

An abstract painting of a cross, rendered in various colors including blue, green, orange, and purple, set against a light background.

Lent

Devotional Resources

Excerpted from Lent devotionals
produced by our
communities and partners.



National Council of Churches
NATIONAL COUNCIL OF THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST IN THE USA



Lent

*The Way of Peace
(John 14:1-11, NRSVue)*

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life..." John 14:6a

This past Christmas, I left the security and comfort of family and home to celebrate the birth of Christ, the Prince of Peace, amidst the rubble in solidarity with the Palestinian people in occupied Bethlehem on the West Bank.

As Black Methodists birthed out of the struggle against Empire and racism, we must examine our faith and actions or inaction during this Lenten period in the light of the war which bleeds the life out of Gaza like the crown of thorns placed on Jesus' head, the nails through his hands and the spear that pierced his side. We must remind ourselves that Christ is the way of peace.

Peace-making is not a passive activity. We must actively share in the mission of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace. Before his crucifixion, Jesus told his disciple; "Peace is what I leave with you. My peace I give to you...do not let your hearts be troubled or be afraid. (John 14:27)

The first words to his fearful band of disciples after the resurrection was, "Peace be with you."

Peace never happens by chance; we make peace. Peacemakers take the initiative; they seek justice and harmonious relationships in all spheres of life.

As a South African, I am a witness to the incredible potential of soft power and can testify that no situation is irredeemable when we are touched by Almighty God.

In his Christmas sermon preached at the Lutheran Church in Bethlehem, Rev. Munther Isaac challenged all of us to look in the mirror and ask, "Where was I when Gaza was going through genocide?"

We are called to be people of action, peacemakers, and harbingers of hope in a world pregnant with possibilities. A different world is possible. Let us march to the drumbeat of Jesus our Lord in solidarity with Christians in Palestine by joining the Gaza Ceasefire Pilgrimage. <http://www.gazaceasefirepilgrimage.com/>

As Methodists, we know how to sing at midnight.

Prayer: O God of Peace, give us faith and courage to keep on working, speaking, and praying for peace. Amen.

Bishop Ivan Abrahams serves as the General Secretary of the World Methodist Council.

***Order Liberation and Unity: 2024
Lenten Devotional: A Guide for
Meditation and Action on Amazon
Kindle or at ameced.com.***

A GUIDE FOR MEDITATION AND ACTION



2024 LENTEN DEVOTIONAL

**LIBERATION
AND UNITY**



Lent

Unity in Diversity
(1 Corinthians 12:14-15, 18, NRSVue)

Order copies of
**Gathered into One:
Devotions for Lent 2024**
on Amazon.com or at
www.augsburgfortress.org/store.
Large print edition available.

The body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot would say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. . . . But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose.

Our bodies are incredible. Your heart beats and your lungs breathe your entire life, without you consciously thinking about it. Eyes are masterful instruments that refract light. Many people blink every three to five seconds. The tongue has 8,000 tastebuds. You have 100,000 miles of blood vessels. Everything works together to make possible all the things you do. Paul pictures the church as a body, the body of Christ. When the church functions as it is meant to do, the many parts do not try to one-up or criticize each other. The foot doesn't see itself as less important than the hand. The church needs all the parts to contribute their gifts and work together as one. What would happen if all the hands went to one church and all the feet went to another? Ditto eyes and ears. In a polarized society, we are at risk of that today. The problem Paul sees in Corinth is still with us. God creates a kaleidoscope of people and gifts. Our differences are a strength, not a weakness, when we listen to one another and learn how to work together. Prayer We give you thanks, O God, for the great diversity in the world. Help us to love all the people you place in our path, and teach us to work together, as the body of Christ. Amen.

To Ponder

This is Christ's body, broken and blest.
Feed us with mercy and love.
We are Christ's body, broken and blest.
Heal us and make us one.

