

Lent and Easter 2017 Worship Brainstorming Summary

February 13, 2017

Members present: Dave Booth, Larry Jorgenson, Rose Emmons, Carole Koch, Jean Kelly, Betty Kinney, Mary Ivanov, Karen Booth, Mary Travis

“The worship we hope to develop will be rooted in Scripture, centered on Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit. It will be relevant to local and emerging culture, while addressing the needs of believers and unbelievers alike. Above all, it will intentionally engage people physically, emotionally, intellectually, and soulfully.”

Felt needs: What physical, emotional, intellectual, or spiritual need are we addressing in this service so that worship is engaging and a means of making disciples? What question needs to be posed/answered so that we are making disciples? Note from Karen: Each service’s felt need is in the message synopsis in bold print.

“Giving It Up”

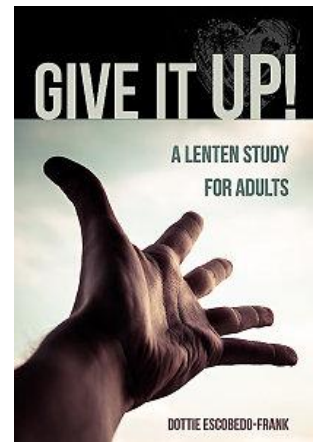
This is a (mostly) lectionary-based series (<http://www.ministrymatters.com/all/entry/2286/giving-it-up-a-sermon-series-for-lent>). Its companion book is Give It Up! (<http://www.ministrymatters.com/product/9781426785962>). Pastor Mary ordered copies that can be purchased for a Lenten devotional and Book Club.

Synopsis:

This Lenten study reflects on all the things that hold our attention, occupy our minds and monopolize our time, yet still isolate us from God and the world around us - things like mirrors, social media, phones, the noise of life, and focus on the external. Imagine taking on the challenge of giving up each of these for a week. During this seven-week study, Dottie Escobedo-Frank takes the reader on a journey of self discovery, where he or she learns that the power of release brings great gain. The biggest gain is a stronger relationship with Christ. In the release, each person is freed to "give it up" in applause and praise for a life deeply lived in Christ.

This thematic Bible study is designed to be used by individuals and small groups during Lent. In addition to the main content, each chapter offers questions for reflection and discussion, a brief prayer, and a focus for the week. The focus emerges from the chapter content and encourages readers to engage in a spiritual practice or do something specific that will help them grow in faith. On the whole, this thematic seasonal Bible study series is designed for transformation and application of Bible study to everyday, practical life experience.

GBOD (General Board of Discipleship) also has a Lenten series from which we might draw some ideas, liturgy, etc. It’s based on “Living Out Our Baptismal Calling” and uses baptismal liturgy as a guide. It’s included on each week’s plan under “GBOD.” <https://gbod->



assets.s3.amazonaws.com/legacy/kintera-files/worship/DiscipleshipMinistries_Lent-2017_Living-Our-Baptismal-Calling.pdf

Media: “Good News.” Length: 2:10. Cost: Free (subscription). We can all relate to that “I have to tell someone!” feeling we get when we receive exciting news. **Good News** is not only an encouragement to invite others to experience Easter Sunday with your community, but it also works year-round as a reminder of the Great Commission.

<https://journeyboxmedia.com/product/good-news/> **Comments:** We did not view it as a group, but those who had seen it thought could be used as an invitation to the series.

Images: Open hands. See some examples at

<http://www.worshiphousemedia.com/countdowns/36128/service-pack-love-volume-1>

Big visuals: Large banner with GIVING UP.... Keep the big visuals to a minimum or consider starting out with more and taking some away each week. There is an April 1 wedding to work around. Use a teeter totter to illustrate the balance between what we are being asked to give up and what we will take on.

General discussion points: 1) When we give up something (fasting), what are we taking on (feasting)? 2) Lake Harbor will host a Holy Thursday service on April 13, incorporating Roots and inviting other churches to worship with us. The theme might be “Giving Up Selfishness.” The Good Friday service will be hosted by a different church.

Music: See some contemporary suggestions from the 2/14/17 Worship Ideas newsletter at <http://worshipblog.org/lent-worship-songs/>

March 1, 2017: Ash Wednesday @ Central UMC - Worship at 7:00 p.m.

Bishop David Bard is preaching.

GBOD - Remember, You Are Dust: We gather to acknowledge our mortality and our sinfulness, and to seek God’s mercy and guidance for the season of intensive formation and reformation in the way of Jesus that lies ahead.

