



Pathways
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH

**A Lenten Study Programme
February - March 2026**

**OUR 40 DAYS
Quest for Meaning**

A Daily Study Guide

Welcome to this study! This resource for Lent, helps us all reflect on our journey with God. There is one reflection for each day and we hope that you will be able to join in a small group each week with others on the journey. May God be with you!

Day 1 – 18 February

It all starts with God

Bible Reading: Colossians 1: 16 (Msg)

For everything, absolutely everything, above and below, visible and invisible, got started in him and finds its purpose in him.

How do you discover the purpose you were created for?

The purpose of your life is far greater than your own personal fulfilment, your peace of mind, or even your happiness. It's far greater than your family, your career, or even your wildest dreams and ambitions.

Focussing on ourselves will never reveal our life's purpose. We need to begin with the premise that God our creator has designed and made us in love. In God we find our origins, our identity, our meaning, our purpose, our significance and our destiny. Rick Warren, The Purpose Driven Life

The first question in the shorter catechism is "What is the chief aim of man?" The answer... "The chief aim of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever." Or in updated language... "The deepest satisfaction for human contentment lies in glorifying God and enjoying God always."

It is as we become aware of who God is, realise what God has done and participate in what God is doing that our deep needs are met and life is given purpose and meaning and great joy.

Point to Ponder: Without God, life makes no sense.

Question: In spite of all the worldly pressure around me, how can I be aware that life is really about living for God, not myself?

Day 2 – 19 February

You are unique and precious to God

Bible Readings: Isaiah 43: 1 (RSV)

God says, "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you. I have called you by name, you are precious and honoured in my sight and I love you. "

Reflection on the Prodigal Son

Remind me Lord, that I am created in your image.

That I was meant, am meant,
to live and walk with you.

That in your purpose and love,
I can stand straight and whole.

That in living in the life
your son has bought and given me,
I can return to what I truly am.
Your child. Real and fulfilled.

Then in the joy of knowing that's for me,
I walk in the world refreshed.
My feet still firmly planted on the ground,
but moving with new grace and dignity.
No Strange Land....
Eddie Askew

What you are is God's gift to you.
What you become is your gift to God.

Anon

Point to Ponder: I know that God created me in God's image and loves and honours me.

Question: What areas of my personality, background and physical appearance do I delight in as gifts of God and what do I struggle with?

Day 3 – 20 February

What am I most passionate about?

Bible Readings: Luke 12: 41-42 (NRSV)

Jesus said: "Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken from her."

Matthew 6: 21 (RSV)

Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Called to Become

You are called to become
a perfect creation.
No one is called to become
who you are called to be.

It does not matter
how short or tall
or thickset or slow
you may be.
It does not matter
whether you sparkle with life
or are as silent as a still pool,
whether you sing your song aloud
or weep alone in darkness.

It does not matter
whether you feel loved and admired
or unloved and alone.
For you are called
to become a perfect creation.
No-one's shadow
should cloud your becoming.
No one's light should dispel your spark.
Prayers of a Lay Woman
Edwina Gatley

Point to ponder: Nothing matters more than knowing God's purposes for your life, and nothing can compensate for not knowing them.

Questions: What would my family and friends say is the driving force of my life? What do I want it to be?

Day 4 – 21 February

Life is a journey in trust

Bible Readings: John 14: 5-6 (RSV)

Thomas said, "Lord we do not know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" Jesus replied "I am the way and the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father but by me."

Psalm 23: 2-3

He leads me by still water, he restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.

A single continuing Quest.

"This is to give expression, embodiment to the overmastering yet elusive conviction of the THOU at the heart of everything. It is the quest for the form of the "personal" as the ultimate reality in life, as the deepest truth about one's relationships and commitments. Life is response - and hence responsibility - to something that encounters one, as it seems, with the claim of a THOU.

This is the mystery that lies at its heart."

JAT Robinson *Exploration into God*

We shall not cease from exploring and the end of all our exploring, will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time.

Little Gidding TS Eliot

My Lord God
I have no idea where I am going
I do not see the road ahead of me.

I cannot know for certain where it will end.

Nor do I really know myself,
and the fact that I think I am following your will
does not mean that I am actually doing so.

But I believe that the desire to please you
does in fact please you.

And I hope that I have that desire
in all that I am doing.

I hope that I will never do anything
apart from that desire.

And I know that if I do this
you will lead me by the right road
though I may know nothing about it.

Therefore, will I trust you always
though I may seem to be lost
and in the shadow of death.

I will not fear, for you are ever with me,
and will never leave me to face my perils alone.

Thoughts in Solitude

Thomas Merton

Point to ponder: Character is both developed and revealed by challenges and much of life is a challenge.

Questions: What are the greatest matters God has entrusted to me on my journey?
When has my journey challenged me?

Day 5 – 22 February

Each day is a gift of God in the scheme of eternity

Bible Readings: Matthew 10: 29-30 (NRSV)

Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. And even the hairs on your head are all counted.

Psalm 139: 9-10 (RSV)

If I take the wings of the morning and settle at the farthest limits of the sea, even there your hand shall guide me and your right hand shall hold me fast.

A prayer from Iona says, "In the vastness of the universe and in the forgotten corners of our hearts, you are God and we bless you."

It is easy to fall into a view of God that is either/or - either almighty creator or our personal friend and helper.

But the amazing thing about our God is the both/and. The One who is the source of all that is and will be is also the intimate companion of our life's journey.

I will remember...

Morning has broken; long shadows are receding;
time for today's resolution:

With the Spirit's help, I will remember
that the toughest, most resilient and tenacious,
most stubborn and unyielding fact that I will encounter this day
is the eternal and all-embracing love of God.

Gerhard E Frost

Point to ponder: I matter to God and can make a difference for God.

Question: What in my life is precious enough for all eternity?

Day 6 – 23 February

Seeing our world through God's eyes

Bible Reading: 1 Corinthians 13: 12-13

For now, we see in a mirror dimly, but then we shall see face to face. Now I know only in part, even as I have been fully known. And now faith hope and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

When we see the world from a human point of view, it is all too easy to see shabbiness, loneliness and despair. It seems impossible to us that God might delight in us and our world. But if we choose to see the world through Spirit-filled eyes of love we can always catch glimpses of beauty, truth and compassion in the midst of the pain. Is it our purpose to enlighten the heart with the sunshine of God's presence?

