



**Here am I; Send me!**  
A Daily Devotional for Disaster Recovery Volunteers & Teams  
of Presbyterian Disaster Assistance

DRAFT: June 19, 16 (Last Edited)



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## **A Letter of Gratitude from the Advisory Committee and Staff of PDA**

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Dear friends,

On behalf of the Advisory Committee and the staff of Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, we applaud and thank you for your service this week. People are hurting, and you are offering a ministry of presence as well as a helping hand. There is pain and suffering, and you are providing tangible hope to those who are in distress. You won't resolve every situation this week, but you are part of a "great cloud of witnesses" participating in a larger effort in the on-going response to those affected by this disaster. So we thank you and pray you will feel the healing power of Christ's reconciling love as you go about your work this week.

Sincerely,

The Advisory Committee & Staff of PDA

## **Time Apart: Dedicating time for daily devotion & examen**

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Preparing for a week of mission service often entails months of preparation to enlist and equip volunteers and work teams for a challenging experience. This devotional is meant to be a gift to you -- a simple place for sacred texts, prayers, and reflections to accompany you throughout a week of listening, service, and reflection. Many who lead or participate in mission service trips desire for more than offering a ministry of presence to neighbors in need and a helping hand; they want to meaningfully engage their own faith, exploring how it impacts their life in this world. We hope this guide will support and strengthen the connection between what we believe and what we do, so that your week of service will yield a lasting enrichment of your faith and how it is expressed in this world.

The days on your work sites may be long. You will find spiritual sustenance is as every bit as important as physical and emotional nourishment. Allow for time with scripture so that you may feel fed, comforted, and known by God throughout the week and beyond. As each day ends, gather again in the living words of the Bible. Reflection questions invite you to be in communion with the One who has called and sent you to serve, as well as with those you are serving alongside. St. Ignatius practiced a daily prayer known as the Daily Examen in order to pay attention to particular instances where God's presence was felt (or not felt) throughout the day. The devotional guide invites you to practice the examen as a way to remember the promise of God's abiding Spirit and discern the places the Spirit is leading you.

There is an African proverb that says, "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together." Remember that you are not alone in your efforts, and yet, your role is integral in restoring the lives, homes, and communities that have been impacted by a disaster. Allow this devotional to be a source of nourishment as you give of yourself in incredible ways and may it be a comforting companion to you throughout your experiences in faithful service and love.

### **Apply as Needed: A Note to Devotional Users & Team Leaders**

This devotional offers each morning and evening a guided reflection including:

- ❖ Scripture reading
- ❖ Meditation on scripture
- ❖ Prayer
- ❖ Hymn suggestions



The evening portions will also include a Daily Examen. You are invited to adapt the contents of this devotional as needed for your group. While there is no “correct” way to spend time in reflection and prayer, it is recommended that there be at minimum some time set aside each day for members of the group to pray and have an opportunity to process their experiences at the end of each day with one another. **Perhaps a moment for the examen and a time of prayer is what is best for bringing each day to a close.**

Be creative or keep it simple, whichever is most beneficial for the spiritual needs of your group. You may choose to invite different group members to help facilitate discussion or guide the group through different parts of the devotional each day. You may choose to pair up members as prayer partners. If time allows, additional worship elements may supplement the devotional, such as prayers of confession, sharing in the Lord’s Supper, or even a foot washing ceremony. If time is limited, apply as needed for the group. This devotional is intended to be a gift for the journey, to lighten the load as you travel together through challenging terrain with a community recovering from a disaster.



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## **Sending: A commissioning service to be used by sending congregations**

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*This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. -John 15:12*

Many have suffered the devastating effects of \_\_\_\_\_.  
It has wreaked havoc in the lives of countless individuals and its full effects will not be known for months to come.

Along the way, you have felt convicted to move out of your comfort zone and go serve as a volunteer with this Disaster Response Team. You have been challenged to use your God given gifts to bear the burdens of others.

Today, we commission you as a member of this team to love and serve God's people, and to expect the unexpected ways that God is at work through you and in the community you go to serve.

*As Jesus calls us to love one another, will you love the stranger and listen to their stories?*

*As Jesus reached out to heal and to repair relationships, will you reach out in compassion?*

*As Jesus called his disciples "no longer servants, but friends," will you receive those you have come to support as partners in healing and restoration, respecting their vision for their own recovery?*

*As Jesus prayed for God's guidance and strength, will you turn to God for help?*

*When you are facing overwhelming sadness, will you offer a hand of friendship and a shoulder to cry on for those who need to be encouraged?*

*Will you remember that you are not God and therefore, be gentle with yourself and those among whom you work?*

***To the congregation:***

*And will you, the members of this church family, continue to support the members and the work of this Disaster Response Team with your prayers?*

In light of these commitments, we, the members of this church, commission you to serve God and God's people in \_\_\_\_\_.