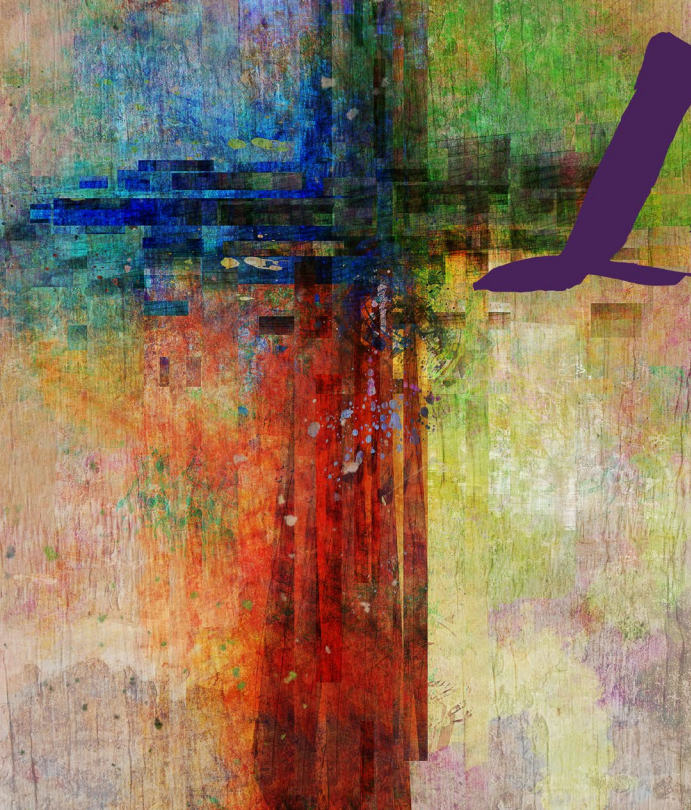
—All Creation Sings, 967

Prayer: We give you thanks, O God, for the great diversity in the world. Help us to love all the people you place in our path, and teach us to work together, as the body of Christ. Amen.

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gathered
into one
DEVOTIONS FOR
LENT 2024



Lent

Breathe Deep
(Mark 9:4-6, NRSVue)

Elijah and Moses appeared and were talking with Jesus. Peter reacted to all of this by saying to Jesus, "Rabbi, it's good that we're here. Let's make three shrines—one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." He said this because he didn't know how to respond, for the three of them were terrified.

In life, there are moments when we encounter the extraordinary, the unexpected, and the divine. We find ourselves standing on the threshold of a holy encounter, feeling a mixture of awe, fear, and confusion. In such moments, like Peter, we may feel the need to respond, to do something tangible to honor the sacred presence.

Peter's immediate response to Jesus's transfiguration was to suggest building shrines for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. It is a natural inclination to do something, to take action in the face of the extraordinary. Peter didn't know what to do, but in the midst of their fear, he wanted to do something. To act. Build. Achieve. Honor.

Peter desired to honor and preserve this revelatory moment, wanting to make it permanent. But sometimes, God calls us to simply abide in the presence, to listen, and to let go of our need to control or achieve.

How can you cultivate a posture of abiding in God's presence, even when faced with the extraordinary or unexpected? What practices or attitudes can help you let go of the need to control or achieve in those moments?

Deep Breath Prayer

Breathe deep using the IN phrase for your inhale and the OUT phrase for your exhale. IN | Sacred OUT | Presence.

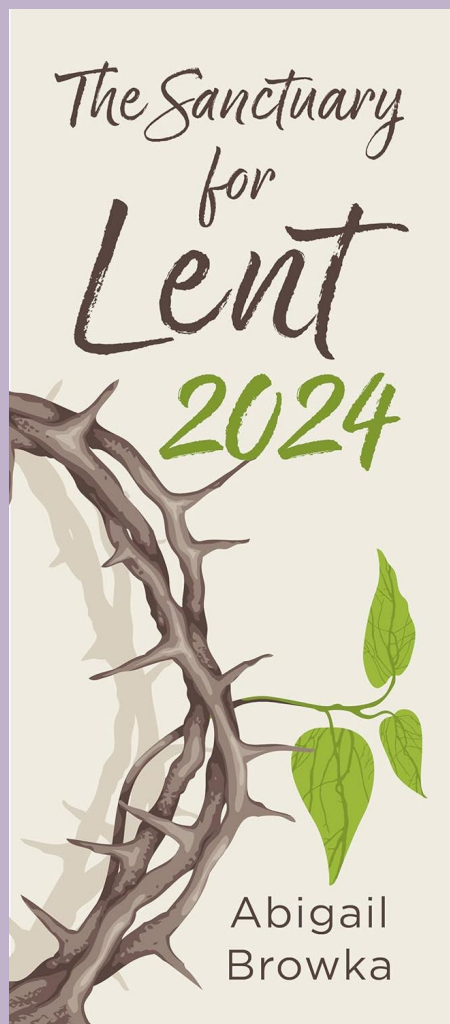
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The Sanctuary for Lent 2024

