



WHAT WE ARE

TAKING ON

FOR LENT

2023 LENTEN DEVOTIONAL
FOUNDRY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

FLIPPING LENT

Foundry United Methodist Church

Pursues closeness with God

During Lent 2023

By taking something on

Rather than

By giving something up.

Micah says “act,” “love,” “walk.”

Other worthwhile practices

For mortals to take on:

Accept, behave, care,

Defend, encourage, fast,

Give, help, inquire,

Jam, keen, laud,

Marvel, notice, oblige,

Pray, quench, read,

Sing, tutor, untangle,

Value, welcome, xoxo,

Yield and Zoom.

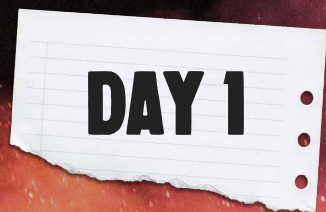
ANONYMOUS

Foundry's 29th annual Lenten Devotional is a Discipleship Ministry under the direction of Rev. Jonathan Brown, Associate Pastor and Director of Discipleship.

Ministry team: Joanne Steller, Lynn Smarte, Elder Witt Wellborn, Karl Marshall, and the scores of contributors who wrote, created, and supported the production of this series. Creative direction came from Kaylon Kirk Rutledge and Live Design.

When a devotional moves you, consider sharing your thoughts with the author or someone you feel may find it meaningful.

**ASH WEDNESDAY,
FEBRUARY 22, 2023**



BETWEEN ASHES AND ASHES

**TODAY BEGINS OUR JOURNEY THROUGH LENT IN PREPARATION FOR EASTER.
HISTORICALLY, IT WAS A TIME OF FASTING AND PREPARATION FOR BAPTISM
FOR NEW CHRISTIAN CONVERTS.**

Our Ash Wednesday Service often includes the words, “Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return,” as ashes are imposed on our forehead or put on our palm. One of the five daily remembrances of Buddhism would add, “All I have are my actions, and my actions have consequences.”

This year our editors invite us to think about what actions we might take on by using these daily devotionals as prompters to ask ourselves:

- What is the Holy Spirit stirring in your heart or compelling your attention?
- Which of your gifts serves that to which you are being drawn?
- What is God calling you to take on for Lent?


Given everything we are certain we have to do, this feels like a showstopper.

BUT WAIT. When was the last time you took time to pay attention to what is stirring in your heart and fleeing away with the next thing on your to-do list?

WAIT. The invitation is to pay attention. It is also an invitation to connect with your heart and what brings you fulfillment and joy.

WAIT. This is an invitation to do one thing — and to savor doing it, now, “between ashes and ashes.” Just possibly one of the consequences will be to experience new or renewed life in preparation for Easter.

REV. DR. DAVID ARGO
ACTING SENIOR PASTOR



**THURSDAY,
FEBRUARY 23, 2023**

DAY 2

IT'S NOT ABOUT YOU

***"FOR WHAT WE PREACH IS NOT OURSELVES, BUT JESUS CHRIST AS
LORD, AND OURSELVES AS YOUR SERVANTS FOR JESUS' SAKE."
2 CORINTHIANS 4:5 NIV***

During Lent, Foundry is asking us to reflect on what more we can do to serve God. After the pandemic, it has been hard for many of us to come back to in-person worship, let alone become more active in the life of the church. It feels like the dynamics of being with others in church have changed.

Prior to the pandemic, I didn't think too much about how God wanted me to serve. As a pastor's spouse in a small church, much of my service centered on routine tasks needed to keep things running. With retirement, I now want to focus on discerning what gifts God has given me and how He wants me to use them.

I will try taking on new tasks both inside and outside Foundry to put my faith into action. Some of these tasks I may do well and others not so well. I will ask God to help me overcome my fear of taking on new things and focus on how to humbly serve by sharing His love with others.

In other words, it's not about me, it's about them.

We don't have to get caught up in doing things perfectly or waiting for the perfect service opportunity to come along. By walking humbly with our God, He will give us whatever skills we need and help us discern which kinds of service are a good fit for the gifts we've been given.

PRAYER:

During Lent, show us new ways to serve so that we can more fully love God, love each other, and change the world.

SARA EAKES



**FRIDAY,
FEBRUARY 24, 2023**

DAY 3 :

**TAKE
IT**

**I TAKE *IN* THE SIGHTS. I TAKE *OUT* THE TRASH.
I TAKE *UP* A HOBBY. I TAKE *DOWN* THE DECORATIONS.
I TAKE *OFF* MY SHOES. I TAKE *ON* ...**

WHAT *DO* I TAKE *ON* ?

Racism, oppression, poverty, mass incarceration, climate change, injustice? I have no problem taking until I'm asked to take on something meaningful.

The prophet Micah foresaw the looming downfall of Jerusalem and Samaria should the people in power continue their dishonest and corrupt practices, which were impoverishing the rest of the population. Micah rhetorically asked, what would be enough to please God and prompt God to right things in an upside down world?

Micah believed that if he could make God happy, then God would stop the impending punishment and the people would be safe and happy too. Feeling defeated and insufficient at the thought of asking God what would it take to stop the injustice he saw around him, Micah hyperbolically answered his own question: "A thousand rams... 10,000 rivers of oil... my firstborn child?" (Micah 6:7)


When I'm frustrated and exhausted, when I think I've given all I can give, I also utter exaggerated and insincere responses to justify my refusal to take on anything else.

What more do you want from me? Will the things I do ever be enough to fix a broken world?

Like Micah, I'm not rich. I can't access endless resources. I don't want to sacrifice what I love most. And yet, I am called to do big things.

God hasn't asked me to act alone or beyond my abilities. Micah reminds me of what I can take on daily: to act fairly, to love by showing compassion, and to be humble (Micah 6:8).

ONI BLAIR



**SATURDAY,
FEBRUARY 25, 2023**

DAY 4 :

TAKING ON, NOT GIVING UP

IN HER BOOK, "THE LIGHT WE CARRY," MICHELLE OBAMA USES THREE PHRASES TO DESCRIBE HOW SHE DEALS WITH DISCOURAGEMENT. AS OUR LIVES CHANGE OVER TIME, WE ALSO NEED TO FIND DIFFERENT WAYS TO COPE WITH SUCH SITUATIONS. OBAMA DESCRIBES HER CURRENT WAYS:

- 1. SOCIAL ENVOYS** Social envoys are friends who carry you through life. Who are your current social envoys? Mine understand my limitations due to physical accidents but support initiatives that embody my beliefs and objectives. My address book now includes mainly my social envoys, the people who help me follow Jesus' admonition to love God and help others.
- 2. KITCHEN TABLE** What do you do when you are discouraged or unable to think of how to proceed? Obama convenes friends around her kitchen table to encourage each other and talk through ways to resolve problems. I reach for the phone for those conversations. We all need strategies to hear God's word.
- 3. GOING HIGH** Obama doesn't let criticism drag her down. She keeps her focus on carefully determined objectives guiding her actions and those of others. I try to "go high" even with myself when I begin to self-critique in a way that thwarts focusing on others.

What is God calling me to take on for Lent? I like the idea of taking on, not giving up, because I don't want discouragement to limit my initiative. I want to take on what I am physically and emotionally able to do, in line with Romans 12:6-8, which reminds us that we all have different gifts that we can put to use.

PRAYER:

May each of us collaborate with social envoys, meet around kitchen tables to generate resolutions for problems, and go high in resolve and spirit as we act in God's name.

BARBARA CAMBRIDGE



**SUNDAY,
FEBRUARY 26, 2023**

DAY 5 :

GAME THEORY

Lately I feel the problems are too big — that God is asking too much and I get overwhelmed. Micah 6:8 is the popular verse (Do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with God) but there is a lot of work involved with these short phrases.

I was struck by the preceding verse in Micah where the writer mocks the suggestion that God requires thousands of rams, rivers of olive oil and firstborns. It reminds me of a child exaggerating a parent's request to avoid doing anything. I know I do that sometimes to God.

God isn't asking for us to do miracles — that's God's job. We are to do what is in front of us: pray every day, volunteer, gather in community, show up when needed. It's the discipline of sticking with a healthy routine. It's these everyday tasks that I struggle with the most ... but somehow I have no problem playing Wordle every day without fail.

Maybe that is because I see these tasks as work.

God is calling us to joy — to laughter — to fellowship. Studies show that people who hang out with their friends regularly live longer and healthier lives. Maybe we are being called this Lent to play games more with our friends. My small group might go dancing together over Lent. Exercise and friendship rolled into one!

This got me thinking about game theory. Do I need a little competition to make me stick to a routine? Maybe a scorecard of what I do like Wordle has? I need the pressure to keep my streak going! God created us to love games and I suggest we lean into that. Bring a little childlike joy into your Lent and leave behind the feeling you need to solve everything.