(If desired, offer a laying on of hands as you pray and commission your work team.)

*Let us pray:*

Holy God, with joy we celebrate the dedication of this your servant (these your servants) who seek(s) faithfully to serve you. Be close to \_\_\_\_\_. Keep \_\_\_\_\_ safe, and give \_\_\_\_\_ strength and wisdom, compassion and courage to face the challenges that will come in the days ahead. Guide \_\_\_\_\_ by your Holy Spirit, that in your service, \_\_\_\_\_ may grow in faith, hope and love, and be a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ. Amen.

## Why we do what we do: A Theology of Disaster Relief Work

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When a natural disaster strikes, people often ask where God is in the midst of such devastation. As Christian people who are rooted and grounded in love, we turn to our faith and find guidance for how to respond in both the Hebrew Scriptures and New Testament. In Genesis, God's love is evident in the story of creation and God's relationship with humanity. When there was widespread famine, God's chosen one, Joseph, made preparations and put grain in the sacks of those suffering from its effects. Vulnerable widows and orphans are often lifted up as individuals for whom special care should be given, and as early as Leviticus, God's people are told to "love your neighbor as yourself," (Lev. 19:18). (By the way, in the Disaster Response world we call Joseph's seven years of preparation "Disaster Mitigation," and it is a very important part of disaster response!)

Jesus' words and actions repeatedly lifted up the care and concern for humankind. The gospels proclaim the responsibility Jesus' followers have for those who are hungry, thirsty, unclothed and in prison. Jesus tells us to love and care for our neighbors.

Acts 11 illustrates one of the things Christians do in response to those who survive disasters; they take up a collection. When the disciples in Antioch heard that other believers in Judea faced famine, they decided to send support, with everyone contributing to the ministry according to their abundance. Building on this idea, Jesus expands the definition of "neighbor" in the story of the Good Samaritan in Luke's gospel, as he crosses religious and ethnic boundaries of culture and race in order to offer aid.

When we respond to disasters, our theology is put in action. Within our Presbyterian heritage, we follow the *Great Ends of the Church*. The great ends provide guidance for the church as faithful expressions of the Christian gospel and as what God calls the church to be and do. All are important, but two of these offer guidance for the ways we offer aid in response to disasters, particularly:

- the shelter, nurture, and spiritual fellowship of the children of God; and
- the promotion of social righteousness.

The first thing disaster assistance teams do is to take care to shelter and nurture those in need of basic essentials such as food, clothing, shelter, and medical care. We save lives and remove imminent dangers as much as possible. Giving a blanket to a shivering child goes a long way in expressing care for one who feels lost and forgotten. Sitting beside a cot, offering a non-anxious presence does not take away the fear, but it may lessen the loneliness and separation. Few words need be spoken. This is the ministry of presence and it is a powerful tool of healing, recognizing that to sit with survivors after a disaster is to honor their humanity. Disasters are opportunities for service, calling us to show care and concern to "the least of these." All of these services are offered without regard to one's

religion, race, nationality, gender, or sexual orientation recognizing that each of us are children of God and stand in need of God's grace. In most cases, emergency response in the first aftermath of a disaster is best provided by local people and resources, as well as agencies whose recognized specialty is emergency response. Though all of us want to show our concern in the immediate wake of disaster, in most cases the appearance of teams and individuals from outside the affected area before the emergency phase has stabilized into short term recovery places a burden on those we are trying to help, requiring the diversion of attention and resources at a time when an affected local community has little ability to helpfully utilize those volunteers.

After the basic and immediate needs are met, our work turns to long-term plans for support and recovery, with its ongoing ministry of presence and offering of tangible resources and skills. This phase can start days or weeks after a disaster, as individuals realize the magnitude of what has happened. Disaster survivors who have lost their homes, possessions, and loved ones or who have witnessed violence may start experiencing symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress. During this phase, caring for the emotional, spiritual and psychological needs of the survivors is of utmost importance. Counselors and spiritual directors, companions and friends become very helpful to the relief work in this phase.

Additionally, we seek to promote social righteousness. Social righteousness is not a term we commonly use, but it was very popular during the Progressive Era (ca. 1890–1913) when the Great Ends of the Church were adopted\*<sup>1</sup>. Today, we can clarify what we mean by social righteousness by remembering that the biblical word we translate as righteousness is also often translated as justice. So as we promote social righteousness or *social justice*, we respond to the ways individuals and communities have been affected by a disaster, taking particular note of the weakest and most vulnerable members of society who are often the hardest hit by natural and human-caused disasters. In international disaster response, this commitment places us in consonance with humanitarian standards prioritizing the most vulnerable, and expands our vision of service beyond the four walls of the Church to embrace the whole human community of God's creating. We work with the local community and our ecumenical partners. We cooperate with non-profit and government agencies to fulfill our mission because collaboration is a key element to a strong, holistic response. Together we may work on long-term housing or future job employment issues, and structure our response to meet the most critical needs. Identifying with and assisting individuals and communities affected by disasters (natural or human-made) are ways we follow Jesus Christ and seek to promote social righteousness.