March 5, 2017: “Giving Up Control”

First Sunday in Lent

Scripture: Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-7 (Contemporary English Version)

¹⁵The Lord God put the man in the Garden of Eden to take care of it and to look after it.

¹⁶But the Lord told him, “You may eat fruit from any tree in the garden, ¹⁷except the one that has the power to let you know the difference between right and wrong. If you eat any fruit from that tree, you will die before the day is over!”

^{3:1} The snake was sneakier than any of the other wild animals that the Lord God had made. One day it came to the woman and asked, “Did God tell you not to eat fruit from any tree in the garden?”

²The woman answered, “God said we could eat fruit from any tree in the garden, ³except the one in the middle. He told us not to eat fruit from that tree or even to touch it. If we do, we will die.”

⁴“No, you won’t!” the snake replied. ⁵“God understands what will happen on the day you eat fruit from that tree. You will see what you have done, and you will know the difference between right and wrong, just as God does.”

⁶The woman stared at the fruit. It looked beautiful and tasty. She wanted the wisdom that it would give her, and she ate some of the fruit. Her husband was there with her, so she gave some to him, and he ate it too. ⁷Right away they saw what they had done, and they realized they were naked. Then they sewed fig leaves together to make something to cover themselves.

Scripture: Matthew 4:1-11 (New Living Translation)

¹Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted there by the devil.

²For forty days and forty nights he fasted and became very hungry.

³During that time the devil came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become loaves of bread.”

⁴But Jesus told him, “No! The Scriptures say, ‘People do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”

⁵Then the devil took him to the holy city, Jerusalem, to the highest point of the Temple, ⁶and said, “If you are the Son of God, jump off! For the Scriptures say, ‘He will order his angels to protect you. And they will hold you up with their hands so you won’t even hurt your foot on a stone.’”

⁷Jesus responded, “The Scriptures also say, ‘You must not test the Lord your God.’”

⁸Next the devil took him to the peak of a very high mountain and showed him the kingdoms of the world and all their glory. ⁹“I will give it all to you,” he said, “if you will kneel down and worship me.”

¹⁰“Get out of here, Satan,” Jesus told him. “For the Scriptures say, ‘You must worship the LORD your God and serve only him.’”

¹¹Then the devil went away, and angels came and took care of Jesus.

Synopsis: Adam and Eve disobeyed God, thinking that they knew better than him, with disastrous consequences. While being tempted in the wilderness, Jesus denied his own impulses and followed God's will. In the modern world, where we are used to having control over so many things, we often fail to **seek God's will for our lives** and try to call all the shots ourselves. God wants us to deny ourselves and give him the final say when we are charting out the course of our lives.

Felt need: Highlighted, above.

Media: We only viewed the first two videos as a group.

- “Control.” Length: 2:17. Cost: \$15.00. Stepping out in faith, while adventurous and exciting, has a price. (Friendswood Community Church) <http://media.preachingtoday.com/mini-movies/9097/>. **Comments:** Good, thoughtful introduction to control
- “Control.” Length: 1:28. Cost: \$12.00. We all like to have control, to be our own master, but the truth of the matter is **our control only leads to death**. But Jesus graciously fixed that and gives us the victory if we hand control of our lives over to Him. (Adoption Media) <http://media.preachingtoday.com/mini-movies/28470/control>. **Comments:** Mixed reviews. You could miss the message if you focused on the chess game rather than the

text. Reading it aloud would help. The statement highlighted in blue above, seems very strong in a negative way. Rose likes it a lot; it went well with the Saturday Sisters' recent discussion about giving up control.

- "Just Give Up (New Year's)." Cost: \$19.98. Length: 1:12. It's a new year. And you want it to be better than the last. Well, the best thing you can do is just give up! That's right. Just give up. <http://media.preachingtoday.com/mini-movies/63606/just-give-up-new-years>
- "God's Will." Length: 1:30. Cost: \$15.00. What is God's will for our lives? How do we even begin to figure that out? This video that combines kinetic typography with simple imagery suggests why it may be so hard for us to find what God truly wants to do with our lives. <http://media.preachingtoday.com/mini-movies/34255/gods-will>

Activity: Holy Communion. Use pita bread.

Music: #349 "Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus"

GBOD - Renounce: We walk the way of temptation with Jesus and learn from him what it means to continue to renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness, reject the evil powers of this world, and repent of our sin.