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Available in Print and Ebook



Abigail
Browka



Lent

*Costly Love and Hard Places
(Hebrews 12:1-2, NRSVue)*

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us.

Perseverance is the character quality that never gives up. Perseverance doesn't take the easy way out. It stays the course and does the right thing, even when the right thing is the hard thing. Obstacles will not stop it. Discouragement will not derail it. Setbacks will not deter it. Perseverance is the unrelenting commitment to keep going. The author of the Hebrews calls it "hupomone" (hoop-a-mona).

Most of the time, we don't get to choose what happens in the world around us. But we do get to choose our response. Perseverance looks like forgiveness instead of holding a grudge, seeking peace rather than remaining enemies, and showing mercy instead of taking revenge.

My first trip to the West Bank was with a delegation of pastors led by the Rev. Dr. Mae Elise Cannon. We met with Jews and Palestinians, Muslims and Christians. We listened to their stories, laughed and cried with them, and came to a new understanding of the complexities of their lives.... Then, we met Charlie, a member of a very small but resilient community. Charlie is a Palestinian Christian. He described the difficulty of his life as a Palestinian, detailing the trauma of injustice and violence he and his community endure. Then he said, "We carry a heavy cross. We don't want to stay here. But we must stay here. It is our call. We stay and witness to the love and forgiveness of Jesus." *Hupomone!*

Lent points us to Jesus, who persevered. His obedience to the Father meant enduring the cross and offering His life as the ultimate sacrifice for us all. He set us free. So where is God calling you to stay? What can you do to bring His peace into your relationships, work, school, and world? May we live with such costly love and stay in the hard places until this earth looks more like our God's heaven and peace prevails.

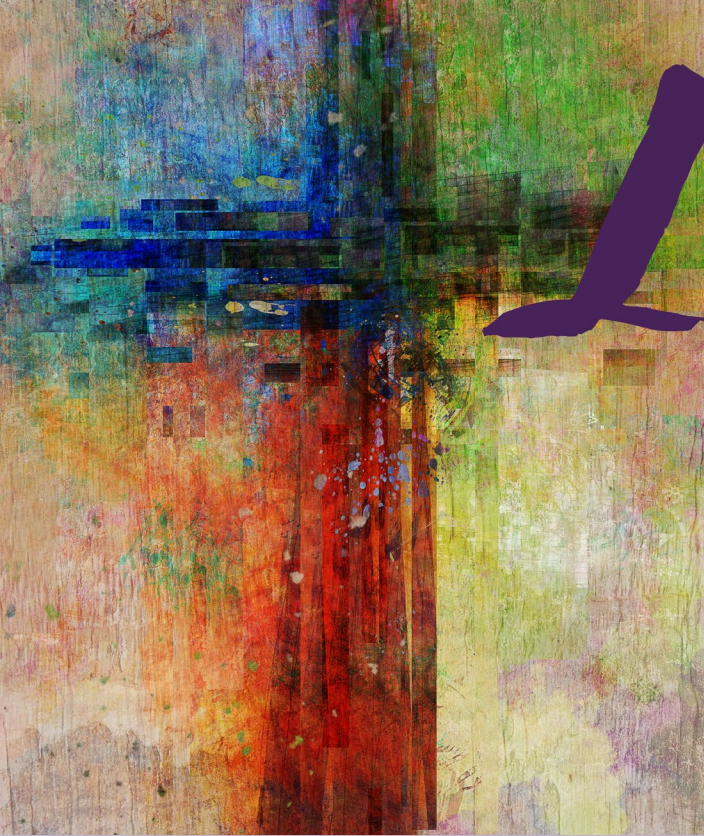
The Rev. Rich Leatherberry is the Associate Pastor for Missions at Bellevue Presbyterian Church, a longtime CMEP Church Partner. He and other pastors and leaders from Bellvue have traveled to the Middle East with CMEP numerous times.