JOANNE GARLOW

**MONDAY,
FEBRUARY 27, 2023**

DAY 6 :

PUT ON TO TAKE ON

BEFORE I CAN TAKE ON SOMETHING FOR LENT, I THINK I SHOULD PUT ON SOMETHING. THAT SOMETHING WOULD BE, IF YOU WILL, SPIRITUAL CLOTHING.

“...seeing you have stripped yourself of the old self with its practices and have clothed yourselves with the new self...compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.”
Colossians 3:9-12 NRSV

“...have clothed yourselves with Christ...” Galatians 3:27b NRSV

“Put on the whole armor of God...” Ephesians 6:11a NRSV The Church of the Savior, founded over 70 years ago in Columbia Heights by Gordon Crosby, encourages both inward and outward journeys. That is, put on Christ before taking on the world. This is a continuous process of prayer, meditation, worship, and ministry, all feeding each other — one that is exemplified by my friend and long-time Foundry member Sunny Branner and her late husband Bill.

What am I going to take on for Lent?

I am encouraged by the renewal of the Stephen Ministries, and plan to be a minister to an elderly person, either at Thomas House near me, or in the Dupont Circle Village, where another friend, Peggy Simpson, was a board member.

I will also stop by the Potter’s House at 1658 Columbia Road NW, one of Church of the Savior’s small churches, for a cup of coffee. While there, I can peruse books and find out more about the small church ministries. Won’t you join me?

I hope this gives you some food for thought, or at least some new clothing ideas...

ELLA CLEVELAND



**TUESDAY,
FEBRUARY 28, 2023**

DAY 7 :

GIVING UP TO TAKE ON

“THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD, I LACK NOTHING.” JOHN 8:31-34

Yet from my youth I have been beset with the fears of my conditioned mind believing I was less than, lacking, and unlovable to my creator. I seek peace that passeth understanding. I need *being* God’s kingdom within me.

The journey to liberation has been arduous. An early opening came in a high-spirited moment teasing my sister-in-law about my brother’s faults. “Maybe you see those things because you knew him before me,” she said, “but he was perfect when I met him, and he is perfect now.”

Immediately, I realized that was how God loves. She does not see our faults; feels only the pain of the separation from her they create.

Revelations since have led to a paradigm shift in my experience of the divine. Jesus said, “know the truth and it will make you free.” He meant the vital truth of who we are, purity of our created soul, the essence of our being.

To his disciples’ protest that they were already free he responded, “No, you are slaves of sin.” In its origin, sin means missing the mark. I was missing the mark of my human existence. I was a slave to my conditioned mind. Freedom comes through its dissolution which reveals the being nature of our true selves.

My choice is to awaken to the Spirit’s wellspring of peace by letting go of my insane ego. The path to Spirit is in subtraction from self.

All we seek, we have already. Behind the anxieties and fears of our minds is the timeless joy of our hearts.

PRAYER:

God, grant us wisdom to discern your presence within us in this timeless moment.

KARL MARSHALL

WEDNESDAY,
MARCH 1, 2023

DAY 8 :

TAKING ON SELF

"WE DO NOT SEE THINGS AS THEY ARE, WE SEE THEM AS WE ARE."
ANAIS NIN, CUBAN-FRENCH NOVELIST

SO HOW AM I VIEWING REALITY?

I know I have an ever-present ego point of view. The ego is interested in preserving the self. It is constantly pushing to have more in order to ensure survival.

The ego looks for differences in defining oneself or one's tribe as better than another. This yields blind spots. The ego will always be raising doubts and fears; it can never be fully satisfied.

Spiritual practice in the Christian tradition has helped me cope with my ego self. Contrary to what the ego would have me believe, the self is not isolated and separate but connected in every way with God's creation.

Humility, meekness, justice, mercy, purity and peacemaking do have their rewards as the Beatitudes promise. And equally important: what I send out into the world returns to me in equal measure sooner or later. But first I must trust and surrender my self to God and continually seek oneness with Him.

In Matthew 16:24-26 (NKJV), Jesus gives his disciples a riddle. "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it."

What view of reality are you now living?

MEDITATE ON:

"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me!"
Galatians 2:20 RSV

JOE STELLER

**THURSDAY,
MARCH 2, 2023**

DAY 9

REMEMBER HOW GOD SEES YOU

For me, 2022 was — as Charles Dickens described in “A Tale of Two Cities” — *the best of times and the worst of times*.

Professionally, my company’s growth started to soar exponentially, and this felt quite exhilarating at times. However, I also often found myself struggling with tremendous anxiety from resurfacing insecurities.

Self-doubt was painfully magnified by confidence-crushing personal situations such as the re-injury of a problematic lower back, breakup from a significant romantic relationship, as well as disruptive yet necessary residential and office moves. December unhappily ended my year with the loss of my Dad, whose health rapidly declined within the month.

These back-to-back life events temporarily eclipsed my ability to perceive just how far I had actually grown on multiple levels in the last few years. The Holy Spirit has had to continuously remind me that I am never alone. I have not been orphaned or abandoned by my Heavenly Creator.

Indeed, when life circumstances cripple my thoughts and I again forget how God sees me, I only need to re-read two cherished scriptures, both from the New Living Translation version of the Bible.

“For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.” Ephesians 2:10.

“Now we see things imperfectly, like puzzling reflections in a mirror, but then we will see everything with perfect clarity. All that I know now is partial and incomplete, but then I will know everything completely, just as God now knows me completely.” I Corinthians 13:12.

PRAYER:

Living God, help us to see ourselves more clearly through your eternally loving lens within all life’s circumstances. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

ERIC M. WALKER

**FRIDAY,
MARCH 3, 2023**

DAY 10 :

EITHER/OR OR BOTH/AND?

**MAYBE YOU HAVE HEARD THE DITTY, “THEY’RE SO HEAVENLY MINDED THEY’RE
NO EARTHLY GOOD.” THIS DEVOTIONAL OFFERS AN ANTIDOTE: THAT THE
“HEAVENLY MINDED” ALSO ARE CALLED TO REACH OUT TO OTHERS.
AS INDEED WE ARE.**

LET ME SUGGEST A BOOSTER SHOT: WE ARE CALLED TO BE AND DO BOTH.

A reporter by trade, I spent years covering President Jimmy Carter and former presidential candidate George McGovern (who also attended Foundry). Both Carter and McGovern aimed their policies toward others, particularly those less who were hurting or less well-off. Both were known for their forthright and clear faith in Jesus Christ. Few politicians embraced both faith and politics as effectively.

But at what cost? Their marriages stayed together but their children experienced brokenness. Their examples are not the only ones.

Does public life, whether in politics or other careers, chip away at one’s family or private life? Not only family life, but especially, our individual spiritual health.

The example isn’t quite parallel, but it calls to mind Harold DeWolf — the famed Boston University theologian and dean at Wesley Seminary — who was doctoral chairman for Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Foundry’s own Rev. Dr. Edward W. Bauman (DeWolf told me that of his 30 doctoral candidates, only two were so clearly focused as to marched through to their PhD in three years — King and Bauman).

DeWolf said that while he was teaching seminary, he also was teaching Sunday School (kindergarten as I recall). *“If I can’t teach it to a child, how can I expect to teach it to a seminary student?”*

In my view, what these tales demonstrate is that we must be integrated — public and private — especially so our religious experience is not only interior but also reaching out to others.

WESLEY G. PIPPERT

**SATURDAY,
MARCH 4, 2023**

DAY 11 :

WHO OR WHAT ARE WE WORSHIPING?

IN LUKE 4:5-8, THE DEVIL OFFERS JESUS ALL THE KINGDOMS AND WEALTH IN THE WORLD IF JESUS WILL AGREE TO WORSHIP HIM.

Without equivocation Jesus responds, “Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.”

We are witnessing some of the most egregious of power-grabbing aspirations in our nation and in the world — Taliban, Ukraine, January 6, U.S. Congress, etc. Fundamentally, this is about greed.

We have no problem condemning these, but what about our own temptations with greed which can take many forms?

How do we know when we are overly fixated on our ‘thing’ at the expense of relationships, when our spouse or a child or a friend is trying to get our attention?

How do we know when we have crossed the line with our possessions? Our closets, our bookshelves and our basement storage cage are stuffed with stuff, much of it as good as new. How do we know when we need to share our ‘stuff’?

How do we know when we are raking in money with no purposeful use in mind?

How do we know when we are making our frame of mind toward what is “mine” the priority instead of “how does this help me to live a responsible life?”

When our time, money and possessions start getting in the way of our responding to the call of God to a more purposeful life, then we know that it is time to think about who or what we are really worshiping.

God forgives. God gives us as many fresh starts as it takes. Like St. Paul it is possible for us to declare with integrity, “I press on toward the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

HAL GARMAN

**SUNDAY,
MARCH 5, 2023**

DAY 12 :



ALIVE IN MYSTERY

Lord God,
is it the shadow of old regrets
that dims the journey?
The sprawl of anonymous fears?
All day ambivalence speaks in dry leaves
and the night sky won't settle down.
Is it the gift of deep hunger
for your light?
Or the wee voice coming like a friend?
Hunger searches out the river
of my years,
treats me like a full player.
Opaque fire,
which never wants to be alone,
stay, burn and bless.
I am alive in mystery;
quicken me to the Way
lest I forget.

