

2016 LENTEN MEDITATIONS



Episcopal
Relief & Development

Healing a hurting world

Dear Friend,

Thank you for taking this opportunity to walk the path of Lent, reflecting on personal faith and our relationships with our global neighbors. Each Lent we Christians commit our lives to a deeper spiritual focus.

It is my prayer that each of these meditations will provide a road for you to encounter Christ each day and to renew your opportunity to encounter the Savior through loving your neighbor as yourself. In this thirteenth edition of Episcopal Relief & Development's Lenten Meditations, our goal is to provide you with an opportunity to walk the spiritual path with many of our program staff, volunteers and friends across the Anglican Communion. We have asked writers to focus on their own spiritual practices and to share with you how the meditations of their hearts have transformed the way they encounter Jesus' presence in all persons. It is our hope that these Lenten meditations will deepen your faith in the risen Christ and strengthen your connection to our community that walks together with others around the world – a community that knows that together we can heal a hurting world.

Sincerely in Christ,

Robert W. Radtke
President, Episcopal Relief & Development



For over 75 years, Episcopal Relief & Development has served as the compassionate response of The Episcopal Church to human suffering in the world. An independent 501(c)(3) organization, it works closely with Anglican Communion and ecumenical partners, helping communities to create long-term development strategies and rebuild after disasters. Using the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a framework, the agency reaches more than 3 million people in nearly 40 countries each year, through multi-sector programs that fight poverty, hunger and disease.

We support programs in the following areas:

- Alleviating Hunger and Improving Food Supply
- Creating Economic Opportunities and Strengthening Communities
- Promoting Health and Fighting Disease
- Responding to Disasters and Rebuilding Communities



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Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.

—*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 402

ASH WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 10

I struggle during Lent. I tried giving up being snarky one year – that lasted about three hours. I've given up coffee, tried to eat vegan, etc., and I generally end up lamenting my inability to retain any sort of Lenten discipline. In recent years, I realized that I had been going about it all wrong.

I came to The Episcopal Church to sing in the choir and stayed because I fell in love with the liturgy, the theology and the priests who challenged me to see the sacred in new ways. As someone new to church, I learned the rhythms of what was happening during mass through the movements of sung masses – that's the *Kyrie!* That's the *Agnus Dei!* I realize now that I also experience the rhythms of the liturgical year through music.

Our choir sings Schubert's *Sanctus* (S130 in *The Hymnal 1982*) for the duration of Lent. We sing it slowly, a capella, with the first line in unison, then moving into four-part harmony. I am often moved to tears by our beautiful and loving profession of faith. And that has become my Lenten discipline and gift each year. I have finally learned to get out of my own way enough to embrace this time. If you struggle with Lent, go back to what brings you to church and love that in a new way.

It's an incredible gift.

—Heidi J. Kim

Be present, O merciful God, and protect us through the hours of this night, so that we who are wearied by the changes and chances of this life may rest in your eternal changelessness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

—*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 133



THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 11

This is a Compline prayer, and yet it applies so well to Lent. For those of us in the North, Lent is a time of darkness. The bright, long days of summer are many months away, and these dark days of winter are often a time for turning inward. A time for staying inside and pausing for reflection. Lent is also a time of change. Sometimes it is change we seek out, and sometimes our Lenten disciplines choose us. The darkness and uncertainty of Lent can be challenging. Where is this path leading? How am I called to engage in transformation in my own life and in my own community?

We are called to heal a hurting world, but the “changes and chances,” the magnitude of the hurts of the world can be overwhelming. Where do we begin?

First and foremost, we can rest in and trust in God’s eternal changelessness. We can trust that even when times are dark, or we feel weighed down by the needs of the world, we are not alone. God is with us. God is steadfast, loving, caring and guiding. God does not change. We can abide in God.

—**Molly F. James**

Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

—Romans 8:35, 38-39

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 12

My spiritual discipline would be better characterized as undisciplined. As with many people, I suspect, my prayer life becomes much more active and intentional when a crisis arises. When someone I love is diagnosed with cancer. I have a health scare of my own. A friend loses her job. A loved one dies.

This passage from Romans comforts and reassures me in all times of crisis. Nothing in scripture or in our understanding of God's love tells us that we will not face crisis, pain and even death. But this passage reminds me that while God does not erase the tough times – God does not even remove the cup from God's own son's lips – God is always with us. God's love always surrounds us. That is no small comfort.

—Josephine Hicks

O Lord God Almighty...Dispel the darkness of our hearts, that by your brightness we may know you to be the true God and eternal light.

—*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 110



SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 13

I had the opportunity to travel to Ghana with Episcopal Relief & Development last year. One third of the population of Ghana lives in poverty. Malnutrition is chronic, and malaria claims the lives of 22 percent of children under five. One of our most sobering visits was to Cape Coast Castle, once the largest slave-trading center in West Africa. After we finished the dark walk through the bowels of the castle and touched the foundation of pain that forever changed the landscape of human history, we visited a craft area with artwork from local Ghanaians. A small, metal sculpture of a basket holding a baby caught my eye. The baby in the basket was the Christ child.

How was Christ in the slave trade? The artist said that if they have learned anything in Ghana, it is that Christ lives in each person. Christ is in the pain and in the joy. This simple yet profound glimpse of Christ as human and divine reminds me that it is up to us to proclaim and live the ultimate message of the gospel, the message of Christ the savior and Christ the child in all lives.

The sculpture sits on my desk and cues me to pray and meditate on seeing the presence of the divine in all lives I see.

—**Lisa Jacoby**





SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 14

Almighty God, whose blessed Son was led by the Spirit to be tempted by Satan: Come quickly to help us who are assaulted by many temptations; and, as you know the weaknesses of each of us, let each one find you mighty to save; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

—*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 218

There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?