**Faithful Resilience:
A Lenten Sojourn for Peace**

CHURCHES FOR
MIDDLE EAST PEACE
Lent 2024

Read each Sunday's Lenten devotional in CMEP's **Prayers4Peace** at cmep.org.



Lent

We Are Bent, Not Destroyed
(2 Corinthians 4:8-10)

Jesus modeled flexibility: hardship and persecution bent but didn't break him. Change and challenge strengthened his ministry. Impossible situations yielded to healing and release.

How many of us could benefit — not from a hard yank but from a stretchy bend, not from stiffness but from resilience?

Bending can be scary, of course. Responding to pressure with flexibility can be counterintuitive. Who knows what our limits are? Who knows if we might crack and break?

But bending can be a source of strength: Trees bend in the wind. Bows bend in order to release their arrows. The river bends around the mountain.

**We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed;
we are perplexed, but not despairing;
we are bent, but not destroyed.**

(2 Corinthians 4:8-10, Adapted)

Take time in the Lent 2024 season to bend low and be renewed. From the Stillspeaking Writers' Group, the devotional *Bend* provides daily readings, reflections, and prayers for the Lenten season: Ash Wednesday (Feb 14) to Easter Sunday (March 31).

Copies of ***Bend Lent Devotional 2024*** can be purchased at www.thepilgrimpress.com and is available in paperback or as a PDF download.





LENT

Take Courage
(Haggai 2:3-5 NRSVue)

Who is left among you that saw this house in its former glory? How does it look to you now? Is it not in your sight as nothing? Yet now take courage, says the Lord. Take courage, all you people of the land, says the Lord; work, for I am with you. My spirit abides among you; do not fear.

You who fear your best days are behind you, take courage, for the Holy One is not finished with you.

You who fear what is yet to come, take courage, for the God of Glory is yet with you.

You who fear that the generations before you have left your generation with nothing but demise and disaster, take courage; the Creator is yet at work.

You who fear that the church is dying, take courage and consider what the Spirit is doing even now.

You who are inclined to become evangelists of every new self-help fad, take courage and make space for the still, small voice within you.

You who refuse to change, take courage—and commit to trying one new thing this week.

You who are prone to catastrophizing, take courage and get to work. God can make a way out of no way.

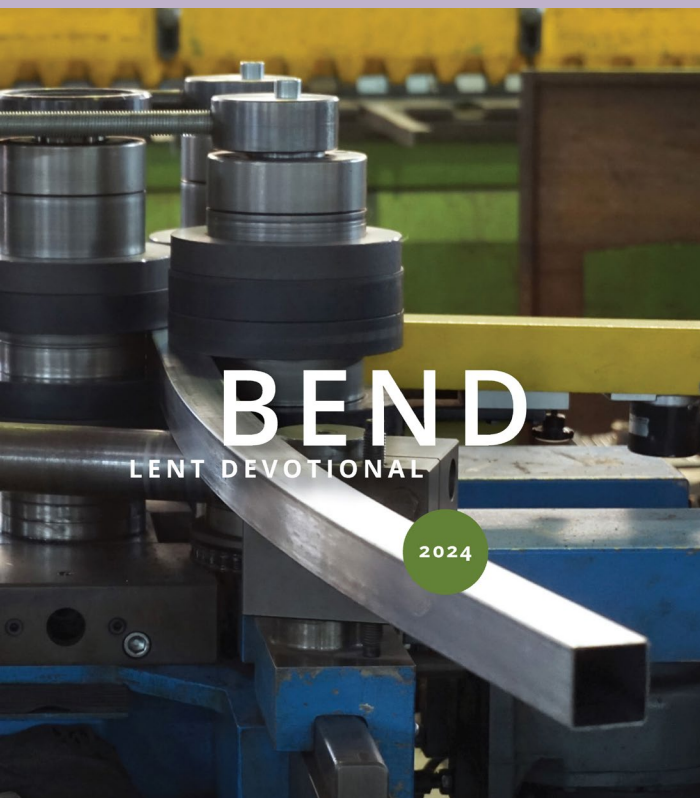
You who are prone to denial, consider the facts and take courage anyway, trusting that the truth will set you free.

