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.”

— Aisha Layne, ACCOUNTING

## MAY WE FIND RAINBOWS WHEREVER WE ARE

Pope Francis gave us pause, in September, with boundless energy, his whirlwind trip, and with his words of peace.

From Washington, D.C., where he spoke at the White House, addressed Congress, and had a service at National Cathedral, to New York, where he spoke at the United Nations and St. Patrick's Cathedral, he greeted homeless people at mealtime and young students showed him how to use a computer, to Philadelphia where he addressed clergy, corporations and politicians giving them challenges and admonishment, the Pope was in constant motion with his white signature "Pope Mobile," carrying the Holy Father everywhere.

Weeks later we have elections, debates, dialogue and terrorist threats. Our planet earth is in a sad state of sorrow. This morning, a young, gifted harpist played as we sang along. A sheltie canine named "Laddie" sat amongst walkers and wheelchairs as the harpists's music entertained us. Laddie snuggled up next to a 96-year-old resident to give comfort and receive a rub. Laddie and the resident bonded. At lunchtime I ate lunch with a 90 years young couple that have been married for 73 years. They had a visit from their daughter-in-law with a 6-month-old grandson. The baby was dressed in turkey pants with gobble footsies. The joy that the visit brought to the couple, the residents and staff was huge. In the afternoon I attended a program in the theater, "Getting to know you." Employees and residents from around the globe were interviewed. We learned about struggle and triumph – studying a new language, getting jobs, beginning a new life. The program was poignant, funny and moving. It made me feel blessed.

Those three very different events: the harpist and dog, the visit at lunchtime from an adorable baby, and the international program, gave me hope for God's world. We each can try to heal our planet in our own way. Peace. Shalom.

– Barbara Crowder, RESIDENT

## FASTING

For me, experience as a Catholic in my youth and two books that I have read speak to the meaning of Lent. As a child, I gave up candy to abide by Church teaching to follow the example of Christ in His forty days in the wilderness.

In the late 1970s, I read the *Celebration of Discipline* by Richard Foster, a Quaker. He devoted a chapter to fasting in which he wrote the practice of fasting centered on God but also had a secondary purpose—to reveal the things that control us. He referred to the spiritual gift of self-control in Paul's letter to the Galatians. The human will in fasting acknowledges and supplements that gift. Foster concludes the book's first chapter entitled, "The Spiritual Disciplines: Door to Liberation," by stating, "Let us be among those who believe the inner transformation of our lives is a goal worthy of our best effort."

George Vaillant, professor of psychiatry at Harvard, wrote the book, *Triumph of Experience*, published in 2012. He had completed a long-term study of 268 students who had graduated from Harvard between 1938 and 1941. 30% had survived to the age of 90. The author concluded that the most important influence by far in a flourishing life is love. Relationships counted most. To my mind, the discipline of fasting fosters self-control to strengthen the bond with God and neighbor in the great commandments.

— James Doherty, RESIDENT

# *Ember Saturday*

EXODUS 19:3-8  
PSALM 15  
MATTHEW 16:24-27

## BLESSED

Thirty years ago I asked my yard man if he knew anyone who could help me in the house. He said I have this dumb old daughter. That dumb old daughter has been with me for 31 years. She is my best friend. I don't know how I would manage without her. When she comes in the morning, I know all is right with the world. Before doing what needs to be done, she gives me a kiss, takes my hands, and says a prayer. I am richly blessed.

— Mary Easterly, RESIDENT



LOVE – A GREAT GIFT OF GOD

My godly Mama Sadie was born in 1904, a coal miner's daughter, in Bluefield, West Virginia. In 1914, her father decided to leave his job as superintendent of the coal mine and take his wife and five children to Roxboro, North Carolina, via rail.

My mother married a southern gentleman, William A. Dunn, 25 years her senior. He had seven children, his oldest girl was the same age as my Mother. Proverbs 31:25 reads, "Strength and honor are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come."

My Mother had seven children with William; I was the last born. I like to say, "I am my Papa's gigantic baby of fourteen, and my Mama's baby of seven."

Mama took in her stepchildren when their own family would not help. Her stepson, his wife, and four children lived with us for months. People referred to her as a saintly, Christian woman and a spiritual rock. She never raised her voice, showed anger, or said any bad word about or to anyone. She loved her Bible, which she called the greatest book. I Corinthians 13 was a favorite, particularly, I Corinthians 13:13 – "And now abideth, faith, hope, and love, these three; but the greatest is love." Mama always said, "Love is the greatest gift of God."

She loved her Bible. As a family, we started the day with devotional scripture, followed by readings from the Bible at every meal and had prayers at every meal and bedtime.

My Mother would kneel with me at my bed and pray with unfailing love, giving me comfort and diverting all my fears. I leaned to pray, filled with gratitude which opened the way for love. My favorite verse is John 3:16.

On February 27, 1998, my godly Mother was taken up in glory, victory, and with the assurance of eternal life.

As we make this Lenten journey—Remember...

"He was delivered over to death for our sins and raised to life for justification." Romans 4:25

— Phyllis Dunn Rossi, RESIDENT

GOD'S MIRACLE BABY

Ever since I was a little girl, I knew there was something greater than us. Something somewhere had to have created us. When I was five years old, my mother began taking me to church where I listened to the messages and testimonies that our preacher presented. I knew that I was in the right place. I had found something special. From then on, I did my best to change for the better. All of my decisions have become God-centered. With age, God has become a greater, stronger reality in my life. I am certain that the seemingly perfect placement of Earth in the constellations was not accidental, but by His choice.

After some years I was blessed with my first child. Soon after, the doctors announced that he was very ill and was soon to die of Moebius Syndrome and many other complications. The doctors said that there was nothing else that they could do except send us home. Day in and day out, I prayed for my child to be given a chance. Twenty-five years later, we are both here. I give thanks to God for this miracle. I asked for help and He answered. For that I gladly owe my life to Him.