SUNNY BRANNER

FROM HER BOOK, **"WINDSONG: A LIFE IN POETRY"**

**MONDAY,
MARCH 6, 2023**

DAY 13:

WORLD WITHOUT WALLS

***“WE HAVE DIFFERENT GIFTS, ACCORDING TO THE GRACE GIVEN TO EACH OF US.”
ROMANS 12:4 NIV***

Someone built a wall. Smack in the middle of the world, the wall obstructs our view.

How may we know our neighbors? We can't see them. They are not allowed into the intimacy of community. The neighborhood is not safe with them here (so say the wall constructionists). Children cannot play or learn together. Differing faith streams may not pray together at Rachel's tomb. Presumed "isms" such as race, terror, politics, religion build walls in our minds each day.

The resulting malaise of this unfortunate haze is theology of the wall. A limited view of God, an unbalanced faith-walk and fear of invisible others form theology, rituals and practice in a walled-off world.

God is hosting a block party. All are invited to find that wall in our minds. Dance. Sit. Stand. Lie in front of the wall within. Don't try to measure the wall or engage its misguided history. Come to the wall with something entirely new — the grace given to each of us. Rap a plea for visibility. Jericho stomp to flatten the wall. Exalt valleys. Level mountains. Build a road through the Red Sea.

Use the grace given to you. Create community with an unobstructed view.

On a recent trip to Palestine, the writer engages the wall that separates Israelis, Palestinians, Christians, Jews, Muslims, women, children, men. The wall is graced with murals, protests, poetry, prayers, imagery of soldiers who guard the wall.

For some, grace is graffiti, to others grace is hope. Hope to see neighbors who will one day see us. The Spirit offers grace; the writer etches on the wall.

PRAYER:

God, use our gifts to build unobstructed community with freedom highways and all-inclusive spaces. Amen.

REVEREND R. LOIS ARTIS

**TUESDAY,
MARCH 7, 2023**

DAY 14 :

SEEDING A DREAM

It sat there silently, folded twice, awaiting discovery.
A \$20 bill in good faith, no questions asked.
This was a miracle.
Money had never found me before.
It will be seed money for enlightening my path.
How can I use it for God's good?

I'm taking a leap of faith by examining my current lifestyle.
No matter how I turned my time around, I came up short.
How was God leading me in using my talents to help others?

My thoughts focused on the instruction
I'd received from the Martin Luther King Library staff.
Patiently, they'd helped me improve my computer skills,
resolving problems, even Zoom glitches.
I felt elated about my progress.

My leap of faith focused on personal lifestyle changes:
...Balancing home responsibilities with valued socializing and "me" time.
...A museum visit enjoyed with friends.
...An energizing walk.
...My Practicing Spirituality group exploring diverse topics in spirited discussion.
...My Journaling class.
Each a God-given opportunity for social interaction.

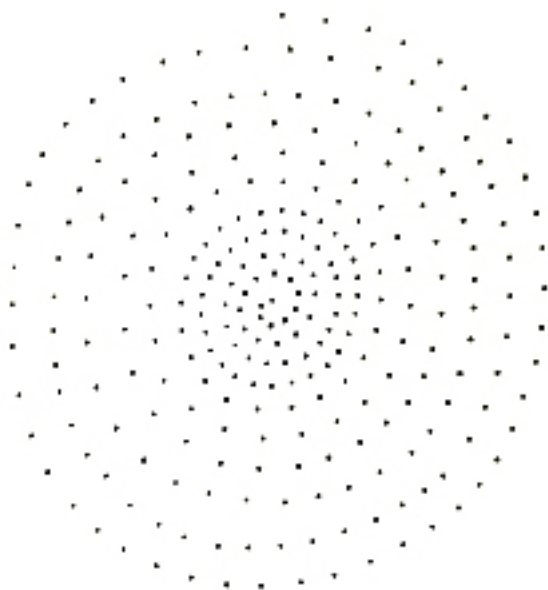
By seeking to educate myself at the MLK Library,
a door opened.
I learned new skills and made new friends.
It changed my life.
Now it's my turn to give back using my talents to help others.
God told us to seek and we would find, knock and the door would open.
Come to the table and be fulfilled.
There is a place waiting for you.

DIANE SEEGER

WEDNESDAY,
MARCH 8, 2023

DAY 15 :

TAKING ON STILLNESS



When I am feeling overwhelmed or struggling, a labyrinth can help me find stillness. I invite you to try it.

Slowly trace the dots, moving from the top, clockwise.

As you approach the center, feel yourself drawing inward, closer to God, feeling His love and acceptance of you — just as you are.

Once you reach the center, slowly retrace the dots, counter-clockwise. Imagine yourself re-entering the world, fortified by God's love and spirit within you.

May these words enhance your feeling of peace and acceptance:

BE STILL. The Lord is God. God is with me. God goes with me and never leaves me. Psalm 46:10 (NIV): “He says, ‘Be still and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.’”

GOD LOVES ME FOREVER. God gives me every mercy and every good gift. God is faithful to me. Lamentations 3:22–23 (NIV): “The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.”

JOANNA GIDDENS

**THURSDAY,
MARCH 9, 2023**

DAY 16

**BE STILL, AND
KNOW...**

What will I take on for Lent?

Foundry's restatement of "giving up for Lent" made me think.
As the years fly by, I am letting go of roles better filled by younger people.
That feels right.

So what will I take on?

In the peace of a morning, I found my answer.

Be still.

Stop.

Focus on who and what you see.

Listen.

Pay attention.

Be still.

Feel the wonder, the pain, the joy, the need.

Respond — a smile, a word, a prayer, a flash of recognition.

"Be still, and know that I am God." Psalm 46:10 (KJV)

God is everywhere. In every person. In every flash of beauty or kindness.

When we stop and look, God is there.

So for Lent — and longer — I am taking on ... being still.

And I will pray, in words given to me by a dear friend:

Lord, in the stillness of the morning, in the business of the day, in the setting of the sun, may I seek your glory and divine wisdom in the embrace of stillness. Amen.

ELDER WITT WELLBORN



**FRIDAY,
MARCH 10, 2023**

DAY 17

TAKING ON THE BAD

“HE HAS SHOWN YOU, O MORTAL, WHAT IS GOOD. AND WHAT DOES THE LORD REQUIRE OF YOU? TO ACT JUSTLY AND TO LOVE MERCY AND TO WALK HUMBLY WITH YOUR GOD.” MICAH 6:8 NIV

I'll give up gossip, candy, binge watching, things that are bad for me.
I'll take up exercise, patience, vegetables, things that are good for me.
I get to decide what goes out of my life and what I take into it.

That was my inner monologue as I sat down to write this devotional. Then I realized it wasn't true.

While I can seek to achieve my own goals, I'll end up taking on things — experiences, emotions — that I don't want but can't avoid. We all will.


We will take on grief. We will take on fear. We will take on hopelessness. Those things are real and they will come for us, no matter how much we try to avoid them.

And honestly, that's ok.

Grief, fear, hopelessness, and all the other things we want to avoid — they can't be avoided. They're life, and experiencing the bad parts is what makes the good parts feel so good, so earned and hard-fought.

I find solace in knowing that I'm not alone in experiencing the bad parts, and that the Lord is walking with me. No one is above the bad parts, and that's why we're called to “walk humbly” with our God.

BETH SCOTT



**SATURDAY,
MARCH 11, 2023**

DAY 18 :

TAKING ON GRATITUDE

***“FOR FROM HIM AND THROUGH HIM AND FOR HIM ARE ALL THINGS.
TO HIM BE THE GLORY.” ROMANS 11:36 NIV***

Friends, colleagues, social media have all been sending me mixed messages for months. Some reinforce my sense of contentment with my circumstances. Others are challenging me emotionally. My inner self is left questioning whether I should change what has made me comfortable.

I live in an area of Pennsylvania that is sometimes depressing. Here, I care for my 86-year-old father who had lived alone for long periods until 2021. I am a counselor and advocate for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. Both my personal and professional lives can be both rewarding and stressful.

Being an online member of “Foundry from Afar” has helped uphold me spiritually.

Yet I was resisting the temptation to flee. I was lured into searching for a new job despite just having started one last September. I have questioned whether being an online member of Foundry is sufficiently fulfilling.

Thankfully, I have had several affirming experiences. Encouragement from friends, expressions of gratitude at home and from clients at work bring satisfaction and clarity to my sense of purpose.

Taking Foundry’s Disciple I class, having my first in-person visit last September 11, and joining fellow congregants in clergy and staff care have made a positive impact. I realize how much I value the great connections with like-minded people in a church I serve and that serves me.