There is no perfect way to respond to a disaster, as each is as unique as the communities affected. However, we do the best we can, asking for the Spirit to guide our actions so we can alleviate suffering, maximize the healing power of the resources we have been given, and show Christ's love and care for our neighbors in meaningful ways.

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<sup>1</sup> *Promotion of Social Righteousness* by Cynthia Rigby [Louisville: Witherspoon Press, 2010] writes that “While the precise inspiration and authorship of the statement has apparently been lost, we know it was first adopted in 1910 by one of the PC(USA)’s predecessor denominations, the United Presbyterian Church of North America (UPCNA).”

\*Sources include:

- *Jewish Theology of Disaster and Recovery* by Rabbi Myrna Matsa, D. Min.
- *The Theology of Disaster Relief and Rehabilitation* by Thomas Kemper, General Board of Global Ministries, UMC
- *Promotion of Social Righteousness* by Cynthia Rigby [Louisville: Witherspoon Press, 2010]



## **A Guide for Daily Devotion & Examen**

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## A Rule of Life<sup>2</sup> for a Week of Service Together

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**We will journey as pilgrims.** We do not come as tourists, teachers, saviors, or preachers, but as learners, servants, receivers, and listeners. We will enter as fully as possible into the lives and ministries of others, allowing the Spirit to use their lives to transform ours.

**We will remember that we are guests.** We will receive the hospitality of others with genuine gratitude, respecting the uniqueness of our hosts' cultures and experiences.

**We will be fully present.** We value our hosts, partners, leaders, and fellow pilgrims by being on time and by fully participating in each step of the journey.

**We will listen deeply.** By given prayerful attention to each person with whom we share this journey, we will help each other listen for the Spirit to speak to us.

**We will value silence.** We will resist the temptation to fill silent spaces with unnecessary words or noise, and we will claim quiet moments for personal reflection and prayer.

**When the going gets tough, we will turn to wonder.** When we feel judgmental or defensive or just plain crabby, we will seek to learn more by asking: "I wonder why I am feeling this way?" or "I wonder what he/she is feeling right now?" or "I wonder what new thing can I learn from this experience?"

**We will honor each other's vulnerability.** When we confront difficult or disturbing experiences, we will be sensitive to each other's feelings and will relate to each other with trust, understanding, and prayer.

**We will speak out truth in love.** Without assuming what others are experiencing, we will use "I" statements to express our observations. We will allow space for others to speak their own truth.

**We will practice curiosity:** What does God want me to learn? Where do I see signs of hope and resurrection? What are the connections between what I'm learning and my own ministry?

**We will practice reflection:** What feelings are stirring in me through this experience? Where am I receiving a call to see my own context differently? What does God require of me in the struggles of our church and its communities?

**We will practice integration:** How might I introduce matters of justice, truth, and reconciliation in my context? Who are the neighbors in my own community that I need to know? What would a pilgrimage at home look like?

**We will attend to joy.** We will celebrate every gift of beauty, laughter, and life by not taking ourselves too seriously. We will remember that "angels can fly because they take themselves so lightly" (G. K. Chesterton).

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<sup>2</sup> Adapted from a "Rule of Life" written by James A. Harnish and Janice Virtue for Advancing Pastoral Leadership, a program of the Texas Conference of the United Methodist Church. UMC.

## Sunday Evening: Here am I; send me!

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### Scripture

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple. Seraphs were in attendance above him; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. And one called to another and said:

*“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of God’s glory.”*

The pivots on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house filled with smoke. And I said: “Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!”

Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. The seraph touched my mouth with it and said: “Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out.” Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” And I said, “Here am I; send me!” And he said,

“Go and say to this people: ‘Keep listening, but do not comprehend; keep looking, but do not understand.’  
- Isaiah 6:1-9

### Meditation

It was a year marked by a death and a major sense of loss, yet Isaiah was overwhelmed by a vision of God’s majesty and glory. Not even catching a full glimpse of God, Isaiah trembles and is utterly aware of his brokenness and the brokenness of his community. Full of compassion, God is quick to extend grace, offering Isaiah the chance to serve even in the midst of his human frailty.

- *Can you relate to Isaiah’s experience? Remember a time in your life when you were confronted with the abundant outpouring of God’s glory and compassion.*

Isaiah’s experience is different from other biblical instances where people responded, “Here I am.” Abraham, Jacob, Moses, and Samuel were replying to an explicit call by God for them specifically. Isaiah *volunteers* himself to an open invitation by God.