Seeing

Dear God, I need to see myself as you see me.
My own vision is fragmented.
I try to divide up my life
and reject those parts of me
I consider to be weak.
I waste time and energy
in the battle of self against self.
And Lord, I always end up the loser.

Dear God,
Help me to see myself
as you see me.

I forget that you made me just as I am
and that you delight in your creation.
You do not ask me to be strong;
you simply ask me to be yours.
You do not expect me to reject my weakness,
merely to surrender it to your healing touch.

Dear God,
When I see myself
as you see me,
then I will understand
that this frail, tender, fearful, aching, singing, half-empty, shining, shadowed person
is a whole being made especially by you for your love.
Aotearoa Psalms Joy Cowley

Point to Ponder: God made me as I am and delights in me.

Question: When you look with the eyes of God do you see what is wrong with the world or what is full of beauty and truth?

Day 7 – 24 February

Who or what do I live for?

Bible Readings: Luke 18: 28-29 (NRSV)

Peter said: "Lord we have left our homes and followed you." Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the Kingdom of God, who will not get back very much more in this age, and in the age to come, eternal life."

Romans 11:36 (RSV)

For from him and through him and to him are all things.

To God be the Glory forever.

This prayer from John Wesley is part of the annual Covenant Service of the Methodist Church, spoken as a commitment to live in obedience to God.

Methodist Covenant Prayer

I am no longer my own, but yours.

Put me to what you will,

rank me with whom you will

put me to doing, put me to suffering;

let me be employed for you or laid aside for you;

exalted for you or brought low for you;

let me be full, let me be empty;

let me have all things, let me have nothing;

I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things

to your pleasure and disposal.

And now glorious and blessed God,
Father Son and Holy Spirit,
you are mine and I am yours,
to the glory and praise of your name.

Point to ponder: Everything comes from God alone, lives by God's power and is for God's glory.

Question: Where in my daily routine can I become more aware of God's Glory?

PURPOSE 1

You were planned for god's pleasure

Day 8 – 25 February

Planned for God's pleasure

Bible Readings: Revelation 4: 11 (NLT)

You created everything, and it is for your pleasure that they exist and were created."

Psalm 149: 4a (TEV)

The Lord takes pleasure in his people.

You were planned for God's pleasure.

The moment you were born into the world, God was there as an unseen witness, smiling at your birth. God wanted you alive, and your arrival gave great pleasure. God did not need to create you, but chose to create you for God's own enjoyment. You exist for God's benefit, glory, purpose and delight.

Bringing enjoyment to God, living for his pleasure, is the first purpose of your life. When you fully understand this truth, you will never again have a problem with feeling insignificant. It proves your worth. If you are that important to God, who considers you valuable enough to keep with him for eternity, what greater significance could you have? You are a child of God, and you bring pleasure to God like nothing else he has ever created.

Bringing pleasure to God is called "worship". Worship is more than church services. Worship is a lifestyle. Anything we do can bring pleasure to God if we have Jesus in it.

"We give thanks for singers.

All types of singers.

Popular, concert singers and tuneless
singers in the bath.
Whistlers, hummers and those who sing
while they work.
Singers of lullabies; singers of nonsense
and small scraps of melody.
Singers on branches and rooftops.
Morning yodellers and evening warblers.
Singers in seedy nightclubs, singers in the street;
Singers in cathedrals, school halls,
grandstands, backyards, paddocks,
bedrooms, corridors, stairwells and
places of echo and resonance.
We give praise to all those who give some
small voice
To the everyday joy of the soul.
Amen."

Leunig

Point to Ponder: I was planned for God's pleasure

Question: How would you see worship as a lifestyle?
What would you do that you do not do now?

Day 9 – 26 February

What makes God smile?

Bible Readings: Numbers 6: 25 (NLT)

May the Lord smile on you...

Psalm 119: 135 (Msg)

Smile on me, your servant; teach me the right way to live.

"The smile of God is the goal of your life"

God smiles when we love him supremely.

He wants a relationship with us

God smiles when we trust him completely.

Even when it doesn't make sense

we can expect him to keep his promises.

God smiles when we obey him wholeheartedly.

Jesus said: If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

God smiles when we praise and thank him continually.

When we give God enjoyment it increases our joy.

God smiles when we use our abilities.

We only bring him enjoyment by being ourselves,
not hiding our abilities or trying to be someone else.

Did God laugh?

"Original laughter,
like Sarah at the joy of discovering His creation?
His laughter a heartfelt assent to the absurd contradiction
of our lives and His too.

I laugh still
when the breath of God's presence
seems real to me.
It is a sombre awesome delight
needing no power
no rightness
no above,
no below
only delight."
Boyd Glassey

Point to Ponder: God smiles when I trust him.

Question: Since God knows what is best, in what areas of my life do I need to trust him most?

Day 10 – 27 February

The heart of worship

Bible Reading: Romans 6: 13 (TEV)

Give yourselves to God... surrender your whole being to him to be used for righteous purposes.

True worship – bringing God pleasure – happens when you give yourself completely to God.
This involves trusting God, admitting our limitations and using our own unique personality.

"The more we let God take us over, the more truly ourselves we become – because he made us.
He invented all the different people that you and I were intended to be.... It is when I turn to Christ, when I give up myself to his personality, that I first begin to have a real personality of my own."

C.S. Lewis

Think not, when you love, that God is in your heart;
Think rather that you are in the heart of God.
Meister Eckhart

Point to Ponder: The heart of worship is trust.

Question: What area of my life am I holding back from God?

Day 11 – 28 February

Becoming best friends with God

Bible Readings: Romans 5: 10 (GN)

We were God's enemies, but he made us his friends through the death of his Son. Now that we are God's friends, how much more will we be saved by Christ's life!"

John 15: 14-15 (NRSV)

You are my friend when you do as I have commanded you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing: but I have called you friends because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father.

God wants, even yearns, to be our best friend.

Friendship with God is possible only because of the grace of God and the sacrifice of Jesus. We become best friends with God through constant conversation.

"A little perseverance, he said was needed at first to form the habit of conversing all the time with God and referring all actions to him. However, after a little care, one felt stirred by God's love without any trouble. He quite expected, after the good times which God gave him, that he should have his turn, and share in troubles and sufferings, but he was not disturbed about it, knowing well that, since he could do nothing for himself, God would not be lacking to give him the strength to endure them. When he set himself the task of putting some virtue into practice, he would address himself to God saying, "God, I should not be able to do that unless you enabled me to do it." And then he was given immediately the strength to do it and more besides.