— Paula Flores, HOUSEKEEPING

## *Tuesday Second Week of Lent*

ISAIAH 1:2-4, 16-20

PSALM 50:7-15

MATTHEW 23:1-12

### HEALTH AND LOVE

I was unsure I could write a Devotional until I sat very still and prayed, remembering all the love and support I received from Hazel Buhrman. I have been blessed with great friends and great mentors. I have a wonderful family and great faith. Health and love are what you need to do all those things you want and need to do to be the person God wants you to be. Sometimes we get distracted from what is important and begin to wonder –what should I do? The answer is to keep the faith and continue to be all God wants you to be, remembering that through him all things are possible. They may not come to us at the exact time we think they should, but they do come to us, sometimes better than what we asked for. So as Hazel has reminded me many times in the past, through God all things are possible! So with Joy and Thanksgiving I will wait and see what he has in store for me and you too! I am Blessed to be one of God's children. Thanks, Hazel, for reminding me once again. With Love in Christ.

— Lela Hall, GALLERIA

## GETTING READY FOR NEW LIFE

As I write these words, the calendar tells me that Advent is about 10 days away. Then the Winter solstice, then Christmas, then Lent, then the Vernal equinox and Easter. So I've started thinking about the circle of life, and especially about the parallels between Advent/Christmas and Lent/Easter. These parallels are not accidental. In the rolling cadence of the Christian year that reflects nature's very heartbeat, our liturgical tradition reminds us that Christ's birth and resurrection are events that none of us can be ready for unless we take the time, and make the effort, to prepare ourselves.

This is because both the nativity and the resurrection are such life- changing events for serious minded Christians. If God was willing to take on human flesh and walk the walk with us, then we need to get ready to walk the walk with Him. And if God was willing to sacrifice Himself to show us the way to redemption, then we need to get ready to take up our own crosses and follow Him — trusting in His promise that, while the cross may be the end of this life's road, it is also the gateway to a road to eternal fellowship with Him.

So, in a nutshell, the question we need to be asking ourselves during both Advent and Lent is, "If God loves us enough to do all this for us, then what do we need to do to show our appreciation for His gifts and our love for Him? Jesus already gave us the answer to that question, of course: "Feed my sheep." Meditate on that, give of yourself, and roll up your sleeves. And while you do that, lose yourself in His grace and say, again and again, "Thanks be to God."

— James H. Hall, RESIDENT

THE PRESENCE OF GOD

The presence of God is very important to the person who is praying. This presence brings peace, joy and love to that person. How wonderful it is to have peace within one's self when there is much turmoil on the outside. How great it is to have joy within one's self when there is unhappiness on the outside. How wonderful it is to have love within one's self when there is so much hatred on the outside world.

It is extremely important for each of us to continue to seek God's presence within us. This is the way that we will continue to live happy and useful lives.

— Dulcy K. Harris, RESIDENT

## THE BEAUTY OF NATURE'S SILENCE

When I am silent in the midst of nature,  
I am able to hear a chipmunk crunching on a nut,  
The haunting call of the herons,  
A beaver swimming silently looking for dinner,  
Minks running along the rocks,  
The white throated sparrow calling for a partner.  
Nature is alive, a musical symphony.  
I am not alone in this silence.  
Instead I am spellbound, inspired.  
The harmony of nature's silence nurtures me.  
I am open to its wonders.

## GOD'S SILENCE

Silence promotes peace and rejuvenation...  
The quiet, the intimacy, the energy gained  
By living in the present...Alone.  
Paying attention to my self.  
It is powerful and stimulating.  
When I am open silently to my world,  
I feel joy, compassion, enlivened.  
I can meditate to my spirit,  
And to the religious nature of my soul.  
I can be renewed, recharged by choice.  
It is a true gift.

– Lolly Hetherington, RESIDENT

## MAKE YOUR DASH COUNT

My mom passed away almost three years ago. Her death was very sudden, unexpected, and she was far too young. I find myself reaching for the phone to call her still to this day. Mom was a listener. I could call her anytime to share good news or to complain about a day that did not go as planned. She would sometimes give me advice and at other times she would just say it will be O.K. During my mom's illness I did what most of us in the caregiving profession do, I took care of everyone but myself. After her death I found myself a little lost and unsure how to spend my time. One night while watching a movie, my reality hit. The scene was from a funeral, where the pastor explained that on everyone's tombstone there is a date of birth and a date of death, but he said it is the dash between those two dates that really matters. Sounds simple but so true. Though mom's life was short, she made a huge impact on everyone who knew her, her dash mattered.

I am working on my dash. I have learned you have to take care of yourself if you plan to be here for others. This includes body, mind and spirit. Each is as important as the other in order to live a healthy and full life. Enjoy the simple things in life and find time for those who matter most to you. Make your dash count.

JAMES 4:14 - Yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.

— Debra Jacobsen, DIRECTOR RESIDENT SERVICES

## MEDITATION FOR LENT

*“LAUDATO SI’, mi’ Signore” – “Praise be to you, my Lord.”* These are the opening words of the Encyclical Letter of Pope Francis. This remarkable and holy man has addressed “Every person on this planet...the whole human race;...who share our common home, the earth.” Francis makes a special appeal to the persons who do not believe in God, but who share a common interest with people of faith. He says, “I would like to enter into dialogue with all people about our common home...”

The Pope notes that “violence present in our hearts wounded by sin, is reflected in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life.” He urgently appeals for a new dialogue about our planet. He praises those who are striving to save the environment, but indicates that such efforts are far from sufficient. “Obstructionist attitudes, even on the part of believers, can range from denial of the problem to indifference... We require a new and universal solidarity.”

The Encyclical describes several aspects of the ecological crisis...drawing on the best scientific research available today. Francis *then* considers “principles drawn from the Judeo-Christian tradition which can render our commitment to the environment more coherent.”