—John 6:9

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 15

“Nothing is little in God’s service,” wrote George Herbert, the English poet and Anglican priest. “If it once have the honour of that Name, it grows great instantly.”

Most of the days I have served God have not been filled with big moments, dramatic flourishes, recognition or accolades. Most days have been filled with small things: speaking a kind word, crafting a sermon, working on a newsletter, recruiting a church school teacher. The days are filled with taking communion to a lonely man whose wife of sixty years recently died, praying with the young person who is unemployed and then calling people to see if they might have a lead on a job, writing a thank-you note and then another, saying my prayers, breaking the bread and drinking the cup.

These are the daily practices of love and service that never make headlines but do, day by day, help heal a hurting world. George Herbert is right. I believe it with all my heart: nothing is little in God’s service. Everything we do (well, almost everything) becomes great when we offer it to God. To learn that and remember it is a spiritual practice for our entire lives.

—Gay Clark Jennings

For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me.

—Matthew 25:35



TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 16

As I arrived to church on a Sunday, two folks came to me and said they were concerned about a man seated on a bench. I walked over, sat next to him and offered a bottle of water. I listened to his story, and he was lost.

I invited Howard into our service, and he followed me. I introduced him to several people who shepherded him around. He didn't smell very good, and he was dirty, and I remember wondering if he was homeless. He stayed for the service and came for Holy Eucharist. He cried at the altar rail. He was invited to our St. Mary's Day celebration.

I listened some more. He had a son, Joe. He'd lost a map and his wallet. We called his son, and Joe came to pick him up and take him home, several miles from the church. They were both grateful.

I put Howard on our church's daily prayer list. I am reminded of this passage from Matthew. Have you had an opportunity to welcome or feed or clothe or visit the least? Can you see Jesus in the face of strangers?

—Russ Oechsel, Jr.

You have turned my wailing into dancing.

—Psalm 30:12a

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 17

My favorite nights growing up were the ones when my dad would push aside the coffee table, and we would have dance night. To this day, dancing is one of my greatest joys.

Dancing doesn't always come easily. Earlier this year, I learned of the Memorial Day floods in West Texas. Twelve people died, many homes were damaged and lives were permanently changed. Dancing amid such heartbreak feels at best, draining, or at worst, insensitive.

However, amid these moments when God's presence is hardest for me to see in the world, I move. When I sway, the dance helps me integrate the world's many hurts with the rich beauty of our incarnate lives. I move until I can feel the beat of God's love pulsing through my veins.

Dancing reminds me that Christ lives within us and that our tender hearts are the ones that must be stirred to heal a hurting world.

—Lura Steele

Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they produce.

—Jeremiah 29:5



THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 18

My father was an avid vegetable gardener, tilling up the better part of an acre to accommodate enough space to grow food for a family of four. I hated weeding when I was a child. It felt like a sentence to sweaty, itchy, undeserved duty. And I definitely hated picking the cabbage worms off of the broccoli. But it was better than thinking about how many worms I might eat at the supper table. Fresh vegetables are definitely delicious but decidedly risky.

Gardening became a practice of meditation and prayer for me as an adult. I love the vigorous work of tilling the soil and smelling pungent, fresh dirt. Although planting can be tedious, when new life sprouts up and transforms into beautiful, edible things, every moment of work and weeding is worth it.

Episcopal Relief & Development's Abundant Life Garden Project resources are a wonderful way to introduce children to sustaining life through healthy food. My own children have also been sentenced to weeding. And they love fresh vegetables and grow their own herbs. They understand the process that gets food to the grocery store. And they, too, enjoy the peaceful prayer that goes with gardening. How do the children in your life encounter creation? How about the child in you?

—**Bronwyn Clark Skov**

A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.”

—John 20:26-28

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 19

I have been involved with Episcopal Relief & Development's US Disaster Program for almost four years. And while many of us don't typically associate Wyoming with disasters, there have been wildfires, blizzards, a landslide and several floods in my short tenure. Through these events and my involvement with the US Disaster Program, I have had the opportunity to be with people shortly after their lives have changed in an instant.

When I visit with people after these life-changing moments, I am often reminded of the exchange between Jesus and Thomas. This passage speaks to me, not because people may have doubts about their faith in times of tragedy, but rather because of the importance of witnessing and being with people after they are hurt, wounded, broken. I like to look at this passage differently from most. For me, Jesus is standing before Thomas, and rather than trying to heal his wounds, Thomas is simply with Jesus and sees him for who he is: hurt, wounded, broken.

How will you be present with the hurt, wounded and broken today?

—Tristan English

He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.

—Psalm 147:3



SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 20

Throughout 2015, my colleagues and I produced and traveled with Episcopal Relief & Development's 75th Anniversary Photo Exhibition. Doing that work, I saw each of the more than thirty images frequently. Before we even set up the exhibition for the first time, one image in particular struck me: the portrait of a midwife in Sierra Leone. Her countenance portrays wisdom, and I can feel in her the confidence and character someone might trust with their prenatal and delivery care.

Early in 2015, the Ebola crisis hit countries in West Africa. One day, as I was installing the exhibit in the nave of a church, I looked at her and wondered how she was doing in the midst of that terrifying disease. I wanted to know about her personally. I knew from my colleagues that midwives in Sierra Leone often serve as frontline medical personnel. In that moment, I said a prayer for her and then for all the people of Sierra Leone. I prayed for the sick, the dead and the caregivers. After that, every time I saw the image, I was reminded to pray for all of the victims of the Ebola crisis and for her as well. The crisis is mostly passed, but I still say a short prayer each time I see this image. What are some of the prayer cues in your life?