We ought to act very simply with God, speaking familiarly with him, and asking him for help in situations as they arise; God would not fail to give it as he had often experienced."

The Practice of the Presence of God, Brother Lawrence.

A second way to establish friendship with God is by thinking about his word – meditation or focussed thinking.

Prayer lets us speak to God; meditation lets God speak to us.

Point to Ponder: God wants to be my best friend.

Question: What can I do to remind myself to think about God and talk to him more often throughout the day?

Day 12 – 1 March

Developing your friendship with God

Bible Reading: James 4: 8 (NLT)

*Draw close to God, and God will draw close to you.
You are as close to God as you choose to be.*

"Like any friendship, you must work at developing your friendship with God. It won't happen by accident. It takes desire, time and energy. If you want a deeper, more intimate connection with God you must learn to share honestly your feelings with him, trust him when he asks you to do something, learn to care about what he cares about, and desire his friendship more than anything else."

Rick Warren

"Kia Ora, my Friend God.
I give to you the voyage of this day
you are the wind: fill up my sails.
You are the water: run fast beneath my keel.
And I will sing in the wind
and dance over the water.
God my Friend, oh God my Friend.
You are light, enfold me.
You are the darkness, embrace me.
You are pain: hollow me.
You are love: overflow me.
The storm of change are you,
and the peace of tranquil waters.
You are all these things, Friend God,
and I thank you Amen, Amen."
Joy Cowley Aotearoa Psalms.

Point to Ponder: I'm as close to God as I choose to be.

Question: What practical choices will I make today in order to grow closer to God?

Day 13 – 2 March

Worship that pleases God

Bible Readings: Mark 12: 30 (NIV)

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.

Mark 12: 30 (Msg)

Love the Lord your God with all your passion and with all your prayer and with all your intelligence and with all your energy.

Worship is "giving worth" to God. It is not our initiative but is a response to what God has already done for us in Christ.

To truly worship, we need to face outwards to the world rather than inward to ourselves. It acknowledges that God is awesome and mysterious, even while intimately in relationship with us. Often in worship we domesticate our God into a small box.

Worship is at its most profound when all of our self is involved - but for most of us our particular personality will ensure one form of spirituality is favoured. For some, closeness to God is predominately emotional - it is about how we feel, for others it is in our thoughts and we study, for some it is relational and we meet God through the love of our friends and in compassion, for others it is through our senses - beholding creation, through music and even smells may bring us close to God. For others it is in the struggle for justice, still others find God most in silence. We should never judge others as somehow having an inferior spirituality just because they do not see things the way we do.

But if we are "giving full worth" to God, maybe we need to explore other forms of worship and spirituality besides that with which we are most comfortable.

Stillness

If you stand very still in the heart of a wood,
you will hear many wonderful things -
the snap of a twig and the wind in the trees
and the whirr of invisible wings.

If you stand very still in the turmoil of life
and you wait for the voice from within;
you will be led down the ways of wisdom and peace,
through a rough world of chaos and din.

If you stand very still and hold onto your faith,
you will get all the help that you ask;
you will draw from the silence the things that you need -
hope, courage and strength for your task.

Author unknown

Point to Ponder: God wants all of me.

Question: Is God most real for you through your senses, your passion, your imagination or your intellect?

Day 14 - 3 March

When God seems distant

Bible Reading: Isaiah. 8: 17 (TEV)

The Lord has hidden himself from his people, but I trust him and place my hope in him.

God is real no matter how you feel!

Friendships are often tested by separation and silence; you are divided by physical distance or you are unable to talk. In your friendship with God, you won't always feel close to God. Philip Yancey has wisely noted, "Any relationship involves times of closeness and times of distance, and in a relationship with God, no matter how intimate, the pendulum will swing from one side to the other."

God help us

if our world should grow dark;
and there is no way of seeing or knowing.

Grant us courage and trust

to touch and be touched
to find our way onwards
by feeling. Amen.

Leunig

God wants you to sense his presence, but he's more concerned that you trust him than you feel him.

We need to tell God exactly how we feel.

We need to focus on who God is - his unchanging nature.

We need to trust God to keep his promises.

We need to remember what God has already done for us.

Point to Ponder: God is real, no matter how I feel.

Question: How can I keep a sense of God's presence, especially when God feels distant?

PURPOSE 2

Formed for God's family

Day 15 – 4 March

Formed for God's family

Bible Reading: Mark 3:31-35 (NRSV)

Jesus said, "Who is my Mother? Who are my brothers?" He looked at the people sitting around him and said, "Look! Here are my mother and my brothers and sisters! Whoever does what God wants is my brother, my sister, my mother."

Following Jesus puts us in some wonderful company. It's a wonderful privilege to be able to call such people your brother, your sister - and to know God as Abba - Father - as Jesus did.

Sometimes the bonds between fellow pilgrims become really strong, as we share values and perspectives, as well as the highs and lows of our journeys. Some find these sort of "family ties" easy to handle, others very difficult indeed.

Families are marked by love that is unconditional, not dependant on worth, talents, status or strength, and always ready to go that extra mile. This is the kind of love shown in the story of the Father and the Two Sons - a father who runs the gauntlet of the village to welcome home a returning son and who seeks out a sulking son, for both were precious to him.

Point to ponder: I was formed for God's family

Question: What will it mean for me to treat other people as members of my own family?

Day 16 – 5 March

What matters most?

Bible Readings 1 John 4: 7 & 12 (NRSV)

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God. Everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and God's love is perfected in us.

1 Corinthians 13: 13

Faith, hope and love, these three abide, but the greatest of all is love.

Love leaves a legacy. How you treat other people, not your wealth or accomplishments, is the most enduring thing you can leave on earth. The essence of love is not what we think or do or provide for others but how much we give of ourselves. Those we love need our focussed attention and our time - a valuable portion of our lives.

"Lifting our lives to others happens every time we speak or act in ways that make our lives, lives for others. When we are fully able to embrace our own lives, we discover that what we claim we also want to proclaim. A life well held is indeed a life for others. We stop wondering whether our life is better or worse than others and start seeing clearly that when we live our life for

others we not only claim our individuality but also proclaim our unique place in the mosaic of the human family."

Henri Nouwen Can you drink this Cup

Point to ponder: Life is all about love -people matter most.

Question: Honestly, are relationships my first priority?

How can I ensure they are?

Day 17 – 6 March

A place to belong

Bible Readings: Romans 12:5 (TEV)

In Christ, we who are many are one body, for each member belongs to all the others.