- *What has compelled you to volunteer to be a part of this experience?*

The message God gives Isaiah to share with his community does not seem to make much sense. Perhaps what is truly senseless is the reality of the brokenness with which Isaiah is confronted. There may be times this week, when you want things to make sense, but cannot seem to understand what God is doing in the midst of such loss and destruction. *Keep listening, and remain open. For Isaiah, it was many years before the healing work of God became truly visible in his suffering and displaced community.*

## Daily Examen

Take a deep breath, perhaps the deepest breath you've taken today.

Remember you are in God's presence and give thanks for God's gifts and grace for this day.

Think back over the past day, from when you woke up to everything that has happened between then and where you are now.

- *For what moment today are you most grateful?*
- *For what moment today are you least grateful?*

Give these moments to God, giving thanks for your moment of consolation, and asking for healing and comfort in your moment of desolation.

## Prayer

Holy, holy, holy are you, O God.

Your majesty and your compassion make us feel small.

Yet, we desire to say yes to your invitation to work for the healing of the world.

Give us your heart and your hands to love and serve your people.

Open our ears so that we may keep listening for your voice.

Trusting in your abiding love and wisdom, we pray.

Amen.

## Hymns

All Creatures of Our God and King	(Francis of Assisi, 1225)
Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing	(Robert Robinson, 1758)
Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty!	(Reginald Heber, 1826)
Sanctuary	(Randy Scruggs & John Thompson, 1982)

## Monday Morning: Make a joyful noise!

### Scripture

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth.  
Worship the Lord with gladness;  
come into his presence with singing.  
Know that the Lord is God.  
It is he that made us, and we are his;  
we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.  
Enter his gates with thanksgiving,  
and his courts with praise.  
Give thanks to him, bless his name.  
For the Lord is good;  
his steadfast love endures forever,  
and his faithfulness to all generations.  
- Psalm 100

### Meditation

The psalmist leads the community in giving thanks to God, because God is God, and we are God's people -- a simple and profound truth by which we live. There is movement in this song of praise: make noise, worship, come, enter, give, and bless. Being still serves an important purpose in worship and communion with God, but today is a time for action!

In this version of the psalm, the Hebrew word עָבַד (pronounced *abad*) is translated as *worship*. Other versions translate this word as *serve*. Your service today is your worship to God. Go and make a joyful noise!

- *Recall a time in the past when you embodied worship? What was that like for you?*
- *What excites you about today? What are some reservations you might have about your worship and service today?*



## Prayer

Gracious God,  
You are the Creator and Shepherd of us all.  
May our actions today be of worship and service to you.  
May the songs of our hearts sing of your faithfulness.  
With joy and gratitude, we pray.  
Amen.

## Hymns

I Will Enter His Gates	(Leona Von Brethorst)
(With Thanksgiving in My Heart)	(Charles Wesley, 1739)
O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing	(Joachim Neander, 1680)
Praise Ye the Lord, the Almighty	

## Monday Evening: As each one was able

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### Scripture

The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch. During this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. (This happened during the reign of Claudius.) The disciples, as each one was able, decided to provide help for the brothers and sisters living in Judea. This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul.

- Acts 11:26c-30

### Meditation

Somehow in Antioch, the term *Christian* was used to identify a distinct community of people. It was not a name they chose for themselves, but because of the way they lived, others could not help but notice that they lived for Jesus the Christ. Christians were those who belonged to Christ, no longer simply servants to Christ but partners and siblings with Christ.

- *What does it mean for you to be called a Christian? What did you notice about your team today that reflected the life lived by Jesus Christ?*

Agabus prophesied a severe and widespread famine would impact the Roman kingdom, and the disciples responded with selflessness. Knowing God as a compassionate God, their response to the impending disaster was one of generosity, compassion and concern for those in need. Sending physical aid to others was a reflection of God's physical presence with God's people as Jesus our Christ.

- *What your initial response when you learned of this disaster? What has it been like for you today to give of yourself to someone in need? Can you remember a time when someone has responded with compassion to your needs or the needs of your community?*





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## Daily Examen

Recalling the promise of God's abiding love, think back over the past day.

- *When did you feel God's presence closest today?*
- *When did God's presence seem furthest?*

Give these moments to God, giving thanks for your moment of consolation, and asking for healing and comfort in your moment of desolation.

## Prayer

Holy Spirit,  
You fill our lives with the love and compassion of Jesus Christ.  
Do not allow our eyes to turn away from those in need.  
Strengthen us and guide us as we try to live as Christians.  
We give thanks for the gifts shared among your children,  
And we remember that as freely we have received and freely we give.  
In the name of Jesus Christ our Savior, we pray.  
Amen.