—Sean T. McConnell





SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 21

O God, whose glory it is always to have mercy: Be gracious to all who have gone astray from your ways, and bring them again with penitent hearts and steadfast faith to embrace and hold fast the unchangeable truth of your Word, Jesus Christ your Son; who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

—*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 218

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

—Hebrews 12:1

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 22

One of the many questions my friends ask when I describe my work with Episcopal Relief & Development is, “Does conversion happen?” It’s a tough question. My colleagues will attest to my joy at working with our church partner in Myanmar. I have been visiting them for nearly ten years, and in those years, the country has worked to reform itself from a repressive past. With successive undemocratic regimes, the Christian community has faced a long history of religious persecution and global isolation. In many ways, the Church in contemporary Myanmar mirrors the life and challenges of the early Christians. And similar to the early followers of Christ, in Myanmar these hardships have deepened their faith, leading them to expand their presence across the country, compose songs of praise, enrich the lives of members with continuous spiritual formation and serve their neighbors through poverty alleviation and humanitarian support.

It is a privilege to participate in acts of worship and to celebrate God’s kingdom with my friends in Myanmar. Language is an insignificant obstacle that their passion and faith transcends. So, does conversion happen? Absolutely. For me. I am constantly renewed by the witness of my brothers and sisters across our global Anglican Communion. In what ways are you inspired and transformed by the faithful people you encounter?

—Nagulan Nesiah

For reasonable weather, and for an abundance of the fruits of the earth,
let us pray to the Lord. *Lord, have mercy.*

—*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 384



TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 23

One way I find connection with God and God's people is by choosing the Prayers of the People for the coming week's Eucharist. In California, we have been experiencing years of drought. Our agriculture industry employs hundreds of thousands of people as well as produces a huge amount of food. Seasonable weather plays an important part. Each week we pray for rain and for the fruit trees in our yards and for our agriculture.

In my work as one of Episcopal Relief & Development's Partners in Response*, I also encounter people adversely affected by too much rain. I recall meeting Candace, whose home was flooded after torrential rains in Colorado. When her basement was inundated, she lost her library. After Hurricane Sandy, I met with church members and other community members whose homes and businesses had been washed away. In partnership with affected dioceses, Episcopal Relief & Development supports long-term recovery efforts to help people get back into their homes.

When you pray about weather, does a certain person or part of the world come to mind?

—**Michael Bamberger**

* Partners in Response is a group of volunteers who have experienced disasters in their own communities and who accompany newly impacted clergy, dioceses, congregations and staff as they find a new normal.

Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

—2 Corinthians 9:7

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 24

This year someone very close to me was facing homelessness. I never thought that I would have such a direct experience with homelessness. Fortunately his plight was a temporary situation, but those nights he spent on the street caused me terrible anguish. He was in another part of the country so an offer of direct assistance was impossible. Would he be OK? My family and I prayed for him a lot during those long nights.

Since he couldn't afford a rent deposit and had poor credit, a longer-term housing solution was out of reach. I made a commitment to support his housing costs for two months until he could find another job. I knew it was the right thing to do and did it with happiness in my heart. Two weeks later, this help was no longer needed because he found a job and could afford a rented room. I gave because I had faith – a faith that also gave him the hope to believe in himself.

Today, I invite you to reflect on how your own faith can transform the lives of others.

—Judith Morrison

O God, you have made us and all living things. You are even more wonderful than what you have made. We thank you for giving us pets who bring us joy. As you take care of us, so also we ask your help that we might take care of those who trust us to look after them. By doing this, we share in your own love for all creation. We ask this in Jesus' name. *Amen.*

—Adapted from a “Collect for Saint Francis”



THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 25

My approach to work is to be doggedly determined. I believe in what I do. I believe it deserves my best. And I believe it matters. I believe it deserves my full attention.

Eight years ago I started taking my Labrador Retriever Annie to the office with me when our older dog died. I was concerned that Annie would be lonely. I was, though, afraid Annie would distract me from work. She did. That turned out to be the best part about Annie at the office. She was as doggedly distracting as I was doggedly determined. She would periodically nudge my hand from the keyboard to stroke her back or scratch her tummy. When she sensed I was losing my cool, all seventy-five pounds of her would crawl in my lap. And, of course, she had to be regularly walked.

Each and every Annie distraction reminded me I was loved unconditionally, as only dogs can do. That in turn reminded me of God. Annie was God's way of doggedly distracting me to come out and play and to know I am loved.

I commend dogged distraction to you. You can find your own distraction. I recommend the four-legged kind.

—Stacy F. Sauls

Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.”

—John 4:10

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 26

Jesus’ meeting at the well with the Samaritan woman relates deeply to my work, my journey and my life. The Samaritan woman was of mixed race and shunned by the Jews; her own people considered her immoral because she had many husbands. She drew water at midday and alone – not with the other women in the cool of the morning or evening. Yet Jesus treats her with radical equality. He knows her story and offers living water, the greatest gift, essential to life. This story warns me against an insidious problem among professional do-gooders like myself: a tendency to feel superior. I can never assume someone is helpless or that my action will save them. So Episcopal Relief & Development doesn’t just go to Nicaragua to build a well – it works with a local civil society organization, El Porvenir, to build wells and latrines, skills and knowledge, based on the community’s own understanding of its needs and what it can sustain.

We are all ministers in the Body of Christ. We are honored to accompany; we are servants. To think that we can fix others is really a marker of our own insecurity. We are privileged to walk with the Samaritan woman – and to share the living water with her. How will you walk along with those you minister to today?

—Lindsay Coates

Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,
Prone to leave the God I love;
Here's my heart, O take and seal it,
Seal it for Thy courts above.