*“LAUDATO SI’, mi’ Signore”* is humbling and inspiring. It generates reverence for God, awareness of our sinfulness, hope for our future, and profound understanding of creation. Reading and meditating on this magnificent document presents a new perspective on the love that God showers on every creature. I can think of no better way to use Lent to prepare for Easter or Pentecost than to fill our minds and hearts with *LAUDATO SI’, mi’ Signore* – Praise to you O Lord, our Creator and Redeemer!

– Charlie McCarthy, RESIDENT

*(The Encyclical is available on the internet at no cost.)*



## THE POWER OF PRAYER

Jesus' Lenten journey ended on the cross with a prayer. Two witnesses reported that he said "My God, my god, why hast Thou forsaken me?" A third witness reported "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit." Did God change His plans for Jesus? Probably not. Nevertheless, by showing his submission to God's will, Jesus' prayers have profoundly affected the spiritual lives of men and women ever since.

According to Alfred Lord Tennyson, the mortally wounded King Arthur consoled his last loyal knight, saying "More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of." In 1896, Tennyson's readers believed in prayer. But in today's secular and cynical culture, most people doubt that a prayer can change an eternal plan. So we all have wishful thoughts, but few of us address them to our Creator.

Whether prayers affect the plans of God, we cannot know. But we can know that prayers affect the world we live in. Whether they be simply giving thanks and asking blessings before meals, or pleas for mercy for endangered or dying loved ones, or pleas for a compassionate society, prayers affect us as supplicants and affect those with whom we share prayers. As King Arthur said and Jesus proved, "More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of." So whether alone or in concert, let us pray.

— Hunter H. McGuire, Jr., RESIDENT

IN THE GARDEN

When I was a child at Barton Heights Baptist Church's Intermediate Department, I loved the picture of Jesus kneeling at a rock in the Garden of Gethsemane. The serenity and worshipful gazes so impressed me. My mother and grandmother had always had flower and vegetable gardens, and I learned at an early age that patience and dedication were necessary to nurture and tend the seed or tiny plants.

I thought I could achieve the same peacefulness as Jesus in His garden. As I got older I understood why His prayers were so important to prepare Him for the agony He was to endure. I too have had many trials that have sapped my strength, but they prepared me to plant and harvest again.

In 1912, Hall Mack Co. copyrighted these words and music of C. Austin Miles (1868-1946). 141

— Beverly Monfalcone, RESIDENT

*Wednesday Third Week  
of Lent*

DEUTERONOMY 4:1-2,5-9  
PSALM 78:1-6  
MATTHEW 5:17-19

MY HEAVEN

If, when I die, I go to Heaven  
May there be a sandy beach,  
With the surf washing upon it  
And a dune within my reach.

May my angel wings be gull wings,  
My halo be the sun  
And my heavenly music be the breeze  
That through sea grasses hum.

I ask no gold-paved highways  
When I leave this life behind;  
Only golden beach extending on  
Beyond the sands of time.

May “my heaven” let me listen  
Forever to the roar  
Of the breakers as they crash  
Upon the battered, sandy shore.

When the Winds of God blow o’er me  
This will be my fervent prayer:  
May the breeze that lifts me Heavenward  
Be filled with Earth’s salt air!

— Nancy Omohundro, RESIDENT

# Thursday Third Week of Lent

JEREMIAH 7:23-28  
PSALM 95:6-11  
LUKE 11:14-23

## HIS STRENGTH

We always should remember  
The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof.

In each of our lives there are times when we're not sure that  
we can continue in our walk with Christ.

But remember, it is God's strength that holds us up  
when we can barely stand.

God works in powerful ways.  
Accept your weakness; this is where God's power will be the  
most visible in your life.

I had to learn this.

— Floretta Owens, RESIDENT

## *Friday Third Week of Lent*

HOSEA 14:1-9  
PSALM 81:8-14  
MARK 12:28-34

### GRATITUDE

My entire life's journey has been and continues to be one of gratitude. Consequently, several years ago I decided to keep a gratitude journal. Since that time I have become more aware of so many "everyday/routine" kinds of things there are to be grateful for that I never noticed before.

Since traveling this journey, I have learned to be grateful for all of life's experiences that have come my way. I realize that, as a result of each experience, I have learned from and grown because of and in spite of it. I have truly learned to joyously give thanks for and in all situations and circumstances.

I realize, too, that thankfulness and gratitude are powerful and effective spiritual weapons.

— Ardieth L. Pierce, RESIDENT

# *Saturday Third Week of Lent*

HOSEA 6:1-6  
PSALM 51:15-20  
LUKE 18:9-14

## TRUST THE LORD

I will have faith in the Lord always. I will always be on the Lord's side. For the Lord is always on my side. I prayed for my son to come home in the Lord. The Lord brought my son home. Every time I pray, God always works it out for my good. I thank the Lord always for being the head of my life. I am blessed to be here with my Westminster Canterbury Richmond family and blessed to be in my family. I love the Lord with all of my heart and all of my mind. I know the Lord is here: everywhere and all of the time.

Thank you Lord for all you have done. Jesus is the way.

— Yovandel Perkins, DINING

## *Fourth Sunday in Lent*

JOSHUA 5:9-12

PSALM 32

LUKE 15:1-3, 11B-32

### FORGIVENESS

Forgiveness is one of the radical notions in the Bible. I'm in agreement that we should forgive those who are hurtful to others and especially to one's self. But when someone perpetrates a terrible destruction such as the 9/11 acts and other acts of wanton murder and destruction, I find it very difficult to forgive.

Lent has many dimensions, one is that it is a time of remembrance. There are many things to remember about Jesus' ministry. A major one is that on the Cross Jesus asked that all who perpetrated his crucifixion be forgiven. To me this is just as amazing as any of the miracles he performed during his life and ministry. In fact, the act of forgiveness is in itself a miracle.

I'm reminded of what as Oscar Wilde once wrote, "When Christ says 'forgive your enemies,' it is not for the sake of the enemy but for one's own sake that he says so, and because Love is more beautiful than Hate."

I think these words are worth some Lenten meditation.