1 John 4: 12 (NRSV)

No one has ever seen God, but if we love one another, God lives in union with us, and his love is made perfect in us.

For most of us, coming to church on Sundays is a great joy, and an integral part of our faith. We are created for community, and none of us can fulfil God's purposes on our own.

But we often hear folk say that they don't need to go to church - they can worship God on their own. This is a mistaken view - followers of Christ belong together. The Bible knows nothing of solitary saints or spiritual hermits. Though our relationship with God is personal, it is not a private relationship. We belong together, connected in love, members of the Body of Christ. We each have gifts to contribute and need each other to provide support, help us grow, to share in the church's mission, and to worship together!

It's not always an easy commitment to make, especially if others among our family and friends don't share our faith. And there are times when we all like to slip in and out of church inconspicuously and just "receive" rather than give and give and give again.

Point to ponder: I am called to belong, not just to believe.

Question: Does my level of involvement at Pathways demonstrate that I love and am committed to God's family?

Day 18 – 7 March

Experiencing life together

Bible Reading: Psalm 133:1 (NRSV)

How wonderful it is, how pleasant it is for God's people to live together in harmony!

"Community is essentially a place of presence.

Thus we must not forget that the best nourishment of community life, the one which renews us and opens our hearts, is in all the small gestures of fidelity, tenderness, humility, forgiveness, sensitivity, and welcome which make up ordinary life. It is these which are at the heart of community and can bring us to a realisation of love. It is they which touch the hearts and reveal gifts."

Jean Vanier.

No man is an island ...

No man is an island, entire of itself;
every man is a piece of the continent,
a part of the main;
if a clod be washed away by the sea,
Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were,
as well as if a manor of thy friends
or of thine own were;
and man's death diminishes me,
because I am involved in Mankind;
and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls;
it tolls for thee.

John Donne

"When I connect with you in love, the Christ in me reaches out and touches the Christ in you and between us there is holy ground."

Reaching Out ... Henri Nouwen

Point to ponder: I need others in my life

Question: What is one step can I take today to connect with someone at Pathways at a deeper level.

Day 19 – 8 March

Cultivating community

Bible Readings: Acts 2:42 (RSV)

They committed themselves to the teaching of the apostles, the life together, the common meal and the prayers.

James 3:18 (Msg)

You can develop a healthy, robust community that lives right with God and enjoys its results if you do the hard work of getting along with each other, treating each other with dignity and honour.

It takes both God's power and our effort to produce a loving Christian community - and it requires commitment and effort to maintain this. Whenever people come together to form relationships at the deepest levels, they will disagree, but in the church we must be honest about this and not brush it under the carpet and pretend that all is well.

Disciples will practise making peace with one another and thereby interrupt the cycle of violence found in society. They will forgive one another and thereby interrupt the cycle of defensiveness found in society. They will bear one another's burdens and thereby interrupt the individualism found in society. They will uphold one another in love and thereby interrupt the isolation and loneliness found in society. They will live as grateful stewards of all of God's gifts and thereby interrupt the cycle of greed and acquisitiveness found in society. They will understand their mission as proclaiming the Gospel by embodying an alternative way of life. Paul Dieterich.

"Community is like a large mosaic. Each little piece seems so insignificant. One piece is bright red, another cold blue, or dull green, another warm purple, another sharp yellow, another shining gold. Some look precious, others ordinary. Some look valuable, others worthless. Some look gaudy, others delicate. As individual stones, we can do little with them except compare them and judge their beauty and value. When however, all these little stones are brought together in one big mosaic portraying the face of Christ, who would ever question the importance of any one of them? If one of them, even the least spectacular is missing, the face is incomplete. Together in the one mosaic, each little stone is indispensable and makes a unique contribution to the glory of God. That's community, a fellowship of little people who together make God visible in the world."

Lifting the Cup Henri Nouwen

Point to ponder: Cultivating community requires commitment, honesty, courtesy, humility, confidentiality and takes frequency.

Question: How can I help cultivate today the characteristics of real community at Pathways?

Day 20 – 9 March

Restoring broken relationships

Bible Readings: Romans 12:18 ((NRSV)

Live in harmony with one another, do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. Do not repay evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

Matthew 5: 22-23 (Msg)

Jesus said, "If you enter your place of worship and, about to make an offering, you suddenly remember a grudge a friend has against you, abandon your offering, leave immediately, go to this friend and make things right. Then, and then only, come back and work things out with God."

Because life is about learning to love more deeply, God wants us to value relationships and make the deepest efforts to enhance them rather than give up as soon as there is conflict or a rift.

We are to be known for the way we love one another! We need to be peace makers - not by avoiding the hard conflict or appeasement but by reconciliation

"It's all so easy Lord,
to find a reason to condemn,
to criticise, to hold up another's faults.
Makes me feel good.
Helps me hide the truth of my own weaknesses.
Lord, help me find the tolerance for others
that I expect from you.
The loving understanding
that gives another chance and yet another,
like you give me.
Help me to accept that every life I touch,
and touches me,
has similar confusions.
Light and dark, good and bad,
that, as I struggle with myself,
so others struggle too.
And far better that I help another up,
than pull them down.

Help me to look with the eyes of love,
like yours."

Eddie Askew *No Strange Land*

Point to ponder: Emphasise reconciliation not resolution - relationships are always worth restoring

Question: Is there anyone with whom I need to restore a relationship today?

Day 21 – 10 March

Unity of the church

Bible Readings: Ephesians 4:3 (NRSV)

Make every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.,

Colossians 3:14 (NRSV)

Above all clothe yourselves in love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

We are all different, thank God - with different personalities, backgrounds, races and preferences so we should enjoy those differences, not merely tolerate them. God desires our unity, but not our uniformity. But for unity's sake, we must not let our differences divide us. Rather stay focussed on what matters most, learning to love one another as Christ has loved us.

"He who loves his dream of community more than the Christian community in which he finds himself becomes a destroyer of the latter. If we do not give thanks daily for the Christian fellowship in which we have been placed, even when there is no great experience, no discoverable riches, but much weakness, small faith and difficulty, if on the contrary, we keep complaining that everything is paltry and petty, we hinder God from helping our fellowship grow."

Dietrich Bonhoeffer *Life together*

Point to ponder: Unity is the soul of fellowship; destroy it and you rip the heart out of Christ's body

Question: How do I work for the unity of Pathways (right now)

PURPOSE 3

You were created to become Christ-like

Day 22 – 11 March

You were created to become like Christ

Bible Reading: Genesis 1:27 (NRSV)

So God created humankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them.