—“Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing”



SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 27

All too often during worship, I get to the end of a hymn that I've just sung and realize that I haven't paid any attention to the lyrics. Any of them. I've been on autopilot, belting out the all-too-familiar words, lustily adding harmony to the "Amen" and then moving on to the next part of worship.

But the lyrics of "Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing" pierce my heart, every time. I simply can't be on autopilot when singing what feels like a bold confession: I am not a faithful servant of God. In fact, not only do I stray from the right paths, but I also feel myself straying. How can I sing, "Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it," without getting a lump in my throat? Fortunately, at Episcopal Relief & Development, I take comfort and strength from my colleagues whose lives are dedicated to nurturing and feeding and walking in solidarity with our partners around the globe.

And if I need role models for staying the course, I think of our sisters and brothers throughout the world who overcome great challenges to serve their families, their communities and their God. Who nudges you back on the path? What keeps you from wandering? Who are your spiritual role models?

—**Esther Cohen**





SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 28

Almighty God, you know that we have no power in ourselves to help ourselves: Keep us both outwardly in our bodies and inwardly in our souls, that we may be defended from all adversities which may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

—*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 218

Then Mary said, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.”

—Luke 1:38

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 29

This past August, my husband and I traveled to the Holy Land with a group from Episcopal Relief & Development. We spent two days in Nazareth, the place where the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary and announced, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus.”

As I wandered the ancient streets – four months pregnant with my first child – my thoughts turned to Mary. Did her fear subside? Was she confused about what was happening to her body? Was she excited about the new life growing inside her? Like expectant mothers all over the world, I worried for my health and the health of the baby. In Nazareth I began to pray for all mothers, especially those without access to maternal and child healthcare, turning over the angel’s final words to Mary in the story of the Annunciation: “For nothing will be impossible with God.” May this statement of faith be the foundation of hope on which we build a vision for a world in which all mothers and children have access to health care.

—Meredith Brown

Lord, it is night. The night is for stillness. Let us be still in the presence of God. It is night after a long day. What has been done has been done; what has not been done has not been done; let it be. The night is dark. Let our fears of the darkness of the world and of our own lives rest in you. The night is quiet. Let the quietness of your peace enfold us, all dear to us, and all who have no peace. The night heralds the dawn. Let us look expectantly to a new day, new joys, new possibilities. *Amen.*



—Night Prayer, *A New Zealand Prayer Book
He Karakia Mihinare o Aotearoa*, p. 184

TUESDAY, MARCH 1

I have long been drawn to the night prayers. I resonate with the words of these offerings. Their poetry soothes my soul. I also resonate with the stillness that comes in darkness, when I am allowed the time to hope, to commune with my spirit in a quiet place.

Our days are so filled with chaos that we often miss opportunities to nurture our spirits. It is in the darkness, when it is quiet, when we are faced with our fears and our desires, that we turn to the One who brings us comfort.

Those in Episcopal Relief & Development's global community have fears and desires that are not dissimilar from our own: to keep their families safe, to protect them from sickness and hardship, to provide them with opportunities to grow.

Tonight, think of our friends around the world and rest well in the knowledge that their savings group is providing opportunities for their children to attend school, that the mosquito net is providing a peaceful night's sleep. And give thanks for these things, these partnerships that create a place for hope, a hope that comes in Christ with the dawn of the new day.

—**Chad Brinkman**

Let nothing disturb thee. Let nothing dismay thee. All things pass.
God never changes.

—Saint Teresa of Ávila

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 2

My spiritual director often reminds me to stop and rest. Sometimes I need the reminder in a very literal way because I really need more sleep. Other times I need these words to help me focus on why I do what I do. In this sense, I understand “stop and rest” to mean I need to be present and rest in the moment and to be open to encountering God in everything. A few years ago, I taped a short prayer by Saint Teresa of Ávila to my computer screen because it reminded me of an important and simple fact: God is constant, faithful.

Recently, I decided that I was going to use that prayer to cultivate a practice of being more present in my own daily life and work. A few times throughout the day, I'll stop what I'm doing, pray this simple, short prayer, and reflect on how I've noticed God's presence. Sometimes I have experienced God in a conversation about mission; other times I see God in formulas that actually work the way I want them to in spreadsheets. Intentionally taking time to look for God has helped reinforce what I hold to be true: God is always present.

How do you stop and rest in God?

—Elizabeth Boe

Be still, then, and know that I am God.

—Psalm 46:11



THURSDAY, MARCH 3

As a disaster ministry volunteer, I find it helpful to seek presence in the One who sustains us all.

Several years ago I was given an Anglican rosary followed by a gift from my daughter – a book called *Praying with Beads*. Immediately I was drawn to the sensorial effects of my daily ritual: silencing mobile distractions, lighting candles that flickered reverently, perusing pages for the day’s prayer, touching the rosary cross and each individual bead. My slow, mindful journey into stillness brought me closer to God’s healing grace.

As my ritual with the beads continues, I am awed by God’s endless grace that lifts me up to ongoing spiritual renewal. This ancient and modern practice with its rich symbolism reaffirms the relevance of my ministry.

During this Lenten season, take time to be still and embrace a spiritual practice that refreshes your soul.

—**Ginger Bankston Bailey**

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.

—Jeremiah 29:11

FRIDAY, MARCH 4

It is said that the ability to visualize what we want unleashes the power to make it so. In my role of program officer, I use a reflection/action tool during visits with partner staff and community-level participants to harness this power of visualization through storytelling and the sharing of individual as well as community dreams. Whether a young man in the Democratic Republic of Congo sharing his dream of becoming a pop music star or a forty-two-year-old savings group member in Angola sharing her dream of returning to school to complete her degree, their faces present the same unmistakable sparkle of faith-filled self-confidence and jubilation. Author Antoine de Saint-Exupéry articulates the power of visualization: “If you want to build a ship, don’t drum up people to collect wood and don’t assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea.”