Discussion points: 1) Pastor Mary will incorporate some elements of an Ash Wednesday service to help people begin their Lenten journey. 2) Larry (to be written as a monologue): At work, we are often expected to be the person in control especially if you are a type A person. It was/is a struggle to give up that role at home and learn subservience. 3) It can be very frustrating and counterproductive to work with anyone who micromanages as it demonstrates a deep lack of trust. 4) We need to define what giving up control looks like because it is clear that we need self control. 5) When we give up control, we might take on the unknown, excitement, thrills, adventure, trust, and freedom. 6) Dave: What if Adam and Eve had never tasted the fruit? Would something else have caused the fall? 7) Is control about comfort zones and safety? 8) With risk comes the possibility of reward. Could we use a teeter totter to show this? (Mary T) 9) Who defines and enforces the concepts of right and wrong? There seems to be a difference of opinion on that from person to person. 10) Larry: Guy gave up control in the Garden of Eden. 11) Pastor Mary: Look at the difference between what happened in the Garden and Jesus' experience in the wilderness: thinking we know better than God than completely relying on Him.

March 12, 2017: "Giving Up Expectations" Second Sunday in Lent, Scouting Sunday

Scripture: Genesis 12:1-4a (NLT, but Karen prefers the CEV which goes through vs. 5)

¹The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father's family, and go to the land that I will show you.

²I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. ³I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you."

⁴So Abram departed as the LORD had instructed, and Lot went with him.

Scripture: John 3:1-17 (Today's English Version) **The GBOD has rewritten John 3: 1-5, 14-17 for two readers (a narrator and Jesus) and the congregation. It weaves Wade in the Water" and "Go Down, Moses" into the reading. See page 42 of "Living out Our Baptismal Calling."**

¹There was a Jewish leader named Nicodemus, who belonged to the party of the Pharisees.

²One night he went to Jesus and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher sent by God. No one could perform the miracles you are doing unless God were with him."

³Jesus answered, "I am telling you the truth: no one can see the Kingdom of God without being born again."

⁴"How can a grown man be born again?" Nicodemus asked. "He certainly cannot enter his mother's womb and be born a second time!"

⁵"I am telling you the truth," replied Jesus, "that no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit. ⁶A person is born physically of human parents, but is born spiritually of the Spirit. ⁷Do not be surprised because I tell you that you must all be born again. ⁸The wind blows wherever it wishes; you hear the sound it makes, but you do not know where it comes from or where it is going. It is like that with everyone who is born of the Spirit."

⁹"How can this be?" asked Nicodemus.

¹⁰Jesus answered, "You are a great teacher in Israel, and you don't know this? ¹¹I am telling you the truth: we speak of what we know and report what we have seen, yet none of you is willing to accept our message. ¹²You do not believe me when I tell you about the things of this world; how will you ever believe me, then, when I tell you about the things of heaven? ¹³And no one has ever gone up to heaven except the Son of Man, who came down from heaven."

¹⁴As Moses lifted up the bronze snake on a pole in the desert, in the same way the Son of Man must be lifted up, ¹⁵so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. ¹⁶For God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not die but have eternal life. ¹⁷For God did not send his Son into the world to be its judge, but to be its savior.

Synopsis: Abraham followed God's call to leave his homeland and travel to the place God promised his descendants, even though he didn't know how it would all work out. When Nicodemus is talking to Jesus, he has a hard time understanding what God's grace is really about because he is used to thinking in terms of religious structure. Sometimes we just can't know what's going on or what's coming next. God doesn't guarantee any future circumstances or uninterrupted prosperity, but **we can trust that God will be with us through whatever circumstances we face and that God will work with us to make the best result out of even the most hopeless of places.**

Felt need: Highlighted, above.

Media: We watched all of the videos as a group.

- "Nicodemus." Length: 3:28 (if we begin at 1:40). Cost: \$15.00. Nicodemus remember the night when Jesus explained to him the meaning of being born again. <http://media.preachingtoday.com/mini-movies/60703/nicodemus>. **Comments:** The accents take a little getting used to and might need more than one viewing to get more out of it. The extra couple lines about what happened with Moses and the snakes in the wilderness made it more understandable (Karen). This video is framed by scenes of Nicodemus

preparing Jesus' body for burial. Nicodemus still looks (justifiably) skeptical at the end of his encounter. Compare this with Abram's complete trust in God in Genesis 12. Betty's rating: 8 out of 10.