Ephesians 4:22 (Msg)

Clothe yourselves in an entirely new way of life - a God-fashioned life, a life renewed from the inside and working itself into your conduct as God accurately reproduces God's character in you.

Most of the time the Holy Spirit's power is released in your life in quiet unassuming ways that you aren't even aware of. We're often nudged with a "gentle whisper." Christ-likeness is not produced by imitation, but by inhabitation. We allow Christ to live through us. How does this happen in real life? Through the choices we make. We choose to do the right thing in situations then trust God's Spirit to give us the power, faith and love and wisdom to action it.

A Hymn to Imperfection

Hey, let's celebrate weakness!
Yes! You know!
Weakness as in failure!
Let's celebrate the slips and slops
the drops and falls and Oh-ohs
that teach us wisdom
and compassion
and patience
and humour
and understanding
of what it means to be
not a human being
but a human becoming.
Let us celebrate
all those opportunities for growth
that were ours yesterday and today.
Let's celebrate for ourselves
let's celebrate for each other.
And while we're at it
let us give thanks for the mistakes
we will make tomorrow.
If we find them painful
or a bit embarrassing
We can remember that perfection
means having no room for improvement,
no need for anyone else
and who wants that?
Let us be grateful
oh so deeply grateful
that God is still shaping us.

Joy Cowley Psalms for the Road.

Point to ponder: We are a work in progress. As Christ lives in us, we become more like him. God cannot help those who justify their actions

Question: In what areas of my life do I need to ask for the grace to be more Christ-like?

Day 23 – 12 March

How we grow

Bible Reading: Romans 12: 2b (NRSV)

Be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect.

"Discernment is the very ground of Christian life and prayer. It is about seeking God's way, sifting through our multi layered impulses and promptings to seek appropriate and specific answers to the question, 'What does the Lord require of us?' It is an art, as love is an art. It is learnt by doing, not by studying. Like loving communication, it is about listening, being attentive, picking up all the signals and seeking to go beyond them to the heart of the matter. We can risk being wrong for the love of God, even risk being foolish, and need not be afraid, for God's love is more accommodating than laws and techniques."

John Franklin Group Discernment

Naked Crabs

That's how crabs grow bigger - when their shells get too tight, they split the shell open and grow a new one.

I've never talked to a crab. But I imagine the process of splitting open a shell must be painful. I'm sure that until they grow a new shell, they feel pretty defenceless and vulnerable. Because that's how we humans feel when we crack open our shells. Our shells are not visible. But they are there just the same - shells formed by years of habit, shells that protect us from other people, shells that are the roles we play as parents or bosses or children or employees. But when a crab's shell becomes too thick, too protective, too tough to crack open and start again, then the crab can't grow anymore. That's when it dies. So do we.

Author unknown

A Door

"Loving God

Our lives stand before us like a series of doors.

Yet there is one most vital to our existence -
the door which opens to you.

We look, and it seems so enticing
but we wonder; what is on the other side?

What will be required of us?

How will our lives change?

And what will it take to move it, to open it?

Cross the threshold to the unknown?

As we stand here uncertain,
your door swings quietly open and you are there.

For it is Your love - not our own effort -
which is the key to your heart."

Author unknown

Point to ponder: Spiritual growth is a collaborative effort between us and the Holy Spirit. God's spirit works with us, as well as in us.

Question: In what way has God's Spirit helped me to grow in recent times?

Day 24 – 13 March

Growing in truth

Bible Readings: Matthew 7: 24 (RSV)

Every one who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house up on the rock. The rain fell, and the wind blew and beat upon that house, but it did not fall, as it had been founded on rock.

Colossians 3:16-17

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts, sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father in everything.

We are a people of the book – our faith is based on the history, the stories, the poetry, the theology and the wisdom of the Bible, particularly on the stories of Jesus, as found in the four gospels. If we are to become more Christ-like we must take seriously the role of the Bible in our faith and lives. We assert that in God's word is found all we need for a life consistent with God's plan for us, and so our interaction with it must be regular, thoughtful and prayerful. Then will we be able to hear the Living Word – Jesus himself – speak his truth and wisdom to us.

"Christians can easily get caught up in a Church for cultural, morality, friendship or nationality reasons. A total emphasis on Jesus, his teaching and ability to enable us to enter into a relationship with the living God, is the basis of a new discovery; Jesus becomes central in our lives."

Jim Cropp, Brief and To the Point.

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." It is indeed a fearsome thing to confront the reality of the living God. It may lead to wisdom, or joy, or praise. It may also lead to opponents, ridicule, and a cross.

What is clear, however, is that we cannot remain the same. When we come to know God more deeply, when we take part of God into ourselves and allow it to nourish and change us, our perspectives, our values, our joys and our sorrows are converted for eternity.

Point to ponder: "The Bible was not given to increase our knowledge, but to change our lives."
D.L. Moody

Question: Is God speaking to me through my reading of the Bible?

Day 25 – 14 March

Growing through adversity

Bible Readings: Romans 5: 3-4 (NRSV)

And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

Romans 8:28: (NRSV)

We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.

Matthew 5: 3-10 (NRSV)

Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of God.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they shall be filled.

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peace makers,
for they shall be called the children of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

God does not promise a rose garden, but abundant life - that life will include struggles and disappointments, sorrow and pain as well as peace and joy. But whatever happens to us, we can be sure that God will never leave us, but will work with us, giving us courage and perseverance to learn from the struggles and hard times. God will, in love, help us grow a Christ-like character that is strong, compassionate and tender. And we will be able to stand with solidarity with others who suffer. The Christ who endured the cross brings us out of our despair with resurrection hope.

"Your joy is your sorrow unmasked
and the self same well from which your laughter rises was oftentimes filled with your tears.

And how else can it be?

The deeper that sorrow carves into your being,
the more joy you can contain.

Is not the cup which holds your wine
the very cup that was burned in the potter's oven?
And is not the lute that soothes your spirit
the very wood that was hollowed out with knives?"

Kahlil Gibran, The Prophet

"All growth is trouble.
If comfort is your need,
better to sleep

curled around yourself for ever,
shelled with indifference,
like an unsown seed.

All love is trouble.

Once you give your heart to anything,
to anyone at all,
you are made vulnerable
in every part.

To be at peace in love,
at peace and free
is the hope of fools.
If fool you be,
curl smugly around yourself
like a smooth stone
that cannot bleed or put forth leaves
or know
what the great have known."