These instances of affirmation signify that ‘from him and through him’ I do have the power to overcome my disturbing resistance and grow to appreciate the blessings of life I often take for granted. And for this, ‘to him be the glory’ this Lent and always.

DANIEL CONKLIN

**SUNDAY,
MARCH 12, 2023**

DAY 19 :



USE THE DIFFICULTY

***“THE LIGHT SHINES IN THE DARKNESS, AND THE DARKNESS
DID NOT OVERCOME IT.” JOHN 1:5 NRSV***

Recently, I was watching an interview with the legendary actor Sir Michael Caine. Caine was talking about what he describes as **using the difficulty**, a philosophy which he employs both in acting and in life.

It comes from his early theater days, decades ago. He was rehearsing a play. It was time for him to enter the scene through a doorway on the stage — but the doorway was blocked with a chair inadvertently knocked over by another actor. Caine stopped the scene because he felt unable to continue because of this unexpected barrier. But his director told him not to stop the scene. Instead, the director told him: “Use the difficulty. If it’s a comedy, fall over [the chair]. If it’s a drama, pick it up and smash it.”

From then on, that was a philosophy that Michael Caine employed in all areas of his life and went on to teach his children.


It’s the idea that you can **do something with** that barrier rather than let it stop you. Fall over it if you must. Smash it if you must. But don’t let it stop the show.

Let us all remember to **use the difficulty** that we experience in whatever we take on in our lives — or whatever takes **us on**. If we can learn from our experiences, our hardships, and our mistakes, they haven’t defeated us.

If we can find any amount of self-knowing, awareness, or understanding from hard times, we can keep our light shining, undimmed by the darkness. **We can use the difficulty.**

KAYLON KIRK RUTLEDGE

DIRECTOR OF DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT



**MONDAY,
MARCH 13, 2023**

DAY 20 :

PASSING FORWARD

***“HONOR YOUR FATHER AND YOUR MOTHER, THAT YOUR DAYS MAY BE LONG IN
THE LAND THAT THE LORD YOUR GOD IS GIVING YOU.” EXODUS 20:12 ESV***

My parents decided that of their three children, I was the one who should become the caretaker of family heirlooms. Now, it is I who am getting old, and it is time for me to find homes for these family treasures.

Many things were passed down through the generations to both of my parents. Dad was the youngest son of six children; Mom was the youngest daughter of six.

Their parents chose them to be the caretakers of family Bibles, homemade quilts, handmade furniture, photographs, personal letters, jewelry and other items specific to each family — one German/English, the other Irish/English. Then my parents left me their own meaningful treasures that they enjoyed during their lifetimes.

I do not have grandchildren. It seems logical that I give the items my parents entrusted to me to my brother's grandchildren. There are six of them. I very much would like to humbly pass these treasures to them. Their parents, my brother's son and daughter, have minimal interest in heirlooms. Of my brother's six grandchildren, I see only three potential recipients.

What is holding me back? Gifts and notes sent to these three are never acknowledged. Attempting to initiate conversations with them at family gatherings is unproductive. They are polite and respectful, but their eyes gaze mid-distance. As much as I want these children to care about their ancestors and things that once belonged to their great-grandparents and great-great-grandparents, I see no indication that they do. I am at my wits' end.

PRAYER:

God, guide me. I want to honor my ancestors. Show me the way to find homes for their keepsakes. Amen.

STEPHEN ROBERTS

**TUESDAY,
MARCH 14, 2023**

DAY 21

IT COULD HAVE BEEN JESUS

*“...THAT HE MIGHT HUMBLE YOU, TESTING YOU TO KNOW WHAT WAS IN YOUR
HEART...” DEUTERONOMY 8:2 ESV*

She called out to me ma'am, ma'am,
I pretended not to see her standing there,
Wide open hands, summoning a twittering of
hope,
Her voice a high note whisper.

But fear is still in charge; she thinks she might
lick it then it fights back real hard,
Her prayers for a pittance, daring light to
appear,
But when you get down to it, you can rest
assured we all know how to disappear.

But I don't want to go on this way,
I don't want to feel detached is still okay,
I just wish I'd found the will and how to reach
her,
A message from the heavens to my heart.

Because it could have been Jesus standing
there,
Could have been him testing that old halo on
my head,
Could have been him asking where's that love
I taught you,
With cardboard signs, I called you,
And you — you sidestep divinity,
Like there's a limit to charity,

And you're hiding everywhere,
It could have been Jesus standing there.
Now I don't know the how, when (or why),
But where she stood's been replaced, been
occupied,
By lovely views, floor-to-ceiling windows to
the sky,

And where she's gone will be a mystery,
I'm seeking answers, writing checks to God
each week,
With wide open hands, hoping faith grows in
the bank,
But when you get down to it, isn't the work
of Christ our only form of currency?

Yes, it could have been Jesus standing there,
Could have been him testing that old halo on
my head,
Could have been him lifting cardboard signs
for charity,
While I sidestep divinity,
And I pass him everywhere,
It could have been Jesus standing there.

AUDREY MILLERHALLETT

**WEDNESDAY,
MARCH 15, 2023**

DAY 22

THE BREAD OF LIFE

“YESHUA SAID TO THEM, ‘I AM THE LIVING GOD, THE BREAD OF LIFE; WHOEVER COMES TO ME SHALL NOT HUNGER, AND WHOEVER TRUSTS IN ME SHALL NEVER THIRST.’” JOHN 6:35 ABPE

In the translation of ABPE (Aramaic Bible, Plain English) we find some emphasis on the “I AM” part of the “I am the bread of life” statement from Jesus.

I find it amusing that people around Jesus were always misinterpreting this — the crowds seem to want real bread, not spiritual bread. People always seem to be missing Jesus’ intent.

One time when I was on a retreat, we had communion there. I had an unusual experience during communion. I suddenly understood the meaning of the bread of life — taking God within us. This spiritual experience allowed me to more fully understand John 6:35.

I have a spiritual practice almost every morning — Coffee with Jesus — to start my day. Right now, it is Green Tea with Jesus. I read a devotion then I move into listening prayer.

Sometimes I hear the still small voice of Spirit, sometimes not.

But it is still a good way for me to seek the Lord, in the first part of the day, to discern what God may be calling me to that day.

The I AM will lead us; when we accept the bread of life, we have Spirit within us who shows us the path.

JOHN GODSHALK

**THURSDAY,
MARCH 16, 2023**

DAY 23 :

**NEW EVERY
MORNING**

“[GOD’S MERCIES] ARE NEW EVERY MORNING.” LAMENTATIONS 3:22 NRSV

If you’re reading this, chances are you’ve already taken on something for Lent: daily reading of this devotional collection. It may be difficult to fit in the time, with work, caregiving, or other responsibilities, but hopefully this daily spiritual centering is bringing some new insights.

In past years, and not just during Lent, I’ve taken on the practice of daily spiritual centering — usually using an outside source, accompanied by inner reflection and spiritual response. The outside source can be a traditional daily devotional like this one, focused listening to an inspirational podcast, an email from a spiritually focused source, a collection of poetry, the writings of a mystic, even watching an earlier church service or sermon.

As I read or hear something that shimmers for me, I pause and reflect on it. My response can take the form of a prayer, a song, or a wordless sense of awe.

Over the years, this practice continues to bring new sources of inspiration, new perspectives on life and relationships, communion with saints who have gone before, glimpses of eternity, even revelations from God.

Consider incorporating a time like this into each day’s life. It can bring new perspectives to the seemingly mundane realities we often have to face, and put you in touch with your inner mystic.

“The mystic maps the territory between the soul and God, between lover and the Beloved, between the little self and the True Self, between transitory and the eternal.”
— Ivan Granger, *The Longing In Between: Sacred Poetry from Around the World*

PAUL KEEFER

FRIDAY,
MARCH 17, 2023

DAY 24

REFLECTION AND RENEWAL

*“...‘TEACHER, WHICH COMMANDMENT IN THE LAW IS THE GREATEST?’
HE SAID TO HIM, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR
HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND’....”*

MATTHEW 22:36-37 NRSV

Although there is enormous value in tradition and routine, I do love the ways that Foundry often takes a break and changes things up. I'm pleased that this year the congregation is being asked to identify what we are taking on for Lent rather than the usual what we are giving up. I like this fresh approach.

I've decided to take on the study of the four gospels for Lent. Although I've read verses, chapters, and books on a fairly regular basis since I was young, I intend to read all four gospels during these 40+ days.

To expand my understanding, I'm planning to use The New Interpreter's Study Bible, which is replete with notes and commentary throughout. I haven't used that kind of background resource in any extensive way before. (And, in keeping with our Methodist roots, I intend to be very methodical about it by completing my study right after my first cup of coffee each morning!)

While the gospels are familiar, I expect new insights and revelations as well as renewed grounding as a result of this experience. The gospels haven't changed much in a couple of millennia, but our individual and collective understanding of them has grown. I anticipate that this will be the case with me.