— Alwin Reiners, Jr., RESIDENT

# Monday Fourth Week of Lent

ISAIAH 65:17-25  
PSALM 30:1-6,11-13  
JOHN 4:43-54

## A FRESH PAGE

*Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.*

PHILIPPIANS 4:8,9

In introducing the letters written by Paul in his later years (one of which is Philippians quoted above), Bishop Spong makes an interesting comment on “the process of aging.” It “works wonders on the human spirit,” he writes. “. . . the differences that once divided people so deeply lose their potency.”\*

For me, this a helpful statement. It does not mean that in old age we forsake our faith nor that we water it down. The call to follow Jesus is still demanding—forgive in a world filled with hate, stand up for the rights of the disenfranchised, embrace others, give freely and gladly, pray without ceasing. In so striving, we find ourselves at one with the neighbor, more willing to listen and learn from him, sure of the Good News and ready to share it, but disinterested in dogma. Grateful for our faith, for those who have helped us to it, and for the many who proclaim it in difficult places, we still acknowledge that there is much we do not know or cannot comprehend. And so, we are perhaps more humble, more open to the winds of the Spirit. I hope so.

O gracious God, teach us, make us faithful, fill us with the proper zeal, and forgive us when our pride gets in the way. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

*\*Re-Claiming the Bible for a Non-Religious World* by John Shelby Spong, c. 2011, page 283.

— Betsy Rice, RESIDENT



A NEW YOU

Reynolds Price, the North Carolina writer who died 2 years ago, wrote a memoir called “A Whole New Life” ten years after his being diagnosed with an excruciating spinal cancer that left him without the use of his legs. He wrote of the agonizing struggle to live in a wheelchair, the problems of putting back together his personal and professional life, and of all he had to learn to deal with chronic and severe pain. It was a death of everything he thought his life would be. But slowly, very slowly, a new life emerged from the ruins of the old.

At the close of his account Price offers advice for people facing a calamity – illness, divorce, loss – the end of one self, the need for a new one. It takes struggle and fighting, he says, and the refusal to give in, to demand that healing come. When something hard hits, do the grieving you need to do. Have a cry, he says, or several. It’s important to grieve for that life that has ended. But then, get on with finding your way to that somebody else you have to become. He says to himself, “Who will you be now that the old Reynolds Price is dead? And how can you get there, double-time?”

— Thomas R. Smith, RESIDENT

## *Wednesday Fourth Week of Lent*

ISAIAH 49:8-15  
PSALM 145:8-19  
JOHN 5:19-29

### ENCOURAGEMENT

I miss my parents every day, and they are always with me in spirit. I am often reminded of them while here at Westminster Canterbury, among the wonderful residents of their generation who live here.

Every day I encounter residents who convey how much they appreciate us for providing a service that is a normal part of our job. I love it when I am reminded to drive safely home, or thanked for being here. I know it comes from the heart, and it is very much appreciated. I hope that they know how much their smiles and words of encouragement mean to me.

We are all connected in this world through common human experiences. A smile and words of good cheer are a lovely way to pass on good will.

— Deborah Stewart, FRONT DESK

UNDER DIVINE PROTECTION

*I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth. He will not suffer the foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.* PSALM 121:1-4

There are wars and rumors of wars, merciless gun violence, and every kind of corruption one can imagine going on in the world today. However, we cannot allow ourselves to become paralyzed in fear. Fear keeps us from thinking clearly and has tremendous control over how we respond to circumstances beyond our control.

When our sleepless nights are filled with fear, tears, and angst over unanswered prayers, we must turn our thoughts toward Him. He is interested in everything that happens to us. Our burdens are His; our problems are His; and our worries are His.

Helen M. Lemmel, who was abandoned by her husband when she became blind, penned *Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus*.

*O soul, are you weary and troubled?  
No light in the darkness you see?  
There's light for a look at the Savior,  
And life more abundant and free!  
Turn your eyes upon Jesus,  
Look full in His wonderful face,  
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,  
In the light of His glory and grace.*

We must learn to trust God in the light of the day as well as during the deepest darkness of our restless nights. He neither slumbers nor sleeps. What an awesome God we serve! Isn't it comforting to know that we can cast our cares upon Him and rest in peace!

Look UP and be encouraged, you are Under Divine Protection!

A TRUE STORY

Two women were talking on the uptown bus. “I wish I had your faith. You are so trusting. What with all the tragedy in your life, you still have an iron clad belief. What keeps you going?”

“I’ll tell you. It’s simple really. I was attending the christening of my roommate’s baby years ago. The cathedral was filled with people. I had never spent much time in a church. This one was just as dark and cold as I remembered. I felt uncomfortable. I sat in the back so I could slip out quickly at the end of the service.

“I kept wondering ‘what am I doing here? For Pete’s sake?’ I knew I would not miss the christening, but I hadn’t been in a church in over fifteen years! I hadn’t said a prayer in even more. I felt out of place.”

“It had been that long?” The other woman questioned.

“Maybe more. The ceremony began. I sat there trying to relax, be in the moment when suddenly, I felt a blast of heat across my body – very, very hot. I looked around to my left, my right.

“What in the world? My body was bathed in dazzling light! I couldn’t catch my breath. I felt faint. I took off my jacket to cool off. Something made me look up. There it was, from the ceiling, a pure white light. A solid shaft beamed directly down on me!”

“Go on,” the other lady said. “It was brighter than a spotlight. Blinding. It was shining on me – no one else and nowhere else.

“I looked around to see if anyone had noticed. Everything was the same, but for me everything had changed.

The priest turned to the congregation and began the Lord’s Prayer. I joined in. Somehow I remembered the words. It felt good. I realized at that moment, it was written for me.

No matter that the roof had a small opening letting a ray of sunlight in, I felt chosen then and I feel chosen now.”

“Thank you for telling me that. I think you were chosen. I won’t forget it. It gives me hope, but I have to get off, my stop was ten blocks ago!”