- "Encounters – Nicodemus." Length: 1:44. Cost: \$14.98. We come to God empty handed. Being born again is his doing. A dynamic retelling of Nicodemus' encounter with Christ. <http://media.preachingtoday.com/mini-movies/19344/encounters--nicodemus>. **Comments:** The typography is a bit busy.
- "Worst-Case Scenario." Length: 2:27. Cost: \$19.99. Controlled by fear and worry, our minds often race to the worst-case scenario in any circumstance. However, God wants us to trust Him with our tomorrows, and realize that He is faithful to walk with us through whatever may come. <http://media.preachingtoday.com/mini-movies/55173/worstcase-scenario>. **Comments:** Extremely funny, but probably better for a message on worry. The best line was about string art being a gateway craft. Betty's rating: 9+ out of 10.

Music: #605 "Wash, O God, Our Sons and Daughters"

GBOD - Accept: Through powerful image of new birth and the biblical story of the serpent in the wilderness, Jesus shows Nicodemus and us what it takes for us to accept the freedom and power God gives us to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves.

Discussion points: 1) Notice how Abram went without saying a word whereas Nicodemus had a good deal to say. 2) Why did Nicodemus go to Jesus at night? Was it out of fear? Curiosity? 3) Nicodemus appears three times in the Gospel of John. 4) A WJQ radio host's experience vacuuming the stairs made him realize that you don't need to see the whole journey to take the next step and in this case, it was better not to focus on the whole experience from the beginning.

March 19, 2017: "Giving Up Superiority"

Third Sunday in Lent

Scripture: John 4: 5-42 (The Message) **The GBOD has rewritten John 4:5-15, 25-29, 39-42 for two readers (a narrator and Jesus) and the congregation as the Samaritan woman. It weaves #3114 "Come to the Water" into the reading. Alternative: #2132 "You Who Are Thirsty." See page 62 of "Living out Our Baptismal Calling."**

⁵He came into Sychar, a Samaritan village that bordered the field Jacob had given his son Joseph.

⁶Jacob's well was still there. Jesus, worn out by the trip, sat down at the well. It was noon.

⁷A woman, a Samaritan, came to draw water. Jesus said, "Would you give me a drink of water?" ⁸(His disciples had gone to the village to buy food for lunch.)

⁹The Samaritan woman, taken aback, asked, "How come you, a Jew, are asking me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink?" (Jews in those days wouldn't be caught dead talking to Samaritans.)

¹⁰Jesus answered, "If you knew the generosity of God and who I am, you would be asking *me* for a drink, and I would give you fresh, living water."

¹¹The woman said, “Sir, you don’t even have a bucket to draw with, and this well is deep. So how are you going to get this ‘living water’? ¹²Are you a better man than our ancestor Jacob, who dug this well and drank from it, he and his sons and livestock, and passed it down to us?”

¹³Jesus said, “Everyone who drinks this water will get thirsty again and again. ¹⁴Anyone who drinks the water I give will never thirst—not ever. The water I give will be an artesian spring within, gushing fountains of endless life.”

¹⁵The woman said, “Sir, give me this water so I won’t ever get thirsty, won’t ever have to come back to this well again!”

¹⁶He said, “Go call your husband and then come back.”

¹⁷“I have no husband,” she said.

“That’s nicely put: ‘I have no husband.’ ¹⁸You’ve had five husbands, and the man you’re living with now isn’t even your husband. You spoke the truth there, sure enough.”

¹⁹“Oh, so you’re a prophet! ²⁰Well, tell me this: Our ancestors worshiped God at this mountain, but you Jews insist that Jerusalem is the only place for worship, right?”

²¹“Believe me, woman, the time is coming when you Samaritans will worship the Father neither here at this mountain nor there in Jerusalem. ²²You worship guessing in the dark; we Jews worship in the clear light of day. God’s way of salvation is made available through the Jews. ²³But the time is coming—it has, in fact, come—when what you’re called will not matter and where you go to worship will not matter.

“It’s who you are and the way you live that count before God. Your worship must engage your spirit in the pursuit of truth. That’s the kind of people the Father is out looking for: those who are simply and honestly *themselves* before him in their worship. ²⁴God is sheer being itself—Spirit. Those who worship him must do it out of their very being, their spirits, their true selves, in adoration.”

²⁵The woman said, “I don’t know about that. I do know that the Messiah is coming. When he arrives, we’ll get the whole story.”

²⁶“I am he,” said Jesus. “You don’t have to wait any longer or look any further.”

²⁷Just then his disciples came back. They were shocked. They couldn’t believe he was talking with that kind of a woman. No one said what they were all thinking, but their faces showed it.