Author not known

Point to ponder: We are like jewels, shaped with the hammer and chisel of adversity.

Question: What struggle in my life has caused the greatest growth in me?

Day 26 – 15 March

Challenges and choices

Bible Readings: Galatians 5:22-23, (RSV)

By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. There is no law against such things.

Hebrews 4: 16

Let us then approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in our time of need.

There is no doubt that the life of one who follows Christ will be full of "temptations." When we are tired and discouraged, under pressure and lacking self-esteem, we are tempted to go down paths that do not bring glory to God and peace of mind for ourselves. Our need to be affirmed and fit in with the crowd makes us choose the easy path. Our addiction to comfort and security tempts us to be apathetic and less than honest with ourselves.

But when we honestly seek God's way, we can count on God's abiding grace with us, to give us the courage, and all the fruit of the spirit as outlined in Galatians.

"How often do we search for a solution, only to discover it is right under our noses? So many times we overlook the simple and the obvious because we expect that things must be complex in order to be effective. In this technological age, there is a temptation to overlook simple things. We need to be reminded of the importance of keeping things simple, of trusting the advice of others - even when - especially when - it is neither elaborate nor complicated. And realising that we are ready, whatever our age, stage or circumstance to live in God's way."

Author unknown

Point to ponder: Growing your character always involves making choices.

Questions: In what ways am I vulnerable to inappropriate choices? What is the basis on which I make the best choices?

Day 27 – 16 March

Being Christ in the world

Bible Reading: John 6:35 (NRSV)

I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will not be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. I have come that they might have life and have it abundantly.

Matthew 28:19-20 (NRSV)

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations and baptise them in the name of God, Father Son and Holy Spirit. And teaching them all that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

Our aim to be more Christ-like is not for our own sake, it is for the sake of the world that God so loved. Our purpose and goal in life is not to gain a place in heaven at the end of our lives. In some ways that is a rather selfish aim! Perhaps it should not be our concern in this life.

Rather we are to be like Christ, bringing God's love and hope to people who so desperately need it - being the bread of healing, the light of understanding, and the salt of justice. Jesus' message was and is "the Kingdom of God is at hand, turn to God now. Believe and have abundant life! And I will be with you always."

"Christ has no body on earth but yours,
yours are the only hands with which he can do his work;
yours are the only feet with which he can go about the world
yours are the only eyes through which his compassion
can shine forth upon a troubled world.
Christ has no body on earth now but yours."
St Teresa of Avila 1515 -1582.

"It is only when we appreciate this dimension of Jesus' emphasis on compassion that we realise how radical his message and vision were. For Jesus, compassion was more than a quality of God and an individual virtue. It was a social paradigm, the core value of life in community. To put it

boldly; compassion for Jesus was political. He directly and repeatedly challenged the dominant socio-political paradigm for his social world and advocated instead what might be called a "politics of compassion." This conflict and this social vision continue to have striking implications for the life of the church today."

Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time. Marcus Borg

Point to Ponder: Our task is to join Christ who is out there working in the world.

Question: In what way are you living as Christ's body in the world?

Day 28 – 17 March

Be kind!

Bible Readings: John 21:22 (KJV)

"What is that to thee? Follow thou me."

Psalm 131 (RSV)

"O Lord, my heart is not lifted up, my eyes are not raised too high;
I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvellous for me.
But I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a child quieted at its mother's breast; like a child
quieted is my soul."

Donald Baillie has a sermon on this text. He talks about the things which we should never mind, but just keep on following Christ. He writes, "Never mind your perplexities, but follow Christ." Baillie does not belittle the real and haunting doubts that come at some time to every man. He goes on to say, "Of course you have to face your doubts and perplexities quite honestly and quite frankly and try to think them out and get light on them. But the great and salutary and reassuring lesson is this: that it is not in just thinking it all out that light comes, and you don't have to wait until you have thought it all out (or you would have to wait for ever). You can go on bravely in the path of duty and purity and love. That must be right - you are sure enough of that. So much of Christ is plain to you, and so far, you can follow him with your eyes wide open. And that is how further light comes. He that does the truth cometh to the light."

There are many things about which we may not be sure and there are not a few things about which we may never be sure. But we do know that "kindness in another's troubles and courage in one's own" is always part of the Christian way, and we can get on with that. I am aware of the contempt with which the theologians regard a religion which, as they put it, consists of "being kind to granny and the cat". But the man who has translated kindness of God in the life of men is not far from the Kingdom. At the end of the day, I would take my chance with the man who was no theologian, but who was kind.

Through the year with William Barclay.

Point to Ponder: Being kind is more important than getting all the thinking right.

Question: How do I choose both to be kind and to nurture my faith by thinking and reading?

PURPOSE 4

You were shaped for serving God

Day 29 – 18 March

Accepting your assignment

Bible Reading: Ephesians 2: 10 (Msg)

We neither make nor save ourselves. God does both the making and saving. He creates each of us by Christ Jesus to join him in the work he does, the good work he has got ready for us to do, work we had better be doing.

John 17: 4 (Msg)

I glorified you on earth by completing down to the last detail what you assigned me to do.

Spiritual maturity is never an end in itself.

We grow up to give out.

You were put on earth to make a contribution.

You weren't created just to consume resources – to eat, breathe and take up space. God designed you to make a difference with your life. You were created to add to life on earth, not just take from it. God wants you to give something back. It is called your "ministry" or service.

What matters is not the duration of your life, but the donation of it. Not how long you lived, but how you lived.

If you are not involved in any service or ministry, what excuse have you been using? Abraham was old, Jacob was insecure, Leah was unattractive, Joseph was abused, Moses stuttered, Gideon was poor, Samson was co-dependent, Rahab was immoral, David had an affair and all kinds of family problems, Elijah was suicidal, Jeremiah was depressed, Jonah was reluctant, Naomi was a widow, John the Baptist was eccentric to say the least, Peter was impulsive and hot-tempered, Martha worried a lot, the Samaritan woman had several failed marriages, Zacchaeus was unpopular, Thomas had doubts, Paul had poor health, and Timothy was timid. That is quite a variety of misfits, but God used each one of them in his service. He will use you, too, if you stop making excuses.

Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him, and the Pharisees and the Scribes murmured saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them". No excuses there for anyone tempted to protest unworthiness and use that as a reason to hide from God!

Basil in Blunderland Cardinal Basil Hume.

Point to Ponder: Service is not optional.