Work in the development field doesn’t involve having all the answers and telling people what they should want, do or need. It is much more fun than that. It is full of reflection, action and celebration of our shared dreams for the future – as wonderful and wild and awe-inspiring as they may be. What is your dream for your future and for the future we all share?

—Tammi Mott

And now, Lord, look at their threats, and grant to your servants to speak your word with all boldness, while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.

—Acts 4:29-30



SATURDAY, MARCH 5

Will I be safe from the person wielding a gun? Can I survive until the next paycheck while I'm drowning under a pile of bills? Will I keep my health? How about my job or my relationships?

Every day we deal with situations that threaten our peace. Some of these threats have the ability to inundate us and make us afraid to consider the next moves in our lives.

In their time, Peter and John and the other disciples faced threats from the authorities and others. We face a multitude of threats, both local and global.

In times of fear, we can all share this prayer of the disciples to be empowered with boldness to fulfill our ministries and be what we are meant to be, despite the prevailing circumstances or threats. How else can we be signs and wonders in the name of Jesus?

—Idris Dada Buabang





SUNDAY, MARCH 6

Gracious Father, whose blessed Son Jesus Christ came down from heaven to be the true bread which gives life to the world: Evermore give us this bread, that he may live in us, and we in him; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

—*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 219

Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?

—*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 305

MONDAY, MARCH 7

It took me many years to live into the reality that we are all children of God. In part I was jolted into what this means when, as an aid worker in Liberia during the civil war, I met a number of Roman Catholics from religious orders. I was struck by how they were living out the gospel – truly loving their neighbors, giving all to help those in need. They treated all persons with such incredible kindness that the vision of their ministry is still embedded in my mind.

If we are all children of God, then we all have the presence of God within our being. It follows that if we are in meaningful relationships with others, we can see that presence of God within them and they in us. In a hurting world, we are called to see the presence of Christ within all people and respond to that presence with love and kindness. We can do this with those we encounter day to day and with those who are presented to us through agencies like Episcopal Relief & Development. In your prayers, think about the many opportunities presented each day to meet Christ in others and pray about how you might respond to that presence in your life.

—**David Copley**

O God, you made us in your own image and redeemed us through Jesus your Son: Look with compassion on the whole human family; take away the arrogance and hatred which infect our hearts; break down the walls that separate us; unite us in bonds of love; and work through our struggle and confusion to accomplish your purposes on earth; that, in your good time, all nations and races may serve you in harmony around your heavenly throne; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

—*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 815



TUESDAY, MARCH 8

I have been thinking about the words power and privilege. Who has power? How does one receive it? What does it mean to have privilege? Our earthly definition of power as coming from wealth, gender, authority or other sources is one big illusion. We all possess power, not because anyone gave it to us, but because we are children of God.

Privilege is different; it's borne out of many things. During this season, I am taking a closer look at how I am living into my own power and privilege. I can use my power for love or hate. I can use my privilege to further the kingdom of God or to fulfill my earthly desires. I was born into privilege I do not deserve. I can pretend the world isn't broken and that the lives and well-being of others doesn't matter. Or I can reread the last line of our baptismal covenant that says, "Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?" and respond, "I will, with God's help." That is my choice through prayer and intentionality.

Everywhere, people are in situations outside of their control. It's our responsibility to love, serve and protect all people, with God's help.

—**Jennifer Korwan**

Guide us waking, O Lord, and guard us sleeping; that awake we may watch with Christ, and asleep we may rest in peace.

—*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 134

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 9

If there is one sentence from the Daily Office that I carry with me, it has to be this antiphon to the Song of Simeon. For me, it speaks to the hours of being purposeful as well as to the hours of downtime. In my life, I wear a variety of hats. I am a pastor and priest, a spouse, a parent – and a volunteer Partner in Response for Episcopal Relief & Development. When I get very busy, I sometimes forget that I am not alone in my endeavors.

Praying this antiphon reminds me that I am not alone in this life, that I work with others and that God is with us to guide and guard. Going it alone is not an option. I am part of a family. As a priest, I can't function without my colleagues and bishops. When I deploy to a disaster, I travel with other folks in our program.

Guide us. Guard us. Be with us as we watch and when we rest.

Who are your companions on the journey?

—**Michael Bamberger**

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

—1 Corinthians 12:4-7



THURSDAY, MARCH 10

Episcopal Relief & Development is a collaborative venture – joining us together with our partners around the Anglican Communion and our neighbors living in marginalized communities around the world. Many of our neighbors face daily challenges of living in severe poverty, and these formidable challenges require many kinds of skills, experiences and a full range of assets to overcome. This passage from Corinthians speaks to the spiritual dimension of resource mobilization, which is the work I do. The process of program development ideally grows out of the best of everyone's ideas and strengths, including and especially the participating communities, and identifies the diverse types of resources that can be used to create change. Resource mobilization is not just about money, which is too often thought of as the main driver of community development. Rather, the resource might be the newfound confidence of women in a savings group. It might be the energy and skills of newly trained health volunteers. It might be the inspiration of clergy speaking out against gender-based violence.

As we seek to support communities working to achieve their goals, our ministry is to first recognize and reinforce the talents and assets that community members and partners already have. Then we consider together how Episcopal Relief & Development can build on the gifts, services and activities underway, bestowed by the Spirit for the blessing of all.

—Dawn Murdock

A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which are worth a penny.