Whoever you are, wherever life finds you, whatever you fear, name it and carry on. Face it, and lean in. Take courage, and live with the boldness of a love that death cannot contain. ."

PRAYER *For the gift of courage, the hope of flexibility, the practice of surrender, and the promise of new life, we give you thanks and praise.*

Copies of ***Bend Lent Devotional 2024*** can be purchased at

www.thepilgrimpress.com and is available in paperback or as a PDF download. This devotional was contributed by Vicki Kenper.



BEND
LENT DEVOTIONAL

2024



LENT

Glimpse of God's Realm
(Mark 1:9-15, NRSVue)

"...the kingdom of God has come near..."

On Palm Sunday evening, we all traveled to a neighboring church for baptism because our building was lacking a baptistry. A parade of young people shared their confession of faith, were baptized, and then welcomed into our congregation. All this was accompanied with parental tears of joy, deacons worrying about logistics in a strange place, and a few giggles from dripping wet, nervous teens.

One of the privileges of pastoral ministry is knowing important things about people that sometimes not even best friends share. Alice was a faithful attender at love feast but she avoided washing feet because her feet were incredibly ticklish. Bonnie was one of the excited teens who was baptized on Sunday, and totally ready to participate in her first love feast on Maundy Thursday.

As things happen, Alice and Bonnie entered the fellowship hall together and sat side by side at the table. I watched in awe as Alice never said a word, but held her lip hard between her teeth while Bonnie knelt to wash and dry those ticklish feet. When they hugged and whispered "God loves you," I'm certain I glimpsed God's realm right there across the table. The kind of love that puts personal comfort aside in order to welcome a new person into the church circle is a true testament to faith in God's reign.

What are the comforts I can put aside so that the reign of God might be more apparent to others? What are the ways I might share an expression of welcome to others seeking a fresh relationship with Jesus?"

PRAYER *God, give me the strength to love you and your world more than I love my own comfort. Help me to practice hospitality even when it pinches. Amen.*

Copies of **Through Thick and Thin 2024** devotional by Beth Sollenberger can be purchased at www.brethrenpress.com and is available in paperback, ebook, or as a PDF download.



BETH SOLLENBERGER



Lent

The Christian's Challenge (Mark 8:31-38, NRSVue)

"Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes and be killed and after three days rise again."

Peter's common-sense reaction [to Jesus' revelation] (whoever heard of a crucified Messiah?) coincides exactly with the satanic opposition to God's saving plan. He is thinking human thoughts, not God's thoughts.

Then comes the challenge from which most of us, given half a chance, still shrink. There is a sense in the gospel in which, because Jesus dies, we do not. His unique death saves us. But there is another sense, repeated in the rest of the New Testament, that because Jesus dies, we must die too. We must pick up our cross — bearing public shame, as Jesus indicates (v. 38), as well as the prospect of pain and suffering — and follow him.

That is not only the route by which we must travel for our own sakes. It is the path we tread through which Jesus' victory is made real, again and again, in the world. Common sense shrieks that this is crazy. Why not settle for a quiet life? But Jesus is quite clear. There are times when common sense means sliding along the smooth downward path with 'this cheating and sinning generation'. Don't rock the boat. Don't be an 'extremist'. Don't do anything rash. And behind this obvious, worldly advice there is the hidden message: don't talk about the cross. Don't mention Jesus. You don't want people to think you're a fanatic....

Well, there is of course always the danger of fanaticism, of a self-induced and self-promoting 'zeal'. But there is also the danger, and much modern Western Christianity runs this risk all the time, of being ashamed of the sharp-edged and scandalous message of the kingdom and the cross. I suspect many of us today need to be warned against the second more than the first.

TODAY: *Forgive us, gracious Lord, when we have preferred human common sense to the strange wisdom and power of your cross. Give us strength and clarity of understanding to hear your call afresh and to follow wherever you lead.*

Excepted from
Lent for Everyone: Mark Year B
by N. T. Wright
(Westminster John Knox Press).

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A DAILY DEVOTIONAL

Lent
for EVERYONE
MARK, YEAR B



N. T. WRIGHT