Question: What is holding me back from accepting God's call to serve him?

Day 30 - 19 March

Shaped for serving God

Bible Reading: Job 10: 8 (NIV)

Your hands shaped me and made me.

Isaiah 43: 21 (NJB)

The people I have shaped for myself will broadcast my praises

You were shaped to serve God. It's not just the "religious" part of you that serves, but every facet of your being: your passion, personality, abilities, and imagination, all of which are God's gifts, to be unwrapped in service. They are not earned, but given as gift of God, and an unopened gift is worthless. Apply your abilities, use your personality employ your experiences.

Listen for the places of enthusiasm, enjoyment and effectiveness in your life and recognise that God is three enjoying your gifts as you serve.

I, the Lord of sea and sky,
I have heard my people's cry
all who dwell in dark and sin,
my hand will save.

I who made the stars of night,
I will make their darkness bright,
who will bear my light to them?
Whom shall I send?

Here I am Lord, is it I, Lord?
I have heard you calling in the night.
I will go, Lord, if you lead me.
I will hold your people in my heart.

I, the Lord of snow and rain,
I have borne my people's pain.
I have wept for love of them,
they turn away.
I will break their hearts of stone,
give them hearts for love alone,
I will speak my word to them.
Whom shall I send?
I, the Lord of wind and flame.
I will tend the poor and lame.
I will set a feast for them.
My hand will save.

Finest bread I will provide.
Till their hearts be satisfied.
I will give my life to them.
Whom shall I send?

Point to Ponder: I was shaped for serving God.

Question: Where do you exercise the gift of service?

Day 31 – 20 March

Understanding your shape

Bible Reading: Psalm 139: 13 (Msg)

You shaped me first inside, then out; you formed me in my mother's womb.

Only you can be you.

No one has the exact same mix of factors that make you unique.

The little boy on TV One say, "I got ten figures, ten toes, two eyes, two knees, and a thousand of hairs...but do you know what there's only one of? Me! Yeah."

Applying your Abilities - Using your Personality - Employing your Experiences:

Family experiences -

What did you learn growing up in your family?

Educational experiences -

What were your favourite subjects in school?

Vocational experiences -

What jobs have you been most effective in
and enjoyed most?

Spiritual experiences -

What have been your most meaningful times
with God?

Ministry experiences -

How have you served God in the past?

Painful experiences -

What problems, hurts, thorns, and trials
have you learned from?

Point to Ponder: Nobody else can be me.

Question: What abilities and experience could I offer my church, Pathways?

Day 32 – 21 March

Using what God gave you

Bible Reading: Romans 12: 5 (Msg)

Since we find ourselves fashioned into all these excellently formed and marvellously functioning parts in Christ's body, let's just go ahead and be what we were made to be.

What you are is God's gift to you; what you do with yourself is your gift to God.
(Danish Proverb)

God deserves your best.

He shaped you for a purpose, and he expects you to make the most of what you have been given. He doesn't want you to worry about or covet abilities you don't have. Instead, he wants you to focus on talents he has given you to use.

Spiritual gifts and natural abilities are usually confirmed by others, so it's worth checking out in your community what others see as your contribution.

Try something you haven't done before. "No matter how old you are... never stop experimenting. Many people (have) discovered hidden talents in their 70's and 80's"

Point to Ponder: God deserves my best.

Question: How can I make the best use of what God has given me?

Day 33 – 22 March

How real servants act

Bible Readings: Mark 10: 43 (Msg)

Whoever wants to be great must become a servant.

Matthew 7: 16 (CEV)

"You can tell what they are by what they do.

We serve God by serving others.

Real servants make themselves available to serve.

Real servants pay attention to needs.

Real servants do their best with what they have.

Real servants do every task with equal dedication.

Real servants are faithful to their ministry.

Real servants maintain a low profile.

Your shape reveals your ministry, but your servant's heart will reveal your maturity.

The Servant Song

Brother, sister let me serve you,
let me be as Christ to you;
pray that I may have the grace
to let you be my servant too.

We are pilgrims on a journey
and companions on the road:
we are here to help each other
walk the mile and bear the load.

I will hold the Christ-light for you
in the night-time of your fear.
I will hold my hand out to you,
speak the peace you long to hear.

I will weep when you are weeping;
When you laugh I'll laugh with you.
I will share your joy and sorrow
Till we've seen this journey through.

When we sing to God in heaven
We shall find such harmony,
Born of all we've known together
Of Christ's love and agony.

Brother, sister, let me serve you,
let me be as Christ to you;
pray that I may have the grace to
let you be my servant too.

(Richard Gillard)

Point to Ponder: I serve God by serving others.

Question: Which of the 6 characteristics of real servants offers the greatest challenge to me?

Day 34 – 23 March

Thinking Like a Servant

Bible Readings: Philippians 2: 5 (Msg)

Think of yourself the way Christ Jesus thought of himself. He had equal status with God, but didn't think so much of himself that he had to cling to the advantages of that status no matter what.

Service starts in your mind.

- Servants think more about others than about themselves.
- Servants think like stewards not owners.
- Servants think about their work, not what others are doing.
- Servants base their identity in Christ.

Henri Nouwen said, "in order to be of service to others we have to die to them; that is, we have to give up measuring our meaning and value with the yardstick of others...thus we become free to be compassionate."

When you base your worth and identity on your relationship to Christ, you are freed from the expectations of others, and that allows you to really serve them best.

Servants think of ministry as an opportunity, not an obligation.

Albert Schweitzer said, "The only really happy people are those who have learned to serve."

"Teach us Good Lord
to serve you as you deserve
to give and not to count the cost,
to fight and not to heed the wounds
to toil and not to seek for rest
to labour and not to ask for any reward
save that of knowing that we do your will."

St Ignatius of Loyola

Point to Ponder: To be a servant I must think like a servant.

Question: Am I usually more concerned about being served or finding ways to serve others?

Day 35 – 24 March

God's power in your weakness

Bible Readings: 2 Corinthians 13: 4 (NIV)

We are weak...yet by God's power we will live with him to serve you.

2 Corinthians 12: 9a (GN)

My grace is all you need, for my power is greatest when you are weak.

"Everyone has weaknesses. In fact, you have a bundle of flaws and imperfections: physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual. You may also have uncontrollable circumstances that weaken you, such as financial or relational limitations. The more important issue is what you do with these. Usually we deny our weaknesses, defend them, excuse them, hide them, and resent them. This prevents God from using them the way he desires.