## Hymns

Lord, Have Mercy	(Richard Proulx, 1984)
Lord, I Want to Be a Christian	(African American Spiritual)
Send me, Jesus (Thuma mina)	(Traditional South African Song)
Spirit of the Living God	(Daniel Iverson, 1926)

## Tuesday Morning: Do away with the yoke of oppression

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### Scripture

“Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen:  
to loose the chains of injustice  
and untie the cords of the yoke,  
to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?  
Is it not to share your food with the hungry  
and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—  
when you see the naked, to clothe them,  
and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?  
Then your light will break forth like the dawn,  
and your healing will quickly appear;  
then your righteousness will go before you,  
and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard.  
Then you will call, and the Lord will answer;  
you will cry for help, and God will say: Here am I.  
“If you do away with the yoke of oppression,  
with the pointing finger and malicious talk,  
and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry  
and satisfy the needs of the oppressed,  
then your light will rise in the darkness,  
and your night will become like the noonday.  
The Lord will guide you always;  
God will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land  
and will strengthen your frame.  
You will be like a well-watered garden,  
like a spring whose waters never fail.  
Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins  
and will raise up the age-old foundations;  
you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls,  
Restorer of Streets with Dwellings.

- Isaiah 58:6-12

### Meditation

The people of Israel have returned from exile to find their city and their homes in ruin. They have fasted and waited for what seemed like too long for God to respond to their cries. Their unanswered prayers must be signs of God’s disregard for the injustice they have endured.

- *What unanswered prayers have you heard lately?*

Isaiah reminds Israel that true fasting is not merely a pious ritual performed in order to get what they want from God. What God desires is for the people to participate in the restructuring of what is unjust. Fasting is not a transaction with God but a transformation of our lives that incorporates the needs of others with our own.

- *What have you noticed that seems unfair or inequitable in the community as it works to recover from disaster? Who has been forgotten, or disadvantaged? How are you participating in systems, communities, and relationships in need of transformation?*

When we are committed to caring for those who are vulnerable and oppressed, our prayers to God will be heard. God will be among us. *Here am I, God will say, Here am I.*

- *What does it mean to you to hear that God is present with you when you care for the vulnerable and oppressed?*

## Prayer

God of righteousness,  
Take our ritual acts of piety and transform them into lives working for fairness and justice. Even though we do not have all the right answers, when we act in faith and for needs of others, you are with us.  
*Emmanuel, God with us.*  
Help us to rebuild what has been ruined.  
Strengthen us. Make us your light rising in darkness.  
Amen.

## Hymns

All Who Love and Serve Your City	(Erik Routley, 1966)
Make Me a Channel of Your Peace	(Sebastian Temple, 1967)
Prayers of the People	(Ruth Duck, 2014)
(For All Who Labor without End)	

## Tuesday Evening: Abide in me as I abide in you

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### Scripture

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.

“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command 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. You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

- John 15:1-5, 12-17

### Meditation

This scripture contains the last of the “I am” statements Jesus tells his disciples. Knowing his crucifixion is near, Jesus reminds his disciples of the true nature of their relationship, of who they are in God. Vinegrower, vine, branches, fruit -- each one of these is interconnected with one another. To abide is to dwell, to be connected in a way that is life-giving and life-sustaining. Abiding with Jesus promises life abundantly.

- *How do you experience abiding with Jesus Christ? Have you noticed any fruit lately in your life, in the lives of those around you, or in your community?*

As we abide with God in Christ, we are empowered to love as Jesus loves us. Our relationship with God and our relationships with one another transform and mature from transactional relationships (If I do something... God does something in return) to mutual relationships. We serve one another out of love, which often requires sacrifices.

- *What does it mean to you to be called a friend by Jesus and no*

*longer a servant? Have you seen relationships around you transform recently?*

## Daily Examen

With your feet planted on the ground, take a deep breath, filling up your lungs.

Remember the Spirit is our guide and comforter. Think back over the past day and ask yourself:

- *What experience today made me most alive?*
- *What experience today was the most draining?*

Give these moments to God, giving thanks for your moment of consolation, and asking for healing and comfort in your moment of desolation.

## Prayer

Creator God, you are the vinegrower.  
As your blessed branches, enrich us with your love and grace,  
So that we may bear fruit in all the places you bring us.  
As your son Jesus has laid down his life for us,  
Grant us the courage to do the same for our neighbors and friends.  
The love you call us to embody is extraordinary,  
And the life you call us to live is one of abundance.  
Thanks be to God!  
Amen.

## Hymns

Be Thou My Vision	(Mary E. Byrne, 1905)
Jesus Call Us	(Cecil Frances Alexander, 1852)
Take Us As We Are, O God	(Carl P. Daw Jr., 1995)

## **Wednesday Morning: Clothe yourselves with love**

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### Scripture

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. 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 deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

- Colossians 3:12-17

### Meditation

At this point, you may have clothed yourself repeatedly with a blue Presbyterian Disaster Assistance t-shirt. As you travel to your work sites, the sea of blue t-shirts provides a visual cue that you are a part of a community living, serving, and working together. In this letter to the Colossians, Paul addresses a community. The "you" refers to "y'all," a group of individuals adapting into their new identities as Christians. Paul's reminder to the community to be clothed with compassion, kindness, humility, patience, and to love, bear, and forgive one another points to the reality that the building up of community takes a lot of effort! Paul points to gratitude as the path to maintaining life in community.