– Anne Tilghman, RESIDENT

# *Saturday Fourth Week of Lent*

JEREMIAH 11:18-20

PSALM 7:6-11

JOHN 7:37-52

## TRUSTING IN YOU

Sometimes I feel like I need to cry my heart out because of some of my personal struggles. I feel like giving up, but this is not God's way. The only thing that gives me hope in these situations is my Heavenly Father. His grace, mercy and love endure forever. He will never leave me or forsake me.

For my hope is in You, Father God!

My trust is in You, Father God!

Thank you, Jesus. You are the Almighty, and your name is above all names. Only you are worthy to be praised!

And, through all of my struggles, I know I need to evolve into the person that God wants me to be, the person God meant for me to be. I give him thanks for who I will become.

— Kieosha Williams, DINING

## CHANGE

Many things in our lives can change in a day, in a week, in a month or a year. As I go over the past year, there are things that have changed in my life. One thing that remains the same, however, is working at Westminster Canterbury Richmond. I see many lives change on a daily basis. As a faith-based organization and because of friends who allowed me the opportunity to share this story, I am grateful. It is the residents such as Ms. Pierce and Ms. Archibald who make it possible to minister to others and learn from others. My family is blessed to have in our life at this time an amazing woman of God at Anointed New Life Baptist Church Pastor Diane C Mosby and her entire flock. It is her teaching of the word and a loving church family that encourages us daily through trials and tribulations. It is in this workplace that there are coworkers like Aisha, Marsha, Michael and Kim in accounting and those in my own department with gifts like Deacon Walker, Deacon Gannaway and Sadie always standing in the gap to encourage, teach and offer guidance. I say all of this to say I had no idea that there were people being put in place to help see me through a dark time in my life. It is this year I experienced the test of faith: Will you still trust me, will you still love me, will you still walk with me if some things in your life changed. My answer I do love the Lord, I trust my Father and I will always walk with Him. It has been the life changing experience of my husband being diagnosed with cancer and the witness of his faith and his trust in the Lord that has made me stronger. I thank God for my circle of loving friends, family and most of all my husband.

— Veronica Merriman, HOUSEKEEPING

THANK YOU! THANK YOU!

I have long been in the habit of shooting up little thank you prayers to God just any ol' time. They are for even the smallest pleasures, understandings, surprises and opportunities as well as for a few miracles and other assorted answered prayers.

It was in Al-Anon that I seriously cultivated the attitude of gratitude so essential in daily living. In a prayer group, my favorite is always the general Thanksgiving on page 58 in the Book of Common Prayer. It is so full of the theology that I embrace.

But back to the random, mini prayers—they were really frequent one day recently when I had too many commitments for comfort. I kept praying for strength and serenity.

Later I realized things weren't nearly as difficult as I'd expected, and the gratitude kicked in. Going over all the details of the day in my thank yous, I suddenly felt God was saying "You're welcome!"

Simultaneously, I knew God was my Best Friend!

— Caroline Neal, RESIDENT

## MY FAITH JOURNEY

Being raised by a Christian mother who took her three children to Sunday school every week, I have always believed in a loving God. Though He seemed strict and stern, I didn't fear Him because of the strong faith and example set by my mother and grandmother. Psalm 46:1 was often quoted ("God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble") and calmed my stress during school days.

At age twelve I accepted Jesus as my Lord and Savior. It took a few more years to understand the great love God showed us by letting His son die so that we could live forever. On reflection, I've felt God's love and protection all my life. When problems and traumas came, I always got the help I needed from pastors' sermons and scripture. A favorite verse was Phil. 4:13 ("I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.") This and other Scriptures gave me armor for life's challenges and temptations, many of which came when I moved to New York City to attend acting school (followed by acting in plays off-Broadway). Offers came that required discernment of both jobs and people. My membership at a strong, Bible-centered church on Fifth Avenue helped me realize that living the life of an actress I didn't live with my faith, as well as some of the men I was dating. So I became a secretary (after taking a class in speedwriting) and accepted a job at the Rockefeller Foundation, never to look back.

Living and working in New York City for forty years tested my faith daily: getting along with all kinds of people, competing for jobs and housing, etc. But God seemed to be protecting me... I never stopped worshipping Him and remained active at the church I joined. I joined a Christian singles group and married a wonderful man from that organization.

In the 1980s I went with a group to the Holy Land. Leading hymn singing was an additional reward of that trip.

All things Christian are still important to me and love is the "name of the game:" loving God with all our hearts, souls and minds and everyone with whom we come into contact.



## ACCEPTANCE

After I had impulsively said “yes” to a request to write something for *A Lenten Journey*, I wondered what I had gotten myself into. I have pondered ever since, picking and choosing among the many instances that I have experienced Christ in my life.

I believe I must choose the influence of my paternal grandmother and my five (maiden) aunts. My parents, sister and I lived with Grandmother and two of these aunts until I was five. The other three were home on holidays and vacations. Grandmother had morning prayer every day after breakfast. I was about three and my sister was seven. I can remember sitting or kneeling in front of “Grandma” and listening impatiently, feeling itchy, knowing it was important but not understanding much of what she said. She was very patient and would answer any question that I had, no matter how foolish or mixed up my understanding.

I was a very stubborn and hardheaded child, with a temper, but they accepted me as I was and tried to help me understand that I was loved despite my bad behavior at times. From those early days, until they were no longer with me, I learned what unconditional acceptance meant. They ‘hated the sin and loved the sinner.’

I think about how Christ accepted everyone, warts and all, and how He was able to forgive even those that killed him. Lent means to me, learning once again to love myself and accept that I am created in his image; to accept others, where they are and who they are and understand they are also children of God. I continue to strive for this and pray for it.