I hope to bring all my heart, soul and mind to this study which I am taking on for Lent.

MICHAEL LAWSON

**SATURDAY,
MARCH 18, 2023**

DAY 25 :

STEP INTO THE SPACE BETWEEN

INTERSTITIAL —The space in between. The unseen but present. Pertaining to being between things, especially between things that are normally closely spaced.

The first time I heard this term used in a theological context, I was gathered with twelve other women of color, all over age 35 and experienced executive leaders for non-profits or faith-based institutions.

We were asked to describe a moment where faith, justice, and trauma intersected. I shared my experience as someone living and serving in our Nation's Capital during the summer protests of 2020. I reflected on the daily marches down Sixteenth Street to Lafayette Square, the sounds of unmarked vehicles speeding down that street in front of our church, the constant worry about the safety of our congregation and staff.

There was an overwhelming sense of hopelessness, as we stood in solidarity with our Black and Brown siblings. We raised our voices in prayers of lament and pleas for peace. At times, clergy would physically place themselves in the spaces between the oppressed and the oppressor, desperately grasping for a miracle while physically facing overwhelming power.


After I finished speaking, one of the leaders, a prophetic and beloved Black Reverend shared the word for my experience: **interstitial**. When I reflect on that moment now, calling out the name of Jesus at what is now Black Lives Matter Plaza, I am convinced that I had borne witness to the embodiment of **interstitial justice**.

I pray that throughout this Lenten season, as we wait for promised hope and witness ongoing violence and oppression, we embody interstitial justice. May we take on those unseen spaces, stepping into the tight places where only the name of Jesus will offer healing and peace.

REV. KEALANI NUNES WILLBANKS

ASSOCIATE PASTOR

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS AND IMPACT



**SUNDAY,
MARCH 19, 2023**

DAY 26 :

WORDS MATTER

I am a member of the vociferous Baby Boomer generation, the youth of 50 years ago who protested and demonstrated for social justice and equality. We were anti-war, anti-nuclear proliferation, pro-education, pro-economic expansion, pro-choice, pro-democracy. We were focused, loyal, communal, and often steeped in our faith.

Now leadership positions are filled by Gen-Xers and Millennials, with Gen-Z's making their debut in the last elections. As older generations step back, and new energy and strategies arise, I wonder what I am to 'take on' now. This shift in positional power, newness of thought and experience leaves me breathless while attempting to coexist among the wonders of God's holiness.

Given today's social tenor, what do I say for the good of generations to come? Scripture from Ephesians 4:29 (NLT) offers: "Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them." What words and actions matter?

TO THESE I COMMIT:

PROFESS MY FAITH. Say why I believe in God. To quote a friend who shares my thoughts, "I choose to believe in God because it makes living easier; it's a framework for living, a compass to guide my decisions, and a source of hope when things seem hopeless."

OFFER A LISTENING EAR. Show up for others when things are good and not so good. Be a source of encouragement.

SEEK FORGIVENESS. Confess that I have made some BIG mistakes. But witness that God still loves me.

MODEL FAITHFUL LIVING. Lean on God's everlasting arms as I share my words and live out my thoughts.

PRAYER:

Thank you, Lord, for the power of words. May my words honor you and open others, with renewed determination, to strive towards justice and righteousness throughout life's journey. Amen.

PAULA BLAIR

**MONDAY,
MARCH 20, 2023**

DAY 27 :

FISHERMAN FISHING

“AS JESUS WALKED ALONGSIDE THE GALILEE SEA, HE SAW TWO BROTHERS, SIMON, WHO IS CALLED PETER, AND ANDREW, THROWING FISHING NETS INTO THE SEA, BECAUSE THEY WERE FISHERMEN. ‘COME, FOLLOW ME,’ HE SAID, ‘AND I’LL SHOW YOU HOW TO FISH FOR PEOPLE.’” MATTHEW 4:18-19 CEB

What if Jesus had seen these fishermen and said “Come, follow me, I will show you how to bowl for people?”

Peter and Andrew probably would have just ignored him. Whatever happened, the impact on the moment would have been lost. The call would have been lost because it did not address the talent of those He was calling. Jesus recognized and acknowledged their talents. He did not call them to be radically different people. He challenged them to rethink how they used their talents in this world.

I have had many conversations with people inside and outside of the church. “I do not fit in at church.” “I am too different.” That conversation — and the times when I felt the same way are on my mind constantly. Then, I remember this passage.


The call of God’s grace is in and on every heart. When Jesus calls us, it is a call to be ourselves. It’s a call to be the people we are made to be — people who direct their passions to bring about the Kingdom of God.

This Lent, I am taking on my call from God. I am going to see how God wants to use my passions for nerdy things to build relationships. I hope all of you will be thinking about what you love to do and how you can bring it to church so all can know they, like you, fit in here too.

REV. JONATHAN BROWN

ASSOCIATE PASTOR

DIRECTOR OF DISCIPLESHIP MINISTRIES



**TUESDAY,
MARCH 21, 2023**

DAY 28 :

CHRISTIAN CHEER IN TIMES OF SORROW

“THOSE WHO OFFER COMFORT TO THE SORROWING SHOULD DO SO WITH CHRISTIAN CHEER. DON’T JUST PRETEND THAT YOU LOVE OTHERS: REALLY LOVE THEM.” ROMANS 8B-9 TLB

Recently my 100-year-old great-aunt passed. She was an artist who had run an interior design business with her husband. She was devoted to the Northeast Pennsylvania parish where she was baptized, confirmed, married, and to which she sent gifts even after she moved away. Her funeral mass would take place there.

Other than my contact with the music director two days before the funeral, nine days passed with no outreach from the priest to my cousin, my aunt’s daughter. Even immediately prior to the mass, no words of comfort were offered to the family.

Instead, during the homily, the priest kept asking my cousin questions about her mother, not even having read her obituary. Leaving the gravesite, all he said was “goodbye.” That day, love didn’t come from that church, but from my cousin’s colleagues and one of my friends who drove for hours to be with us.


This experience deepened my appreciation for Foundry and the radical hospitality it abundantly showers on the grieving — lovingly housing the remains of the unhoused in the Columbarium, grace-filled witness to loved ones at memorial services, arranging a pall to cover my mother’s casket.

It’s how we live our mission to love God, love each other, and change the world — Christ living in and through us. It’s the love Joseph of Arimathea and the Marys had for Jesus at his death. Throughout Lent, I take on that radical encouragement and grace, offering light in darkness.

PRAYER:

Lord, even on my worst days, help me realize that my words and actions may be the light that offers cheer, hope, and promise for someone else.

DREW WILLIAMS



**WEDNESDAY,
MARCH 22, 2023**

DAY 29 :

NIGHTSHIFT

***“MARVIN...
HE WAS A FRIEND OF MINE
AND HE COULD SING HIS SONG
HIS HEART IN EVERY LINE”
— “NIGHTSHIFT” BY COMMODORES***

“Nightshift” is a song by the Commodores that celebrates the rich musical legacies of Marvin Gaye and Jackie Wilson in the afterlife.

As a kid growing up in the eighties, it was not possible to fully digest the significance of the tribute, but fast-forward 40 years and the sweet, yet powerful, soul of the piece continues to evoke much thought and emotion.

In the wake of yet more brutality and untimely deaths in our “great” nation, I believe the world still needs more voices to join the song in asking, “What’s going on?”

Today, the tribute also reminds me of my late father who loved to play the guitar and sing. While no Jimi Hendrix or Pavarotti, my Dad often loved to treat friends and family to a song or two, one of his favorites being the great hymn “All the way my Savior leads me.”

My Dad was also a “handy man type” who enjoyed repairing wheelchairs and walkers at the community center. Alas, over time Parkinson’s and cancer would freeze his hands and legs, but not his heart. In fact, adjusting to a knife-sharpening service, my Dad would continue to serve his neighbors a bit longer.

What a beautiful reminder to share whatever gifts we are granted, whether five loaves, two fish, one talent, or a song.

This year during Lent I will surely savor the familiar, classic celebration of two musical icons, while also remembering my Dad, his love of music and his legacy of service.

Gonna be some sweet sounds
Comin’ down on the nightshift
You found another home
I know you’re not alone
On the nightshift.

CHRIS HONG

THURSDAY,
MARCH 23, 2023

DAY 30

TAKING ON THE LETTER OF JAMES

“FAITH THAT DOESN’T LEAD US TO DO GOOD DEEDS IS ALL ALONE AND DEAD! SUPPOSE SOMEONE DISAGREES AND SAYS, ‘IT IS POSSIBLE TO HAVE FAITH WITHOUT DOING KIND DEEDS.’ I WOULD ANSWER, ‘PROVE THAT YOU HAVE FAITH WITHOUT DOING KIND DEEDS, AND I WILL PROVE THAT I HAVE FAITH BY DOING THEM.’” JAMES 2:17-18 CEV

At Rutgers University, the Lutheran chaplain in the early 1980s who led a Bible study once mentioned that Martin Luther complained, “James is an epistle of straw.” The chaplain didn’t seem to agree with that conclusion, noting Martin Luther had experienced a lot of spiritual abuse from the church.