*What do you have to be thankful for today? Are there any hymns, songs, or poems that reflect your heart of gratitude?*



## Prayer

God in One and God in Three,  
Community is an integral part of your very being.  
Bless the relationships that are forming and transforming.  
Just as we have been graciously forgiven, we forgive all others.  
May all that we say and do today sing of our thanksgiving  
For the ways you have called us together as the Body of Christ.  
Clothed with the love and light of Jesus our Lord, we pray.  
Amen.

## Hymns

Blest Be the Tie that Binds	(John Fawcett, 1782)
O for a World	(Miriam Therese Winter, 1987)
We Gather Here in Jesus' Name	
(Come, Share the Lord)	(Bryan Jeffery Leech, 1984)
Here in This Place (Gather Us In)	(Marty Haugen, 1982)

## Wednesday Evening: For I have seen God face to face

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### Scripture

Jacob was left alone; and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he struck him on the hip socket; and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. Then he said, "Let me go, for the day is breaking." But Jacob said, "I will not let you go, unless you bless me."

So he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." Then the man said, "You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with humans, and have prevailed." Then Jacob asked him, "Please tell me your name." But he said, "Why is it that you ask my name?" And there he blessed him. So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved."

The sun rose upon him as he passed Penuel, limping because of his hip. Therefore to this day the Israelites do not eat the thigh muscle that is on the hip socket, because he struck Jacob on the hip socket at the thigh muscle.

- Genesis 32:24-31

### Meditation

Until this point in his life, Jacob had already lived through a number of adventures. Jacob tricked his own twin brother and his father into obtaining Esau's birthright. Jacob was sent away to live with his uncle Laban, where even more complicated relationships ensued between Laban, his daughters Rachel and Leah, and Jacob. Here, Jacob received word his brother Esau is traveling with an army of 400 to meet him, and he is afraid for his life. Scared and distressed, he sends his family and all that he has away. In the darkness of the night, Jacob is entangled in a struggle.

- *What do you believe is the significance of this event for Jacob? What is odd about this event? What seems to resonate with your own experiences of faith? Are there times you have wrestled—with yourself or with God—to find clarity or direction in life and faith?*

It seems Jacob did not walk away from the fight completely untouched. He has been changed physically and his identity has been transformed. And he is also blessed.



- *In what ways have you or those around you been blessed by challenging circumstances that often leave us scarred and transformed?*

## Daily Examen

“Be still and know that I am God.” Take a moment to be still. Breathe into the places in your body where you might be aching.

Review in your mind this day’s events, and ask yourself:

- *During what part of the day was I most drawn toward God?*
- *During what part of the day was I most drawn away from God?*

Give these moments to God, giving thanks for your moment of consolation, and asking for healing and comfort in your moment of desolation.

## Prayer

God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,  
Mysterious, powerful, and full of grace,  
Our humanity does not disconnect us from your divine love.  
Rather, in Christ, you became one in flesh with us.  
You intimately engage with us,  
Seeking us out and never abandoning us even in the darkest of nights.  
Continue to transform us  
From fleeing individuals into beloved children of God  
Gathered and empowered by the Spirit  
To know and be blessed by the Creator of us all.  
Amen.

## Hymns

God, Be the Love to Search and Keep Me (O Christ, Surround Me)	(Richard Colligan, 2004)
(Dios Está Aquí) God is Here Today	(Raul Galeano, 1999)
Why Should I Feel Discouraged?	(Civilla Durfee Martin, 1905)
Precious Lord, Take My Hand	(Thomas Andrew Dorsey, 1938)

## Thursday Morning: Present your bodies as a living sacrifice

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### Scripture

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but 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.

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.

- Romans 12:1-2, 9-13

### Meditation

The living sacrifices that once were offered to God were the sacrifices of animals. Radically expanding their understanding of God, Paul is reminding believers how we ourselves can be living sacrifices. Worship that is truly in response to God's mercy and grace cannot be contained to Sundays and the spaces around our pews. The full embodiment of worship intertwines our lives to one another in the ways we express God's love.

- *How have you noticed the embodiment of worship throughout your experiences this week?*

Remembering that Jesus said the greatest commandments are to love God and to love others as much as you love yourself (Matt. 22:36-40), Paul offers practical and ongoing ways believers can embody love to their neighbors.