— June D. Buntin, RESIDENT

## RECOGNIZING BLESSINGS

Throughout this year, I have personally experienced several moments that have reminded me of what a special place I am blessed to work for. In January while out to lunch with a group of residents from the Mary Morton Parsons Health Center, we experienced a story of generosity. A gentleman at the restaurant was overwhelmed watching the interactions of staff and residents. He came over to the table to say he had taken care of our tab and tip. A few months later while with another group of residents out for lunch, the trip had gotten off to a bumpy start with some issues with the van. However, we all kept our spirits up and pressed on. While at the restaurant, two patrons asked where our group was from. We proudly replied, Westminster Canterbury. The patrons praised the staff for their patience and caring for the residents. A resident proudly spoke up and stated we only hire staff like these ladies. The lady chuckled a little and the resident responded without hesitation, “No, I’m serious. They ONLY hire ladies like this to care for us.” Several months passed and while at another restaurant, staff were pulled aside. The patrons shared how they felt the ladies were so nicely dressed, and how impressed they were with how nicely the staff interacted with the residents. These experiences have reminded me how truly blessed I am to work here at Westminster Canterbury. Within our walls we often become accustomed to the standards we have here; these things seem normal to us. However, outside of our security gate, our way of life is seen as exemplary and over and above.

— Lori Capers, RECREATION

## A DAY NEVER TO BE FORGOTTEN

On October 13, I, along with my three children and grandson, had the most heart-warming and heart-full experience. We went to the Episcopal Theological Seminary in Alexandria, Virginia to be a part of the dedication of the new chapel. Three years ago, the original chapel there burned. That chapel was where my husband, Holt Souder, had been ordained and our first child was baptized. It was a cherished place for our family.

A drive to replace the destroyed chapel was organized and memorial possibilities offered. One was a set of set of seven small, stained-glass windows depicting scenes from the life of Christ. I asked my children if they wanted, with me, to give money so that the stained-glassed windows could be restored and re-hung in memory of their father Holt Souder, who loved and honored Virginia Seminary. The obligation would come out of their inheritance. They agreed that it would be wonderful, and they were honored and pleased to be able to do it.

October 13, 2015, was the long-awaited day, and oh my—what a day it was! The new chapel stunned us with its simplicity. It is totally unadorned. Even the chairs were basic. When it was filled with clergy and congregation, it was a majestic beauty. For the service of dedication, we were led by the Most Reverend and Right Honorable Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury, the Most Reverend Katharine Jefferts Schori, Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, the Right Reverend Michael Curry, the 27th Presiding Bishop-Elect of the Episcopal Church, a huge flock of other bishops from all over the world, and hundreds of clergy. It was estimated to be one thousand people in attendance.

My children and I are honored to have made an investment in honor of Holt Souder and this blessed place.

— Isabel Souder Correll, RESIDENT

# *Saturday Fifth Week of Lent*

2 SAMUEL 7:4, 8-16

PSALM 89:1-29

LUKE 2:41-52

## MUSIC MOVES THE HEART

Do certain hymns we sing ever bring a tear to your eye?

When I as a teenager and we sang “Dear Lord and Father of Mankind,” the tears would roll down my cheeks. Teaching Eskimo children the words to “I Sing a Song of the Saints of God” with gestures. I pictured them at tea.

When we sing the Navy hymn, I can see out of the corner of my eye my husband take out his handkerchief. During Lent, I can hardly bear to sing the verses to “Were You There When They Crucified My Lord?”

How about you?

— Joanne Reiners, RESIDENT

## A LAND OF LOVE AND ACCEPTANCE

My father enjoyed Palm Sunday although he only attended church for weddings, funerals and baptisms. He and my mother would join in a procession each Palm Sunday between the Lee Monument and Stuart Circle that involved several churches. Members from Grace Covenant Presbyterian, First English Evangelical Lutheran Church, St. John's United Church of Christ, St. James's Episcopal and the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart gathered to process on Monument Avenue, remembering Jesus' entry into Jerusalem on a donkey.

Perhaps my father liked the ecumenism of different churches joining together for an event. Public processions harken back to ancient times in foreign countries which also appealed to him. We owned a grandfather clock that had the Palm Sunday scene painted on its glass front, which caused my father to rename this special day "Clock Sunday".

I never knew what my father's beliefs were. He didn't talk about personal things easily. He also seemed to live a life of lack rather than abundance. As he was dying, I wondered how I could reassure him with what I knew of Jesus's love and mercy, while still honoring who he was.

One day, while visiting when he was beyond the point of talking, I was holding his hand, wanting to offer comfort and support. I believed that he could still hear my voice as he often became quieter and turned towards me when I spoke to him. Through my tears, I said to him several times, "You are going to a land of love and acceptance, a beautiful place to live."

I had to leave my father in Jesus's hands and trust that he would be welcomed into God's kingdom. That was and still is my prayer for him.

May we all be invited into that land of love and acceptance, a beautiful place to live forever!

— Fontaine Williamson, PASTORAL CARE VOLUNTEER

PSALM 91

II Timothy 1:7 says, “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.” Psalm 91 is an excellent psalm of protection. Psalm 91:11, “For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.” We can trust and believe God to watch over us and protect us at all times. I was taught years ago to pray the promises of God back to him. That’s what I did with Psalm 91. I would make it personal and I’m glad I did. I continue to pray Psalm 91.

I began to reminisce on something that happened many years ago. Early one morning, my husband and I were in bed, and we were just waking up. I heard a noise over my head. Also, my husband heard the noise, but we hadn’t yet talked about it. We both sat up in bed at the same time. When we did, a picture that was on the wall fell on both of our pillows. It was a large heavy picture. The picture had been on the wall for years, and it had never fallen. What is surprising about this story was our bed wasn’t flush to the wall. I would have thought that, if the picture had fallen, it would have fallen on the floor not on our pillows. I’m truly thankful and glad that it didn’t hit us. We didn’t get hurt.

We live in perilous times. II Timothy 3:1, “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.” When we listen to the news, we hear of very sad stories. God wants us to have peace in the midst of a storm. The prince of peace is with us, Jesus. God is our protection and our shield. He is our hiding place.