—Mark 12:42

FRIDAY, MARCH 11

In June of 2015, Texas experienced Tropical Storm Bill, and the Diocese of Texas received emergency funds from Episcopal Relief & Development. A woman contacted the Diocese to request help, and I listened as she told me of evacuations. She opened her home to six people, unknown to her at the time, who needed temporary shelter. She told me that she was on a fixed income and needed financial help. I placed her on my daily prayer list.

When I called her to arrange a time to meet and give her a check, she said that she just couldn't accept the money. She said that she'd received a windfall – she didn't say from whom or how much – and that she was sure that others needed the money more than she did. This woman gave what she had to strangers: not money, but food, water and shelter.

I am reminded of the story of the poor widow who gave two small copper coins – everything that she had. Jesus tells his disciples that this widow has put in more than all the others.

Today, I invite you to pray for the faithful who give their all in time of need. Perhaps you know some by name.

—Russ Oechsel, Jr.

Almighty God, we entrust all who are dear to us to your never-failing care and love.

—*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 831



SATURDAY, MARCH 12

A siren is blaring. An accident, a heart attack, a theft, an assault, a fire. Whatever the siren is racing toward, someone's life is falling apart. So whenever I hear a siren, I say a quick prayer: Lord have mercy on whoever is involved in that event.

Victims, perpetrators and first responders all need our prayers. So many people need our prayers: people on our personal prayer list and our parish prayer list and people at the other end of the siren. But what about the many who have no one rushing to their aid? What about the many whose needs are known only to God? For them we can offer a variation of the familiar prayer:

Almighty God, we entrust all who are dear to us, all whose names we do not know, and all whose needs are known only to you, to your never-failing care and love, for this life and the life to come, knowing that you are doing for them better things than we can desire or pray for; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Who will be on your prayer list today?

—**Josephine Hicks**





SUNDAY, MARCH 13

Almighty God, you alone can bring into order the unruly wills and affections of sinners: Grant your people grace to love what you command and desire what you promise; that, among the swift and varied changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed where true joys are to be found; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

—*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 219

He waited another seven days, and again he sent out the dove from the ark.

—Genesis 8:10

MONDAY, MARCH 14

People often express surprise when I talk about the US Disaster Program's long-term recovery programs. After inquiring about a particular disaster, they often respond with some alarmed variation of, "Oh, is there still a program there?!" Recovery, I've learned, is an effort of incredible endurance.

Time doesn't seem to move uniformly after a disaster. Normal life is placed in a holding pattern as whole communities wait for federal declarations and assistance, case management approval and news about loved ones.

After the news cycle has moved on, however, the Church and its people remain. Through various ministries, people are able to offer persistent love for their hurting neighbors, as people begin to slowly find their new normal.

More than once, I have been accused of trying to live life all at once. I'm inclined to rushing and restlessness. During Lent, I try to build an awareness of this tendency and to slow down. As my pace slows, I find myself being more present and better able to care for those around me.

—Lura Steele

If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

—Romans 12:18



TUESDAY, MARCH 15

In this age of global information, people do not need to leave their house, let alone their countries, to experience the unfamiliar and, as a result, to see the world and themselves in a new light. But those who travel, particularly those who journey to places where daily life is starkly different, can attest to how intense and confounding feelings of wonder, vulnerability, unity and isolation can stir the soul like no other experience.

As I have lived abroad and continue to travel frequently for my work with Episcopal Relief & Development, I have found it is surprisingly easy to become numb to the things that once stirred me. French novelist Marcel Proust said, “The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes.” I am learning that these new eyes – like mindfulness and other spiritual disciplines – require continuous practice. These are traits that every international development practitioner strives for – and to which I aspire each and every day.

—Vanessa Pizer

You must understand this, my beloved: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak.

—James 1:19

Making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding.

—Proverbs 2:2

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 16

I started my Christian walk late in life. When I turned toward God, I immediately felt God's intense love for me. It was a little overwhelming, but I wanted it, I needed it and I felt a responsibility to it. My early days in church and Christian community saw me saying yes to any request to join a ministry. All good stuff: I was with God and God's people, but I was not yet in dialogue with God or my fellow Christians. I could hear, but I was not listening.

Ministry burnout and prayer valleys soon followed. Fast-forward and the last few years in my Christian walk have evolved into a spiritual practice of listening, both in my prayer life and in ministry. I discovered that I had to start really listening to what God wanted me to know. In listening, I learned about God, about me and about God's people. Christian maturity started when I learned to empty myself and listen for God's voice. Now being able to recognize God's voice, I am able to answer yes to ministries that glorify God and decline those God is not calling me to. Listening is where I give and receive love, listening is where I connect with God and with God's people. Listening may sound like a one-way, lonely, contemplative action, but it is not. Try it! For a long time. You may find, like I did, an active, life-giving spiritual practice.

—Christian Kassoff

There will be enough goats' milk for your food, for the food of your household and nourishment for your servant-girls.

—Proverbs 27:27



THURSDAY, MARCH 17

It started with rabbits. Our family moved to a big, old farmhouse on ten rural acres, and our six- and nine-year-old sons were promised “farm animals.” So we acquired rabbits and tried that for a year. They weren’t very playful or cuddly, and they preferred to bite the hands that fed them.

Fast forward to the following April Fools’ Day. The boys went to a swap meet with Grampa. They sold the rabbits and their habitat to an unsuspecting 4-H member. With their newfound wealth and some help from Grampa’s generous wallet, they purchased two baby miniature goats.

Goats, we learned, are playful. They are outdoor pets, and one of the goats did not survive her second year. But Lydia, who has grown to be a fat, old goat who currently boasts sixteen years of skipping across the planet, has been a constant reminder of the abundance we enjoy. She inspired us to give goats to friends and family members on special occasions through Episcopal Relief & Development’s *Gifts for Life* program.