- *Which of Paul's exhortations regarding love do you feel you can embody today?*



- *Which of Paul's exhortations regarding love have you seen in others this week?*

## Prayer

Holy Lord of majesty and mercy,  
We offer ourselves to you as living sacrifices.  
May the sharing of our time and our gifts be pleasing to you.  
Draw us closer as the body of Christ,  
And renew our faith and hope in your everlasting kingdom.  
Holy Spirit, infuse our actions and our words  
With the very love Jesus Christ embodied in his life, death, and resurrection.  
In humility and awe, we pray.  
Amen.

## Hymns

In Christ There is No East or West	(John Oxenham, 1908)
Shout to the North	(Martin Smith, 1995)
Take My Life, and Let It Be	(Frances R. Havergal, 1874)
Take, O Take Me as I Am	(John L. Bell, 1995)
Bring Forth the Kingdom	(Marty Haugen, 1986)
(You are salt for the earth, O people)	

## Thursday Evening: Do you love me?

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### Scripture

This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead. When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you."

Jesus said to him,  
"Feed my lambs."

A second time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you."

Jesus said to him,  
"Tend my sheep."

He said to him the third time, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" And he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you."

Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep. Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go." (He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.)

After this he said to him, "Follow me."

- John 21:14-19

### Meditation

Jesus' appearance to his disciples after his death undoubtedly brought a huge sense of assurance to his followers. They had committed the last several years to his ministry, yet remained uncertain what their future would hold. Living with the shame of having denied Jesus three times, Peter seems to endure Jesus' repeated questioning with as much patience and honesty as he could bear. And Jesus, who begins by asking Peter if he loves him wholeheartedly, shows compassion in the end by accepting the love Peter is able to offer, as flawed and broken as that love might seem. Some scholars label this moment Peter's "rehabilitation and commissioning." Jesus will soon leave his disciples again, yet he will remain with them in Spirit. His



presence will continually guide them, and his voice will continue to echo throughout the ages saying again and again these three things:

Do you love me?

Feed my sheep.

Follow me.

- *How do you think you would react if you were in Peter's position? What does it mean for you to hear Jesus ask again and again, "Do you love me?"*
  
  
- *What does it mean for you to hear Jesus ask for you to feed and tend to his sheep?*
  
  
- *Are there times in your faith journey where you feel led to places you do not want to go? In what ways do you hear Jesus calling you to follow him?*

## Daily Examen

There is nothing on heaven on earth that will ever separate us from the love of God. Give thanks for God's unceasing love.

From this morning until now, think over your day.

- *What moment today gave you the most hope?*
- *What moment today gave you a sense of despair?*

Give these moments to God, giving thanks for your moment of consolation, and asking for healing and comfort in your moment of desolation.

## Prayer

Come, Holy Spirit, come.  
You breathe into us compassion for your flock.  
Give us joy as we feed, tend, and share your love.  
Thank you, gracious God, for your persistence.  
Even when we deny the call of Jesus Christ  
And when we turn away from the suffering of our neighbors,  
It is never too late to follow you.  
In the name of Christ Jesus, our Lord and Savior, we pray.  
Amen.

## Hymns

I'm Gonna Live So God Can Use Me (Wendell P. Whalum, 1984)  
I, the Lord of Sea and Sky (Here I am, Lord) (Daniel Schutte, 1981)  
The Summons (Will You Come and Follow Me) (John L. Bell, 1987)

## Friday Morning: I will let you find me

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### Scripture

For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you. When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart, I will let you find me, says the Lord, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, says the Lord, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.

- Jeremiah 29:11-14

### Meditation

Through the prophet Jeremiah, God speaks to a people forced to leave their home and everything they and known and who found themselves to be migrants, refugees, and an exiled people.

- *What emotions, feelings, and sentiments have you witnessed expressed by people who have been displaced or have had their homes and communities destroyed?*

God tells a hurting people that when they call, their prayers and their cries will be heard. For those who seek out God in this time of darkness, they will find God.

- *In what ways have people been able to find comfort in the midst of their pain or seen a glimmer of light when they are surrounded by such darkness?*
  
- *What does it mean for you to hear God promise to restore the homes and lives that have been destroyed?*



## Prayer

O Lord,  
Our hearts grieve with all those who have experienced great loss.  
May our presence with those who have been exiled  
Be a sign of your promise of restoration.  
We trust in your goodness and in your mercy,  
And we give you thanks for hearing us as we pray.  
Amen.

## Hymns

Great is Thy Faithfulness	(Thomas O. Chilsolm, 1923)
God is Our Help, Refuge, and Strength	(Seung Nam Kim, 2000)
Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise	(Walter Chalmers Smith, 1867)
O Lord, Hear My Prayer	(Taize Community, 1982)



## Friday Evening: Are you going to wash my feet?

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### Scripture

And during supper Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand." Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" Jesus said to him, "One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you." For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, "Not all of you are clean."