— LaVerne Winston, PASTORAL CARE VOLUNTEER

## THE RUNAWAY BUNNY

*The Runaway Bunny* by Margaret Wise Brown is one of my all-time favorite books. This simple children's tale features a little bunny who is constantly dreaming up ways to escape his mother. No matter where he flees, though, his mother assures him she will be there. If he climbs a mountain, she becomes a mountain climber and rescues him. If he becomes a fish and swims away from her, she becomes a fisherman and catches him ... Finally realizing there is nowhere he can go to escape her love, the little bunny just decides to stay at home in her snuggly embrace.

I've used this book while doing devotions in Westminster's memory support areas. After reading the book to residents and talking about it, I read Psalm 139 and talk about the presence of God with us no matter where we are.

On a personal note, I remember feeling overwhelmed and afraid three years ago when our 28-year-old daughter, Amber, was diagnosed with Hodgkins Lymphoma cancer. So stunned and worried, I sometimes felt distant from the God I love and seek to serve daily. I couldn't help but wonder sometimes why this was happening to my daughter in the prime of her young life. At times I couldn't hear God's reassuring voice.

Throughout her chemo and then radiation, the loving embraces of family and friends tangibly reminded me of God's presence. Because of their constant prayers, notes, and phone messages, I heard God's voice whispering reassurances.

Thankfully, Amber is now in remission and doing very well. Her illness was the scariest time of my life, but I relearned a valuable faith lesson. God is always with us, especially in the scariest times. God cared so much about us that he sent his son to remind us of his presence. Through the gift of the Holy Spirit, God dwells around us and within us. And, God gives us one another for love and support. May we always be looking for ways we can offer that reassurance to our hurting world.

— Kathy F. Berry, PASTORAL CARE

## ANGELS ARE AMONG US!

I've always believed that angels are among us.

On January 29, 2015, I have no doubt in my mind that a Guardian Angel was with my uncle Troy when he was in a horrific, single-car accident in Highland County, Virginia. It was a normal winter's day and Troy was driving to the mechanics. While en route, on an almost desolate mountain road, he hit black ice which sent his vehicle spinning into a tree. The SUV hit with such force that the tree fell on top of the vehicle. As it would happen, this road had one house on it and in front of this one house is where the accident occurred. This house was occupied by an elderly woman who had lost her hearing and would have never known about the accident, had her daughter not been visiting her at that exact time. Had the daughter not been there, it is likely that Troy would not have been found in time. This was not a coincidence, it was angelic.

It took rescue workers 25 minutes to reach the scene and another 30 minutes to pry him out of the mangled wreckage. Troy was then medevaced to UVA Hospital. He had suffered severe brain damage, and they were unsure if he would live and if he did what kind of life he would have. That evening prayer chains were started. Church and Healing Anew services were attended and, of course, our angels were still hard at work.

The next 26 days at UVA would be spent celebrating minor victories such as eye blinks and slight turns of the head. After UVA, he was transported to McGuire VA Hospital. Three and a half months of wonderful medical attention and thousands of prayers from across the country (and here at Westminster Canterbury Richmond) and Troy was released! The only damage that remained affected the mobility of one leg and one arm, but that didn't stop him. On September 26 he proudly walked his youngest daughter down the aisle at her wedding. As he and my aunt left the church, he was met with a standing ovation.

Troy's wonderful medical team along with his perseverance had a lot to do with his recovery. I will, however, always believe that God's healing and his angels played a much bigger part!



BLESSINGS – THANKFULNESS

JOHN 13:34

I think twice before saying “You were lucky.”

My childhood church was robbed, but nothing of value was stolen. A church member told the neighborhood policeman, “We were lucky!” The policeman responded, “You were blessed!” (His nickname was “Holy Joe.”)

That is how I feel. Being blessed, blessed through parents, husband, children, family, teachers, summer church camp, Luther League, Lutheran Student Association (college), neighbors, congregations, friends, Westminster Canterbury Richmond and the list could go on. When I think of the influence of those on the list, it is overwhelming. What a blessing to have so much support in day-to-day living.

The Christian lifestyle is not something tacked on our daily agenda. It is the center-core of our day-to-day living. We are blessed as the church proclaims God’s love and forgiveness. We are not working our way to heaven, but God’s action in Jesus saves us. God loves – we respond in worship and daily life. What a blessing!

This blessing leads to thankfulness. How do we thank God? “Love one another as I have loved you!” What a difficult assignment. We are human beings capable of being BAD and GOOD. God forgives. He sets us free. God loves us. What a blessing. Good Friday – Easter!

– Evelyn Byerly, RESIDENT

## WERE YOU THERE?

*Were you there when they crucified my Lord? Were you there?*

Two thieves were there, hanging with Jesus on either side. One, you remember, was rather cynical and self-serving. “Are you not the Messiah? Then save yourself- and us!” But the other responds: “Do you not fear God? . . . We are getting what we deserve . . . but he has done nothing wrong.” Then turning to Jesus, he says: “Remember me when you come into your kingdom.” In those simple words, that thief affirms what makes this Friday, Good- that past the pain and the suffering and the stress- and even death, there is victory! He alone at that scene sees beyond the cross to Jesus’ continuing presence after his physical death. The crowd and the other thief certainly didn’t. The apostles – long gone – certainly didn’t. Even his mother and the other women at the scene didn’t. Which makes of this thief, the first Christian, for not only did he see beyond the cross, but he understood the meaning of Grace. There he was, a convicted criminal who knew his own guilt, his own unworthiness, and turning to Jesus, he makes no excuses, no bargaining, no reasons why he should be saved- only *Remember me*. “Just as I am without one plea.” And Jesus responds: “Today you will be with me in paradise.” So this thief ended his earthly life as he had lived- he stole heaven. Is that not our connection with that thief? Is he not our model? As with him, is it not grace that saves us, for there is nothing we can do to earn or gain it. We, too, by the grace of God, steal heaven. It is God’s pure gift to us as we see beyond the cross to its victory. And are not his words the very words we need, not only at our death, but throughout our lives: *Jesus, remember me?*

— Fletcher Lowe, RESIDENT

## THE SHAPE OF THE CROSS

There's some solid theology in *Life on the Mississippi* (1874) by Mark Twain. Early on in the book, Twain signs on as a cub riverboat pilot under the tutelage of veteran navigator Mr. Bixby, who was hired to "teach him the river" between St. Louis and New Orleans. In the thick black of a starless night, behind the wheel, the young Twain is startled to hear Mr. Bixby ask, "What is the shape of Walnut Bend?"