Early in Luther’s life, his walk with Jesus seemed to be motivated more by fear and dread than faith until he learned to trust God. After that, Luther seemed to go in the opposite direction.

About a decade later, I moved to the Boston area. The pastor of the Harvard Epworth United Methodist Church in Cambridge, Massachusetts, had spent his entire career at that church. He first arrived as a graduate student in the early 1960s to study under Paul Tillich and did not leave until he retired. I don’t remember discussing the “faith or works debate” much with him, but he did point out that he found the letter of James very useful and practical. That point has stayed with me to this day.

I encourage you to spend this day with James’ letter. It is less than five pages, a quick read, and worth taking on, especially my favorite passages included here.

“My friends, don’t say cruel things about others! If you do, or if you condemn others, you are condemning God’s Law.” James 4:11 CEV

CHUCK KLUPEFEL



**FRIDAY,
MARCH 24, 2023**

DAY 31

HELPING A STRANGER IN NEED

***“YOU MUST LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF;
I AM THE LORD.” LEVITICUS 19:18 CEB***

Last year I worked in Sierra Leone, West Africa as a consultant for a malaria control program. Inexpensive transportation in Sierra Leone includes the poda-poda, a minibus; the keke, a commercial tricycle; and the Okada, a motorbike taxi. The Okada is popular because it is fast and cheap, but they have been in many traffic accidents, causing loss of limb and death to drivers and passengers.

My colleague Dave was driving his jeep in the countryside with his parents who were visiting for the first time. Many of the roads outside of the main capital, Freetown, are poorly maintained. While driving, he saw an Okada, with a female passenger, ride over a pothole in the road and flip.

All he could see were mangled legs intertwined with the motorbike. Dave stopped to help. The driver was bleeding profusely and the passenger had a crushed leg. The motorbike was unrideable. The nearest hospital was many miles away. Dave chose to drive the injured to the hospital but had to leave his parents to wait on the road. His parents did not complain; they were just as concerned for the injured as Dave was.

Dave put the injured before his parents. They were on an isolated, undeveloped road, unfamiliar with the country and its people, left by themselves while their son assisted two strangers!

How many of us would have done that? We who would have helped would certainly be filled with anxiety for our parents, their safety and comfort. But Dave felt called to take a giant step forward by helping others in dire need.

Let us go and do likewise!

CELESTE CARR

**SATURDAY,
MARCH 25, 2023**

DAY 32 :

GOD IS TAKING A CHANCE ON YOU AND ME

***“THOSE WHO OFFER COMFORT TO THE SORROWING SHOULD DO SO WITH
CHRISTIAN CHEER. DON’T JUST PRETEND THAT YOU LOVE OTHERS: REALLY
LOVE THEM.” ROMANS 8B-9 TLB***

A November 2022 fact-finding mission took a group of us to visit the Holy Land. In addition to the holy sites, we also saw the walls, refugee camps, check points and the armed soldiers. Palestine is an occupied territory that exists under apartheid conditions.

We visited Rawdat el Zahour (rawdath.org), a primary school for Palestinian children, Christians, and Muslims, in East Jerusalem. Their joy of learning reminded me of the work we did with Foundry and Project Transformation in the summer of 2022. It was so moving to hear the children sing, “We Shall Overcome.” We gave them a thank-you card with a picture of children from Project Transformation and a description of the program.

What is God calling us, individually and collectively as the Foundry community, to do about education of children in DC and Palestine?

Meeting with an Israeli and a Palestinian father of the Parents Circle, we heard bereaved fathers describe in graphic detail how their children had died in the conflict (theparentscircle.com). Their agonizing losses led them to work together to end the bloodshed.


What is God calling us Foundry to do about violent deaths in DC and Palestine?

Aida, a Palestinian refugee camp is located north of the historic center of Bethlehem in the central West Bank, State of Palestine. Its population is approximately 6,000 persons with about 2/3 of them under the age of 20. They are all beautiful children experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder because of forced displacement.

What is God calling us Foundry, you, and me, to do about housing and refugee crises in DC and Palestine?

The answer for me now is, embrace these communities, and “do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with our God.” Micah 6:8

CATHERINE HARGROVE



**SUNDAY,
MARCH 26, 2023**

DAY 33 :

MEDIA FASTING

The great pandemic of Covid-19 has left us with a 6.75 million death toll worldwide. Other visible tolls include a 25% increase in domestic violence and a 30% increase in drug overdoses. Beneath the surface of the pandemic lies another insidious toll, media addiction.

Since Covid, there has been a 50% increase in time spent on Facebook and an overall global rise in social media addiction. I suspect other forms of media addiction are also on the rise. A National Library of Medicine study from April 2022 mentions that this addiction undermines psychological well-being and social skills. The study also states that media addiction fosters an inability to regulate attention, insomnia, stress, compulsive behavior, separation anxiety, and depression. Ouch!


During Covid, I have struggled with this addiction. I have recognized many of the symptoms listed above. Media addiction has adversely affected my connections with friends, work, and the church. As we all return to normalcy from Covid, I strive to reclaim my community.

For Lent 2023, media fasting will be my mantra. While I reduce my media consumption, I'm taking on these plans:

- Physical outreach to at least three friends a week. "How about a hike or coffee with my bestie?"
- Twenty minutes of meditation each day.
- More intentional facetime and engagement in church.

Consider these ideas a call to action if media consumption has impacted your connections. Your community is worth it and YOU are worth it too!

WIL RUMBLE



**MONDAY,
MARCH 27, 2023**

DAY 34 :

JOY AS DISCOVERY

This devotional theme of taking on something reminds me of the age-old “If you had one wish, what would you ask for?” When I was young, that would be a cat. When Diane and I were 30-something, both of us put two cobalt glass birds in the far-right window which was feng shui for my wish to find a boyfriend.

Now, having been in a Bible Study reading group for five years, my wish is to help a young person read better and discover the joy of stories.

It all started in Summit Library looking for a book where the animals don’t talk and humans were the main characters. The librarian was probably amused and offered me a job shelving books which I happily took on. In high school, I would skip the study hall scene and go off campus to the public library and find quiet.


This past summer, I volunteered with other Foundry folks to help kids learn to read. The boys were already good readers, but the graphic novels they favored were new for me. I took some time to focus on the drawings and sound effects which was fun.

A few years back I practiced with a boy at Foundry’s summer reading camp and had a bigger challenge of calming him down to pay attention, not running or hiding. I brought two books with Black characters and the seven-year-old surprised me. Once the words settled him, he read well, but then we ran out of time.

PRAYER:

Lord, please give me the opportunity to fulfill my wish to light up words for a young person so they can discover new things and grow.

JEANETTE BARKER



**TUESDAY,
MARCH 28, 2023**

DAY 35

CLAIMING JOY

It has recently occurred to me that, overall, I have not lived life as a particularly joyful person. I have certainly known times of great happiness. However, a somewhat lonely childhood, my mother's long illness, and awareness of my parents' fears and past sadness often hampered my ability to experience exuberance or deep joy.

But it is joy that I believe I am both called and blessed to experience, notwithstanding any "doom and gloom" in my personal circumstances, even in the face of multiple pandemics, entrenched injustice, and institutional and political turmoil in the world.

These words from a Renaissance author resonate:

"There is nothing I can give you which you have not. But there is much, very much, that, while I cannot give it, you can take.

No heaven can come to us unless our hearts find rest in it today. Take heaven!

No peace lies in the future which is not hidden in this present little instant. Take peace!

The gloom of our world is but a shadow. Behind it, yet within our reach is joy. . . Life is so full of meaning and purpose, so full of beauty beneath its covering, that you will find earth but cloaks your heaven.


Courage, then to claim it; that is all! But courage you have, and the knowledge that we are pilgrims together, wending through unknown country home."

*A Letter to the Most Illustrious the Contessina Allagia Dela Aldobrandeschi
Attributed to Fra Giovanni Giocondo.*

I believe it is such joy that can sustain our living and striving for justice. As contemporary hymn librettist, Shirley Erena Murray, wrote "God will delight when we are creators of compassion and peace, . . . justice and joy!"

This Lent, I choose to take on joy!

BARBARA MARVIN



**WEDNESDAY,
MARCH 29, 2023**

DAY 36 :

I WILL CULTIVATE THE FATHER'S GARDEN

William Barry, a Jesuit priest, urges people to “cultivate the Father’s garden!”

Jesus said, “I must be about my Father’s business” Luke 2:49. His business is to make the world [his garden] a better place.

Ella Cleveland, my wife, says, “Pull out a weed; plant a flower!”

These words came to mind after I saw the movie “Babel”, starring Brad Pitt. That movie features problems in three communities: a village in Morocco, a village in Mexico, and rich people in Tokyo. Bad behaviors lead to bigger problems. I had ideas to help them. I had sympathy for the people who suffered their tragedies.