What inspires you to act for the betterment of others?

—Bronwyn Clark Skov

If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill,” and yet you do not supply their bodily need, what is the good of that?

—James 2:15-16

FRIDAY, MARCH 18

I have worked in international development for the last twenty years, and I am often asked which poverty is worse: poverty in developing countries or in the US. It is a question that is impossible to answer. Hopelessness cannot be measured, and ranking misery is a foolhardy exercise.

Many development agencies are working to find sustainable solutions that lead to long-term improvements that can be quantified in tangible outcomes. However, seeing the headlines on climate change and the refugee crisis, I am increasingly concerned about safety nets. What does one do when in immediate crisis? Long-term solutions in these moments of turmoil can seem empty to people who are going through great suffering and need help for basic survival.

It is important to periodically get out of our own space and think deeply and profoundly about others. Bodily needs of shelter, nutrition, safety and well-being cannot be ignored in order to solve more “noble” development pursuits. After all, what is the “good” of that? When people literally lose everything in a natural disaster, does it matter where they started out in life? Who helps? Today, I invite you to pray for long-term solutions and to give enough to transform the life of an individual or a family.

—Judith Morrison

I sing because I'm happy, I sing because I'm free,
for his eye is on the sparrow, and I know he watches me.

“His Eye Is on the Sparrow”
—Civilla D. Martin



SATURDAY, MARCH 19

I take eight international trips a year, primarily to Latin America and Africa. I have what makes for good stories: tales of crazy dreams induced by antimalarials, cold bucket baths, and long, bumpy, dusty road trips to communities. Although I feel humbled and blessed in the presence of people who have little and share everything, that is not the only thing that inspires me to continue my work. Instead, it is the constant opportunity and variety of ways I am afforded to joyfully connect my spirit to individuals and communities.

In Kenya, it is the bonding handshake I wish I could give everywhere, the dances I am invited to join (but probably shouldn't) and the laughter I share with passion fruit farmers about being an expert in opening the fruit because one of them taught me years ago. In Guatemala, seed planting with three spirited children, all under ten, honestly gave me pure joy. That moment, when the kids showed me how to pluck a sunflower seed, took me back to childhood summers in Spain where I walked with my family on Sunday afternoons with no destination but plenty of sunflower seeds to share.

Yes, I have what makes for good stories. The best ones are about when and where I've seen God. Today I invite you to reflect on how God enters your life in times of happiness with others.

—Kellie McDaniel





PALM SUNDAY, MARCH 20

Almighty and everliving God, in your tender love for the human race you sent your Son our Savior Jesus Christ to take upon him our nature, and to suffer death upon the cross, giving us the example of his great humility: Mercifully grant that we may walk in the way of his suffering, and also share in his resurrection; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

—*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 219

Make me a channel of your peace,
Where there is hatred, let me bring your love;
Where there is injury, your pardon Lord,
And where there's doubt, true faith in you.

—The Peace Prayer attributed to Saint Francis

MONDAY IN HOLY WEEK, MARCH 21

One of my favorite prayers is the Peace Prayer of Saint Francis – especially when it's sung to an adaptation composed by Sebastian Temple. I am the daughter of a Lutheran pastor and a music minister who met through choir in college; singing has been a pillar of my spiritual life since I could hold a hymnal. Some of my favorite memories are of my two younger sisters in the pew next to me, singing soft harmonies during Christmas or raucous Alle-you-know-whats during Easter. I tear out verses from bulletins to post on my fridge at home and sing refrains in my head while making tea at work.

Part earworm and part meditation, these are moments to commune with the cloud of witnesses who create and sustain a spiritual tradition that I love. I love this hymn because it puts things in perspective, puts me in perspective – not as the source of the peace, the love, the power that's going to put things right, but as the channel. My job is to be open, to be present, to do what I can.

Setting things to music makes them memorable, and this is a message worth remembering – a holy earworm for Saint Francis.

—Faith Rowold

Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being? I will, with God's help.

—*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 294



TUESDAY IN HOLY WEEK, MARCH 22

As someone who spends a lot of time talking to Episcopalians about racial justice and reconciliation, I often refer to our Baptismal Covenant. I especially invite folks to consider this final question about striving for justice and peace and respecting the dignity of every person. It's an invitation to think about how we might be the Body of Christ together while also understanding that we are not alone: we will, with God's help.

Recently this has made me somewhat uncomfortable; it seems a little too obvious or perhaps too easy. As I encounter people and communities of faith who form and transform me, I feel called to grapple with the uncomfortable areas of my faith, those places where I need to learn and grow. More recently I have wondered how my ministry might be transformed if I instead focused on this question: "Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?" This seems so much simpler and yet so much more complicated at the same time.

I invite you to explore with me what it means to proclaim by word and example in your own life. Together, I am certain that we can find new ways to shout, "We will, with God's help," and work to heal a hurting world.

—**Heidi J. Kim**

Christ has no body now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which he looks compassion on this world. Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good. Yours are the hands through which he blesses all the world. Yours are the hands, yours are the feet, yours are the eyes, you are his body. Christ has no body now on Earth but yours.

—Attributed to Saint Teresa of Ávila

WEDNESDAY IN HOLY WEEK, MARCH 23

I love this quote attributed to Teresa of Ávila. It reminds me of our call to seek and serve Christ in all persons and to love our neighbors as ourselves. It reminds me that we are a physical embodiment of the call to do God's work in all that we undertake. It also reminds me that we show our faith in our actions toward others.

In the US Disaster Program, we work to connect, inspire and equip churches to respond to disasters in their communities. The churches act as the hands and feet of Christ in a time when their neighbors are the most vulnerable and the most in need. I pray that we might find Christ's peace and presence through one another in the midst of disaster and always.