*"He might as well have asked me my grandmother's opinion of protoplasm. I reflected respectfully, and then said I didn't know that it had any particular shape...By and by (Bixby) said, 'My boy, you've got to know the shape of the river perfectly. It is all there is left to steer by on a very dark night. Everything else is blotted out and gone. But mind you, it hasn't got the same shape in the night as it has in the daytime.'"*

Nowadays, ships navigate through a straightened Mississippi River, thanks to the work of the Army Corps of Engineers. But back in Twain's and Bixby's day, with no GPS systems or depth-finders, nighttime riverboat pilots had to know like the back of their hands the locations of treacherous sandbars and illusive shorelines.

Bixby sums up his lesson, *"You...learn the shape of the river; and you learn with such absolute certainty that you can always steer by the shape that's in your head, and never mind the one that's before your eyes."*

Christ calls us to navigate through the night of brokenness and despair with the shape that's in our head—the shape of the cross. To know the shape of the cross is not to be called out of the night, but through it, with new eyes.

— Lynn McClintock

DIRECTOR OF PASTORAL CARE

## TIME FOR REFLECTION

The Lenten season can be a reflection of the tests we have endured. The story of Abraham is one of the Bible's most familiar figures who was tested by God. First, he was called to leave his home to settle in a place where he did not know where he was going. Second, he was promised a son who was not born for another 25 years. Third, he was told to sacrifice this beloved son on the altar as a sign of obedience to God. One can imagine the thoughts, angst, and grief that Abraham endured as he traveled three days and nights to reach the place where his son Isaac was to die. Then the Lord called to Abraham to stop the slaying of his son and provided a ram to be the sacrifice. Abraham then called the place The Lord Will Provide.

The disciples were tested during the arrest, trial, and crucifixion of Jesus. Jesus predicted their actions but loved them unconditionally. Afterwards, Jesus entered through the unopened door where the disciples had gathered, saying to them, "Peace be with you." Their shoulders relaxed, and their fears drifted away. The waiting was over. Jesus was with them. They had passed the test. More would come, but his presence and peace were sufficient at that very moment when they needed him.

God's testing allows the building of spiritual maturity and growth which is borne out through obedient action. When Abraham was told to possess the land where he was going, he questioned God about how this would happen. Later when God called to him, Abraham responded in the affirmative, "Here I am." Abraham knew that the Lord would provide what he needed.

*Lord, help me to trust you and be obedient, knowing that you provide for me in all things. Amen.*

— Charlotte Evans, PASTORAL CARE

## FREEDOM FROM BONDAGE

God has given us a way to be free from bondage to people and free from holding on tightly to things of this world.

1 Peter 2:21 “to this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in His steps,” (I inserted my name in place of “you”), “saying, To this Anne, you were called to follow in His steps.” Verse 22 says, “When they hurled their insults at Him, He did not retaliate; when He suffered, He made no threats. He entrusted Himself to Him Who judges justly.”

### *Forgive Completely*

Christ set the example for us to forgive completely what others do to us. Matthew 6:15 says, “But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.” When I find it hard to forgive, I simply say, “God, I choose to forgive (whoever it might be), because You say for me to forgive. I don’t feel it in my heart now, but I ask You to make it real in my heart.” God has never let me down and I am able to freely forgive.

### *Love Deeply*

We are also called to love deeply because God loves us unconditionally. Matthew 5: 43-46 says, “Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you – if you love those who love you, what reward will you get.” Love is a choice. Choose God’s way, and He will enable you to love freely and deeply.

### *Give Lavishly, Expecting Nothing In Return*

Everything in my possession belongs to God. I own nothing. Because God is a lavish giver, I am called to give generously to others expecting nothing in return.

The bottom line is this:

Forgive completely

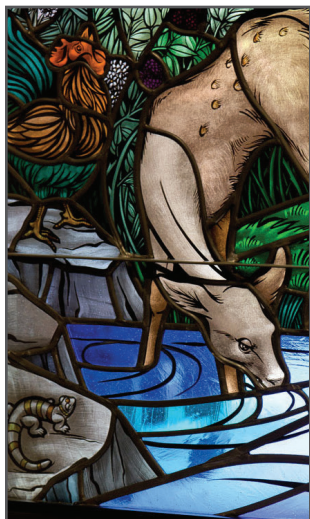
Love deeply (even the unlovable)

Give lavishly, knowing you cannot out give God – and you will be blessed.

– Anne Lewis, RESIDENT







## WESTMINSTER CANTERBURY RICHMOND

was founded in 1975 by the Episcopal and Presbyterian Churches as a faith-based charitable organization. Today, the continuing care retirement community serves more than nine hundred residents, who enjoy a wide variety of housing options and amenities such as

performing arts and cultural programs in the Sara Belle November Theater and the Center for Creative and Cultural Arts. Westminster Canterbury Richmond is accredited by the Continuing Care Accreditation Commission and has been named “one of America’s 20 best” by *New Choices Magazine*. Westminster Canterbury welcomes all regardless of race, religion, or nationality.

**WESTMINSTER  
CANTERBURY**  
RICHMOND

LIVE  
LIFE  
WELL.™

1600 WESTBROOK AVENUE • RICHMOND, VIRGINIA 23227

804.264.6000 • [www.WCRICHMOND.org](http://www.WCRICHMOND.org)

Go to [www.facebook.com/wcrichmond](https://www.facebook.com/wcrichmond) to stay informed  
on news, events and how our residents Live Life Well!