After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

- John 13:3-17

### Meditation

Jesus and his disciples were frequent travelers. Their ministry led them to various peoples and to various peoples with various needs and concerns. Jesus called disciples and gained followers and spectators all across Galilee, Capernaum, Judea, Samaria, and Jerusalem. Yet, in the last moments of his human life, those who would follow him to the cross in Golgotha diminished. Knowing his impending trial and crucifixion would challenge the faith of his disciples, Jesus reaches out to their hearts by reaching for their feet.

- *What is your reaction to Peter's initial rejection of Jesus' offer to wash his feet? In what ways would your response to Jesus' offer to wash your feet be similar or different?*



Much of Jesus' teachings and responses to the disciples' questions were often enigmatic. Jesus spoke in parables or answered a question with another question. In this moment, however, it seems Jesus makes his intentions quite clear: *So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you.* When we allow Jesus full access to our calloused, smelly, and aching feet, his cleansing touch is capable of removing all that holds us back from following after him.

- *How does it feel for you to know that Jesus' offer to wash your feet still stands? What has it looked like for you this week to do as Jesus has done -- hearing and responding to the needs of God's children? What will it look like for you to continue following after Jesus even after this experience is over?*

## Daily Examen

Take a moment to find stillness in your mind and body. Remember you are God's beloved child.

Thinking the past day and the interactions and experiences you've had:

- *During what moment did you most feel God's love for you?*
- *During what moment did you least feel God's love for you?*

Give these moments to God, giving thanks for your moment of consolation, and asking for healing and comfort in your moment of desolation.



## Prayer

Jesus, Son of God,  
You have cleansed our feet and invited us to follow you.  
We give you thanks for your love and mercy,  
We give thanks and praise for the relationships formed and deepened this week.  
We are disturbed by the great needs that still exist.  
We are humbled to be given gifts to share with our neighbors.  
May the Spirit of God never leave us.  
Attune our ears to the cries of the suffering.  
And strengthen our feet to follow after you to the places you lead us.  
In your holy and mighty name we pray.  
Amen.

## Hymns

How Clear is Our Vocation, Lord	(Fred Pratt Green, 1981)
Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love	(Tom Colvin, 1969)
The Servant Song	(Richard Gillard, 1977)
(Will You Let Me Be Your Servant)	

## Saturday Morning: God chose you as the first fruits

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### Scripture

But we must always give thanks to God for you, brothers and sisters beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the first fruits for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and through belief in the truth. For this purpose he called you through our proclamation of the good news, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. So then, brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold fast to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by our letter.

Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and through grace gave us eternal comfort and good hope, comfort your hearts and strengthen them in every good work and word.

- 2 Thessalonians 2:13-17

### Meditation

You have served tirelessly this week. Your muscles, your attitude, and even your faith may look a little different from the beginning of the week. Perhaps there were times when it was difficult to hold onto hope. You may be wondering what will happen to the people and the places you are leaving behind.

- *What people, stories, or events have you encountered this week that you hope to continue to remember when you return home?*
  
- *What was something unexpected that you experienced this week?*

The Thessalonians were filled with distress, anxiety, and anticipation of when and how Christ would come again. Not knowing how they should go about their lives given the mysteriousness of Jesus' return, Paul encourages them to stand firm in their faith and to remember how the Spirit has revealed the truth and love of God to them through their community. Rather



than allowing fear to overwhelm them, Paul encourages them to allow God to comfort them.

- *How has God offered you comfort and grace this week? How have you noticed God's offer of comfort and grace for others?*

## Prayer

*Write your own prayer, lifting up your joys, concerns, gratitude, confessions, and anything else on your heart and mind to God.*

## Hymns

*What songs or hymns reflect your prayer?*



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## **Returning: A prayer for congregations welcoming volunteers home**

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Healing God,

We give you thanks for the meaningful ways this team has served you as they have cared for your people in \_\_\_\_\_ and we continue to pray for the many that are still living through the aftermath of this disaster. Their wounds remain deep and their pain has broken their hearts and ripped through their souls. They stand in disbelief as their world has fallen down all around them. And, in the midst of this, many wonder where you are, God, as they look at this insane configuration that is now their life.

We give you thanks for the evidence of faithfulness in their lives, and for the resilience they demonstrate as they work to rebuild, a powerful witness of faith at work in the wilderness. We thank you for the ways their witness has strengthened our own faith.

Yet, in the midst of this chaos, these servants who stand before us have offered your hope as they have listened to the stories of your children and allowed them to cry on their shoulders. We celebrate their efforts to bring comfort and strength and we continue to pray for all those affected by this disaster. Yes, God, we pray for the healing of the injured and for the families worldwide who have lost loved ones. We pray for those who are homeless or in harm's way and we pray for wisdom, safety and strength to guide all of the relief workers who will come in the future.

We offer this prayer in the strong and healing name of Jesus Christ. Amen.