—Sara Lowery

The night is quiet. Let the quietness of your peace enfold us, all dear to us, and all who have no peace. The night heralds the dawn. Let us look expectantly to a new day, new joys, new possibilities.

—Night Prayer, *A New Zealand Prayer Book
He Karakia Mihinare o Aotearoa*, p. 184



MAUNDY THURSDAY, MARCH 24

It's hard to think about what enough means after a disaster. With so many people so acutely struggling right in your own community, you know you must do something. But how many things can you do? Who can you serve? Who are you missing who is still in desperate need? And when can you stop and catch your breath? When are you allowed to rest?

This concept of enough, these questions kept me up at night when I was helping clear out flooded homes in the months following Katrina in New Orleans. Had I done enough? Had I forgotten anyone? Had I prioritized those we could serve properly, justly? I could never answer those questions. I still can't. But in the months following the storm, I found that I could quiet them through prayer. I lit a candle next to my bed almost every night and read the Compline service to myself, whispering both parts in the darkness. Most nights, that routine, those words I grew to know by heart, were all the prayer that I could muster with my scattered, distracted mind. But somehow that ritual, that flame, those whispers and that connection to God kept the anxiety at bay. My time in prayer reminded me that while the challenges are many, they're not mine to shoulder alone. There will always be enough work for tomorrow, but in the meantime, we can sit with the darkness and the quiet and try, for a moment, to find some peace and strength for what lies ahead – and to know that God is always enough.

—Katie Mears

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

—1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

When I remember you in my prayers, I always thank my God.

—Philemon 1:4

FRIDAY IN HOLY WEEK, MARCH 25

Not many months ago I took an unplanned retreat: four months in a hospital bed, my own 4-by-8 hermitage. At first prayer did not come easily or at all, from my end at least. But I was very aware of all the prayer without ceasing. As I started to heal, I would fix my eyes on an Ethiopian cross in my room and breathe, in and out, and eventually start thanking God for all who were praying in action and word.

The prayers that came easiest were the long lists of thank you and thank God for all who had a hand in my healing: my loving wife and children, parents and siblings, extended family, friends, my parish and diocesan family, colleagues and partners at Episcopal Relief & Development, surgeons, nurses, aides, therapists, administrators, chaplains, cleaners, countless people known and unknown, near and far off. The list does not end. Their actions and words were the healing prayers that saved my life and helped me see life in a new way. Now when I feel tired and spiritually depleted, I pull out my list and say thank you and thank God for all.

—**Brian Sellers-Petersen**

No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.

—1 John 4:12



SATURDAY, MARCH 26

Around noon every day I leave the office to get something to eat. I usually bring back a sandwich to eat at my desk.

This daily activity is impossible to do in midtown Manhattan where I work without being reminded of the reality of poverty and homelessness even in the midst of phenomenal wealth. It's a little disconcerting. Isn't that just like Jesus to be disconcerting? The homeless and the poor are Jesus after all. That is where Jesus said we would meet him.

So, occasionally I take Jesus to lunch. As I walk by the church around the corner where homeless people congregate, I ask Jesus if he (or she) would like something to eat. Sometimes there's just one Jesus there; sometimes, a few. Then I go buy Jesus a sandwich. One day I'm going to take Jesus to lunch somewhere nicer. Or maybe Jesus will take me.

To tell you the truth, I don't bring sandwiches to homeless people to feed them so much as I do it to meet Jesus in person.

I wonder if taking Jesus to lunch might open up some new ways for you to meet Jesus, too.

—**Stacy F. Sauls**

The LORD is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation.

—Psalm 118:14

EASTER SUNDAY, MARCH 27

Twice a year I go on a three- to four-day retreat at Holy Cross Monastery in West Park, New York. It is a thin place for me with a few amenities, like good food and good company. In fact, I am writing this mediation at Holy Cross. My time at Holy Cross is for prayer, reflection and reading. Long walks in the John Burroughs Nature Sanctuary enable me to reflect on the glory of God in nature. The abundant and delicious food shared with interesting and eclectic companions reminds me of how Jesus, on his last night, gathered his friends together in fellowship. Hours spent on the front porch watching the Hudson River ebb and flow while indulging in unbroken hours lost in historical biography open my eyes to new narratives of how to do God's work in a broken world.

My time in retreat at Holy Cross helps me grow closer to God and find my strength and my song to do the work of healing a hurting world through the work of Episcopal Relief & Development. Finally, it gives me new optimism as I shout out this Easter morning: the Lord is risen. Alleluia!

—Robert W. Radtke



MY LENTEN RESPONSE

During this season of reflection, I want to follow Jesus in caring for people in need. Enclosed is my Lenten offering to help make communities stronger and to invest in a thriving future for all of our global friends.

Episcopal Relief & Development's diverse, faithful community responds compassionately to the suffering in the world. In partnership with churches, communities, supporters and friends, we make a difference in the lives of more than 3 million people in nearly 40 countries around the world. It takes all our hands to heal a hurting world.

Please join us by investing in Episcopal Relief & Development's vital mission, giving meaningfully to support our work to strengthen communities worldwide, through programs that promote health, respond to disasters, improve food supply and create economic opportunities in Jesus' name. Together, we are seeking to serve Christ in all persons and striving to love our neighbor as ourselves.

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For over 75 years, Episcopal Relief & Development has served as the compassionate response of The Episcopal Church to human suffering in the world. An independent 501(c)(3) organization, it works closely with Anglican Communion and ecumenical partners, helping communities to create long-term development strategies and rebuild after disasters. Using the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a framework, the agency reaches more than 3 million people in nearly 40 countries each year, through multi-sector programs that fight poverty, hunger and disease.

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