God has a different perspective on your weaknesses. He says, "My thoughts and my ways are higher than yours," so he often acts in ways that are the exact opposite of what we expect. We think that God only wants to use our strengths, but he also wants to use our weaknesses for his glory..."

If God only used perfect people, nothing would ever get done."

Remember Moses' temper, eg Exodus 2: 11-15

Gideon had low self-esteem: Judges 6: 15

Abraham's weakness was fear: Genesis 20

Peter was weak-willed, eg Luke 22: 57, 58, 60

David was an adulterer: 2 Samuel 11: 2-4

John was one of the arrogant

"Sons of Thunder": Mark 3: 17

"God, help us find our confession;
the truth within us which is hidden from our mind;
the beauty or the ugliness we see elsewhere
but never in ourselves;
the stowaway which has been smuggled
into the dark side of the heart,
which puts the heart off balance and causes it pain.
Which wearies and confuses us,
which tips us in false directions and inclines us to destruction,
the Load which is not carried squarely
because it is carried in ignorance.

God help us find our confession.

Help us across the boundary of our understanding.

Lead us into the darkness that we may find what lies concealed;
that we may confess it towards the light;
that we may carry our truth in the centre of our heart;
that we may carry our cross wisely
and bring harmony into our life and our world.

Leunig.

Point to Ponder: God works best when I admit my weakness.

Questions: Am I limiting God's power in my life by trying to hide my weaknesses?
What do I need to be honest about in order to help others?

PURPOSE 5

Day 36 – 25 March

Living our faith

"The best use of life is to spend it for something that outlasts it." (William James)

Bible Reading: 2 Corinthians 5: 16-17 (Msg)

God has given us the task of telling everyone what he is doing. We are Christ's representatives; God uses us to persuade men and women to drop their differences and enter into God's work of making things right between them.

"Don't the Bible say we must love everybody? Oh, the Bible, To be sure, it says a great many things, but then nobody ever thinks of doing them."

Harriet Beecher Stowe Uncle Tom's Cabin

"Let us live in such a way that when we die, our love will survive and continue to grow"

William James

Living nobly is not just a worthy goal, it is an act of worshipping the God who created us, to present divine goodness where everyone can take heart from it. In the heart of each person is the possibility to bring the love of God to others in a unique way - whether they notice, appreciate, receive it or not.

Being faithful to the desire to act in a way that allows this to happen, is our daily way of honouring God in public.

Robert Wicks Everyday Simplicity

Point to Ponder: "The best use of life is to spend it for something that outlasts it."

(William James)

Question: If I was tried as a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict me?

Day 37 – 26 March

Sharing your faith journey

Bible Reading: 1 Thessalonians 1:8 (Msg)

Your lives are echoing the master's word...The news of your faith in God is out. We don't even have to say anything anymore -YOU are the message.

1 Peter 3: 15-b-16 (TEV)

*Be ready at all times to answer anyone who asks you to explain the hope that is within you, but do it with gentleness and respect.
Actions speak louder than words.*

*"Shared stories build a relational bridge that Jesus can walk across from your heart to others."
Rick Warren*

"The medium IS the message." Marshall McLuhan

Point to Ponder: God wants to say something to the world through me.

Question: As I reflect on my personal story, who does God want me to share it with?

Day 38 – 27 March

Connect for Christ

Bible Readings: Mark 16:15 (NRSV)

Jesus said to his followers, "Go everywhere in the world, and tell the good news to the whole creation".

Matthew 5: 14-16 (NRSV)

You are the light of world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting the lamp puts it under a bushel basket, but on the lamp stand and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven."

Greenless Child

I watched her go uncelebrated into the second grade,
a greenless child,
grey among the orange and yellow,
attached too much to corners and to other people's sunshine.
She colours the rainbow brown
and leaves balloons unopened in their packages.
Oh, who will touch this greenless child?
Who will plant alleluias in her heart
and send her dancing into all the colours of God?
Or will she be left like an unwrapped package
 on the kitchen table -
too dull for anyone to take the trouble?
Does God think we are her keeper?
Ann Weems, Reaching for Rainbows.

Point to Ponder: "They drew a circle that shut me out
A heretic, a rebel, a 'thing' to flout;
but love and I had the wit to win;

We drew a circle that took them in."

Edwin Markham

Question: In what way could I contribute to outreach locally or globally in a different way?

Day 39 – 28 March

Wholeness and balance.

Bible Reading: Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 (RSV)

For everything there is a season and a time for every matter under heaven:

A time to be born and a time to die;
a time to plant and a time to pluck up what is planted;
a time to kill and a time to heal;
a time to break down and a time to build up;
a time to weep and a time to laugh;
a time to mourn and a time to dance;
a time to throw away stones

and a time to gather stones together.

A time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing;
a time to seek and a time to lose;
a time to keep and a time to throw away;
a time to tear and a time to sew;
a time to keep silence and a time to speak;
a time to love and a time to hate;
a time for war and a time for peace.

"Dear God

We pray for balance and exchange
balance us like trees
as the roots of a tree shall equal its branches,
so must the inner life be equal to the outer life.
And as the leaves shall nourish the roots,
so shall the roots give nourishment to the leaves.
Without equality and exchange of nourishment,
there can be no growth and no love."

Amen

Leunig A Common Prayer

Point to Ponder: At different times in our lives, we are in different "seasons," for example, a season of mothering, or a season of study or a season of career, or a season of deepening spiritual awareness.

Question: What is the current "season" of my life?

Day 40 – 29 March

Journeying on

Bible Reading Philippians 4: 4-7 (NRSV)

Rejoice in the Lord, always! And again, I say, rejoice! Let your gentleness be known to everyone, The Lord is near, And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Go gently, go lightly
go safely in the Spirit,
live simply, don't carry
much more than you need:
Go trusting in God's goodness,
go spreading God's kindness,
stay centred on Jesus
and where he will lead.

Go singing, go bringing
the gifts of the Spirit,
go hopefully searching
for things that are true:
In living, in loving,
whatever befalls you,
God keep you, God bless you
in all that you do.
Shirley Erena Murray

Over the last 40 days, we have offered you a path of reflection. Now we invite you to think back over the last few weeks and wonder about where God has led you. You may like to write yourself a note or a letter about this journey.

What have I learned? What for me is different/has changed?

At this point in my journey I can truly say I believe.... ?
What am I really passionate about (that God is calling me to act on)?

My next step is...
How shall I journey on and with whom?