I found myself thinking how I could improve the situations in the villages in Morocco and Mexico, and among the rich Tokyoians.


But then I recalled the advice of my spiritual director: Love first the ones closest to you — your spouse, for example. Love her. She is your neighbor. Before getting excited about imaginary people encountered faraway by Brad Pitt, love the one you’re with.

I already have problems and tasks to do: I must exercise, eat less, and eat carrots and kale rather than cake. Watch less television, spend less time scrolling through Facebook. I have court deadlines; a chapter in a book is due on March 1; clients are demanding action on their cases.

What, I should do more?

Cultivate the Father’s garden. Be about the Father’s business. Plant a flower. I pray that God will give me the grace to want to do these things, and that He will give me the power to actually do them.

DAVE CLEVELAND



**THURSDAY,
MARCH 30, 2023**

DAY 37 :

PROVIDING ENCOURAGEMENT

I have seen parents' moods brighten when they are told they are doing a good job raising their kids, or when experienced parents of older children or adults supportively reassure them about a behavior that they worry about.

I think about the parenting sessions my wife, Lynn, and I did for several years at Foundry when we would say in a supportive way, "You're worried about that? Let us tell you about the experiences we know first-hand from our family and friends." Like, the child who just couldn't be stopped from running across the street and other dangerous behaviors who is now married, a father, and a research fellow at NIH.

It's not easy for young parents to avoid projecting their toddlers' current behaviors into the future, and maybe even being a bit catastrophic about how that trait is going to sabotage the child's success in life. It's not easy because they're tired, feel responsible, and have great hopes for their children. It's understandable. They need a counterbalance.

Today's nuclear family is pretty small. We all know that most young parents today don't have their parents or other family nearby for respite, advice, and other support.

Fortunately, we have several young parents in our lives and spend as much time with their families as possible. It's a tonic for us and fits research findings about the value for seniors in spending time with young families. Is there anything better than cooking a four-year-old his favorite breakfast, and watching Mom and Dad relax a little bit?

I want to take on building relationships with young Foundry families. Spending time with our families is fun and an opportunity to show parents we love them and they can relax a bit because their family is doing just fine.

DOUG SMARTE

**FRIDAY,
MARCH 31, 2023**

DAY 38 :

LISTENING THIS LENT

Lord,
What are you calling me to do?
And I heard these words: Listen, Love, Write
That's right: Listen, Love, Write
Humbly with your God: Listen, Love, Write
Write about the fear...ever so near.
Write about the struggle...the fight.
Put your ego aside
Open your heart wide
Write about how my perfect love scares you so
And other profound curiosities people want to know
The grace you don't think you deserve
The mercy you are too afraid to accept

The loneliness, the longstanding loneliness
Write about these things. Humbly, truthfully
Remember you can always walk through my open door.
Fear and shame need not keep you trapped forever more.

SUZIE COLBERT



**SATURDAY,
APRIL 1, 2023**

DAY 39

INTERLOCKING

“EVENTUALLY, EVERYTHING CONNECTS.”

CHARLES EAMES, GROUNDBREAKING AMERICAN DESIGNER

I had a gut feeling that, when my roommate Amy met my colleague Ken, they would click. I had listened intently to each of their love life stories. Connecting them was an honest expression of my fondness for two unattached friends I felt would enjoy one another’s company. A year later I was maid of honor at their wedding. I was present again when death parted them 40 years later.

Connecting people with each other, and with ideas and opportunities, has always been an intuitive, joy-filled act for me. It’s an “aha” moment, like discovering an interlocking piece that completes a confounding puzzle. It comes from listening to and absorbing individual needs and linking them with something I know in my heart is right — another person, a career opportunity, a fitting resource, a harmonious idea, some care-giving words.

Yet, because I see possible connections so easily, I have often stopped myself from making them. I worry that maybe I’m trivializing situations. Or, perhaps I am breaching the fine line between being helpful and meddlesome.


I have had to accept that my intuition only works when I allow myself to trust and follow the Voice that speaks within. Doing so requires quieting life’s overwhelming noise and distracting doubts. It also means choosing this one thing I can do — meaningfully and beneficially — and letting go of the many other things I think I should do.

For Lent and beyond, I will make intentional connections every way I can, as acts of faith, grace, and love.

PRAYER:

Guide my connections, Lord, to nurture those around me while nourishing my soul. Help me discern what else I can take on and when, remembering that “no” and “not now” are OK too.

JOANNE STELLER



**PALM SUNDAY,
APRIL 2, 2023**

DAY 40

GIFTED

***“AND WHAT DOES THE LORD REQUIRE OF YOU? TO ACT JUSTLY AND LOVE
MERCY AND TO WALK HUMBLY WITH YOUR GOD.” MICAH 6:8 NIV***

The two scripture passages suggested as a springboard for our reflection this Lent have powerful messages for me. Micah reminds me that my relationship with God is covenantal.

I am infinitely loved and abundantly blessed by God, and I need to live in a relationship of accountability for my participation in my Creator’s work in our world.

The second passage, Romans 12:6, reminds me that I have been gifted by God. I have gifts to share. And here is the crunch!

Looking over my life, I have struggled with self-limitation — not good enough, not skilled enough, too old. I confess that I have missed many an opportunity to serve God along the way.


These passages of scripture are both a reminder and an invitation to pause and pray for clarity on our gifts. As I prepared to write this reflection, I realized that I have several gifts that I can share. I have the gifts of encouragement, compassion, and teaching.

No gift is too small. The story of the loaves and fishes helps me trust that God multiplies what I offer, and uses it for the good of my community.

So, what am I taking on for Lent? I am taking on trust as a discipline. I have been called to leadership in the Stephen Ministry at Foundry. I am praying for discernment as I put one foot in front of the other. I need to trust that my faithfulness will be enough. God will multiply.

I invite you to risk overcoming whatever resistance you may feel, and use your gifts boldly on your own journey with your God.

JOSIANE BLACKMAN



**MONDAY,
APRIL 3, 2023**

DAY 41

OUR SELVES, WONDERFULLY MADE

"I PRAISE YOU BECAUSE I AM FEARFULLY AND WONDERFULLY MADE; YOUR WORKS ARE WONDERFUL, I KNOW THAT FULL WELL." PSALM 139:14 NIV

As creations of our Lord, we were created with exactly what we need to make our way through the world in the way He intends for us. Our individual strengths, weaknesses, gifts, characteristics, abilities, preferences, interests, and features are all on purpose and by design.

So often we try to shift and mold ourselves to meet others' standards or try to be something we believe we "should" be. We try to minimize parts of ourselves and make other parts more prominent. We strive to be the "best versions of ourselves" as if God won't or can't use us just as we are in this moment.

As we connect more with our God and what He wants for us, we grow and change, but often in ways that differ from how our world might encourage. In our relationship with Christ, we can find how we were meant to be strong, gifted, and able, and stop striving in areas that were never meant for us.

We don't need to be perfect in every single aspect of being; perfection simply is not available to us. We can, however, lean into our strengths, and allow God to fill in the gaps. We are, after all, fearfully and wonderfully made.

We were never meant to be everything to everyone in this world; we can only be what we are.

What are your strengths and weaknesses? What are you called to do, and what can you release? Where can you allow for support or provision as you take on imperfection and the identity with which you were created?

JAMIE M. HUNT

**TUESDAY,
APRIL 4, 2023**

DAY 42 :

SERVE THEE TO THE END

***“THE LORD CAME AND STOOD THERE, CALLING AS AT THE OTHER TIMES,
SAMUEL! SAMUEL! THEN SAMUEL SAID, ‘SPEAK, FOR YOUR SERVANT IS
LISTENING’.” 1 SAMUEL 3:10 NIV***

“What will I do, not what will I give up.” I never thought of Lent as a time to give up anything. My grandmother’s ritual was fasting, only drinking juices in the evenings.

I thought that was too drastic, so I ignored taking Lent seriously. In adulthood I tried being diligent with my prayer life or with doing charitable work, but I never lasted through Lent.

I excused my failures by focusing on the other ministries with which I was already involved. But these missions were all assigned to me. I never chose them voluntarily.

Unlike Samuel, I never heard God’s voice calling. I am naturally a helper bee, who comes quietly to give a hand and without realizing it becomes central to the entire project. I complain to God, but in the silence, I hear his answer, “You can do it, and you have help; ME.”

In my youth I was confirmed into full membership of my hometown church. My class chose the hymn “Oh Jesus I have promised to serve Thee to the end.” These words have stayed with me no matter how far I have strayed from the church.

As my faith has grown, I have been led to know that even without literally hearing God’s voice it is his Spirit that created me and which is active within me. Every gift and talent I offer to his world is his doing, and however I am led to use them for the benefit of another is a joyous opportunity, including during Lent, to take on spreading his love.

FAY ALLEN

**WEDNESDAY,
APRIL 5, 2023**

DAY 43

IF I CAN HELP SOMEBODY

To say that our collective days in this age are challenging is understatement. Hate seems to have infected much of the world. Violence is either erupting somewhere or simmering under the surface. Terror and death are all too commonplace.

Today's world is a much smaller place than in the past, and yet the evils and injustices seem much larger, beyond grasp, and impervious to our efforts to confront evil, alleviate suffering, and heal the increasingly connected communities of this world.

When I consider what we are called to take on in this season, I think of Foundry's long history of collective faith and action to love one another and transform the world. Many in our Foundry family have devoted years to a beloved community.

As we consider additional areas of focus, I am thankful for the guidance we have in Micah 6:8, "what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with your God." (NRSV) These are challenging yet comforting words.

But I still seek active participation in the creation and defense of the work of God's people. And that's when I turn to the song, "If I Can Help Somebody," by Alma Androzso:

"If I can help somebody as I pass along,
If I can cheer somebody with a word or song,
If I can show somebody he is trav'ling wrong,
Then my living shall not be in vain.
If I can do my duty as a Christian ought,
If I can bring back beauty to a world up-wrought,
If I can spread love's message that the Master taught,
Then my living shall not be in vain."

May it be so.

GAREY EAKES

**MAUNDY
THURSDAY**

THURSDAY, APRIL 6, 2023

A CHALLENGING INTERRUPTION, THEN HOPE

On February 15, 2017 — just two months after losing my father — I was diagnosed with cancer.

I had no symptoms, only an abnormality on a routine test for my annual physical. The initial diagnosis was stage four, and all of the research I did showed a life expectancy of three to five years. I was overwhelmed emotionally, and for several agonizing weeks, I saw no reason for hope.

I don't remember what triggered it, but out of the blue I had this overwhelming feeling that I needed to take my faith seriously. In the past it had always been about doing, and not feeling.

And then everything changed. After the initial biopsy, my diagnosis changed from stage four kidney and bladder cancer to stage one kidney cancer, with the significant tumors in the bladder being benign.

My initial surgeon and I had clashed, and, through circumstances I still cannot comprehend, I ended up a patient at NIH with an amazing team of caregivers.

Next week, on April 13, I will be cancer-free for six years, and although I now only have one kidney, I have no significant health impacts as a result.

When I was growing up, we had three plain wooden plaques above our kitchen table, one each for the words faith, hope, and love.

I strive to incorporate these three words, along with a fourth — gratitude — in my daily life practice. Each seems to support the other in unique ways on the different experiences of my life journey.

Six years ago I started the Lenten season with little hope.

My surgery was on Maundy Thursday, and I ended that Lenten season full of hope, with the help of a lot of love from many who supported me during that challenging time.

ANDREW (ANDY) LEE

**GOOD
FRIDAY**

FRIDAY, APRIL 7, 2023

BELIEVING

“THEREFORE I TELL YOU, WHATEVER YOU ASK FOR IN PRAYER, BELIEVE THAT YOU HAVE RECEIVED IT AND IT WILL BE YOURS.” MARK 11:24 NIV

Hello — what is Jesus talking about in Mark 11:24? All those prayers I’ve prayed AND I BELIEVED!

But looking around I see so much suffering, everywhere it seems. Just what has believing gotten me?

Jesus gives this very personal assurance that believing will get us something. Believing, perhaps, that God is at work in the world? Believing that God is indeed doing something new in the lives of those who are suffering?

This is what we are told — IF we ask, believing, THEN it will be granted.

I shared this verse with a fellow mom. Can we step into a space of believing even while we see our children suffer? It is a tough place to enter into, but we have no choice — we must ask, believing.

We must also picture a world free of suffering and use our faith and prayers and works to bring this world alive among us.

The poor we will always have with us, Jesus also said. The news will always feature negative stories. People will continue to suffer. And we will continue to believe.

Praying, we will believe, and the power of God will be alive in us to build that world where our prayers become reality. This is Foundry’s sweet spot, a faith so deep that belief lives on.

PRAYER:

Be with us on this journey of believing, dear God. Let us ask, believing, that your spirit live and breathe and dwell among us.

CAMILLA TAFT HICKS

**HOLY
SATURDAY**

APRIL 8, 2023

HOPE OVER FEAR

***“BE JOYFUL IN HOPE, PATIENT IN AFFLICTION, FAITHFUL IN PRAYER.”
ROMANS 12:12 NIV***

OK. It's happened. I've now reached the age where the subject of aches, pains, and doctor visits creep into more conversations. And the age when some new, uncomfortable health issue makes me wonder "How much worse will this get?"

Deciding whether I feel up to doing something that requires time, energy, and going somewhere is a bigger deal than it used to be.

I often think of the older folks in my life when I was young. There were grandparents, great aunts and uncles who each had a constellation of ailments, but they all still got dressed up and went to church every Sunday, and they took trips. And they planned where they would go next year.

When my grandmother moved to Asbury Methodist Village her next-door neighbor was a woman in her late 70s who still had lots of energy and enthusiasm. She loved to travel, including going on cruises. When the residents found out she and a 90-year-old man at Asbury were going to get married, the popular wisdom was "He'll never keep up with her. It's going to kill him." Of course he died eventually, but first he happily went on several cruises.

They chose living over fear of dying — hope over fear.

In Bob Goff's book of devotions, "Live in Grace: Walk in Love," he writes, "... fear tries to shrivel our hearts and shrink us down. Hope ... swells our hearts and makes us expand. Hope restores the life fear tries to steal."

Can I choose to take on love and hope more than fear?

Can I focus on what I can still do, rather than what I can no longer do?

I intend to try.

LYNN SMARTE

EASTER SUNDAY

SUNDAY, APRIL 9, 2023

WE WAIT

"I CONSIDER THAT THE SUFFERINGS OF THIS PRESENT TIME ARE NOT WORTH COMPARING WITH THE GLORY ABOUT TO BE REVEALED TO US. FOR THE CREATION WAITS WITH EAGER LONGING FOR THE REVEALING OF THE CHILDREN OF GOD, FOR THE CREATION WAS SUBJECTED TO FUTILITY, NOT OF ITS OWN WILL, BUT BY THE WILL OF THE ONE WHO SUBJECTED IT, IN HOPE THAT THE CREATION ITSELF WILL BE SET FREE FROM ITS ENSLAVEMENT TO DECAY AND WILL OBTAIN THE FREEDOM OF THE GLORY OF THE CHILDREN OF GOD. WE KNOW THAT THE WHOLE CREATION HAS BEEN GROANING TOGETHER AS IT SUFFERS TOGETHER THE PAINS OF LABOR, AND NOT ONLY THE CREATION, BUT WE OURSELVES, WHO HAVE THE FIRST FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT, GROAN INWARDLY WHILE WE WAIT FOR ADOPTION, THE REDEMPTION OF OUR BODIES. FOR IN HOPE WE WERE SAVED. NOW HOPE THAT IS SEEN IS NOT HOPE, FOR WHO HOPES FOR WHAT ONE ALREADY SEES? BUT IF WE HOPE FOR WHAT WE DO NOT SEE, WE WAIT FOR IT WITH PATIENCE." ROMANS 8:18-25 NRSVUE

We forget

that all of Creation bears with us
in our waiting and our longing,
our quiet watch for hope.

All of Creation cries with us.
Together we thirst for want of the Spirit;
together we hunger for bread of new life.

All of Creation holds vigil till dawn;
We long for God's grace
and we listen for love.

All of Creation remembers God's glory;
the birds in their singing
bring hope for us all.

LYNNE FETTER



**EASTER
MONDAY**

APRIL 10, 2023

A TIME FOR ACTION

***“YOU SEE THAT A PERSON IS CONSIDERED RIGHTEOUS BY WHAT THEY DO AND
NOT BY FAITH ALONE.” JAMES 2:24 NIV***

I desire to be righteous.

I seek to be just, compassionate, and merciful.

I love God and my neighbors. And I constantly think of ways by which we can all live in peace and harmony.

But, I've remained in the bubble of comfort that working hard for the Man has provided.

Or, in other words, I talk a good game but don't act beyond my workplace, my immediate family, and good friends.

I feel that God has called me this Lent to break out of my comfort zone — to take concrete and public steps to address the economic and racial disparity in the United States that continues to benefit only the rich.

Now, as James 2 teaches, I must follow these words with action.

And, through the love and grace of God, I pray I will.

Are you with me?

RICH DODGE



HOPE

*“NOW FAITH IS CONFIDENCE IN WHAT WE HOPE FOR AND ASSURANCE ABOUT
WHAT WE DO NOT SEE.” HEBREWS 11:1 NIV*

Look deep into nature, and then you will
understand everything better.

ALBERT EINSTEIN

PRAYER:

Grant us, Lord, the grace to see beauty in the world. May we channel St.
Francis of Assisi in showing care for creation. Amen.

TA-CHEN WU



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