²⁸The woman took the hint and left. In her confusion she left her water pot. Back in the village she told the people, ²⁹“Come see a man who knew all about the things I did, who knows me inside and out. Do you think this could be the Messiah?” ³⁰And they went out to see for themselves.

³¹In the meantime, the disciples pressed him, “Rabbi, eat. Aren’t you going to eat?”

³²He told them, “I have food to eat you know nothing about.”

³³The disciples were puzzled. “Who could have brought him food?”

³⁴Jesus said, “The food that keeps me going is that I do the will of the One who sent me, finishing the work he started. ³⁵As you look around right now, wouldn’t you say that in about four months it will be time to harvest? Well, I’m telling you to open your eyes and take a good look at what’s right in front of you. These Samaritan fields are ripe. It’s harvest time!

³⁶“The Harvester isn’t waiting. He’s taking his pay, gathering in this grain that’s ripe for eternal life. Now the Sower is arm in arm with the Harvester, triumphant. ³⁷That’s the truth of

the saying, 'This one sows, that one harvests.' ³⁸I sent you to harvest a field you never worked. Without lifting a finger, you have walked in on a field worked long and hard by others."

³⁹Many of the Samaritans from that village committed themselves to him because of the woman's witness: "He knew all about the things I did. He knows me inside and out!" ⁴⁰They asked him to stay on, so Jesus stayed two days. ⁴¹A lot more people entrusted their lives to him when they heard what he had to say. ⁴²They said to the woman, "We're no longer taking this on your say-so. We've heard it for ourselves and know it for sure. He's the Savior of the world!"

Synopsis: Jesus broke all kinds of social conventions by speaking to a woman in public, a Samaritan no less, whose own life was such a mess that it could have really messed up Jesus' reputation as a holy man. But Jesus brought his message of grace and freedom to the woman, knowing that in her humility, she would actually hear and respond, while the religious people were too busy and self-important to hear. God doesn't care about any of the artificial lines we draw to make ourselves feel superior to others. **If we let go of our status symbols and judgmental attitudes, we too can hear Jesus' call more clearly and respond more faithfully.**

Felt need: Highlighted, above.

Media:

- "I Am a Christian." Length: 1:09. Cost: \$18.00. How are we supposed to see if we are unable or unwilling to remove our blinders? Do we even realize our actions when our blinders are on? <http://media.preachingtoday.com/mini-movies/59048/i-am-a-christian>. **Comments:** Carole's rating: 18 out of 10. It hits the mark.
- "Spoken Word – Woman at the Well." Length: 2:35. Cost: We own it. Last used: 2/24/08. A dramatic interpretation of the woman at the well, and her desire to be loved for who she is. <http://media.preachingtoday.com/mini-movies/6702/spoken-word--woman-at-the-well>. **Comments:** The woman is the complete opposite of the man in the first video.

Activity: Noisy offering for missions

GBOD - Confess: In an encounter with a woman at a well in Samaria, Jesus confesses he is the Messiah, and she not only embraces this, but leads others to make the same confession.

Contemporary music suggestion: Lauren Daigle "How Can It Be?" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6UXn_OuJkVE

Discussion points: 1) Consider showing both videos. Which one should come first? Ask: Who do you identify with? 2) If we give up superiority, do we gain humility? 3) Jesus never plays all his cards. 4) The woman probably went to the well during mid day so that she wouldn't be harassed. Talking to Jesus would have been a no-no. He offers her grace, freedom, and new life and she gives powerful witness to many people which may have included some who had not treated her well. 5) From the New Interpreter's Study Bible p. 1914: *Most Jews would try to avoid contact with Samaritans because they considered them outsiders (2 Kings 17). Although Jews and Samaritans shared the Pentateuch as Scripture, Samaritans claimed Mt. Gerizim as the location of the cultic center, not Jerusalem. Passing through Samaria was the shortest route between Judea and Galilee; Jesus flouts conventional practice by choosing that route.* 6) Rose: Today some Christians use faith to defend their political views in a way that divides people. Sadly, nothing has since Jesus' time when the Jews and Samaritans were also sharply divided. 7) Larry's experience with his trap shooting group is no different. He is not sure how to

respond to the divisive talk other than to leave. 8) Betty: It all goes back to being judgmental. 9) Wouldn't it be great if we all could follow the rules discussed during the "Can We Talk?" series? They are: Have an open mind. Be respectful, listen, and seek to understand. Stay on topic. Challenge the idea, not the person.

March 26, 2017: "Giving Up Enemies"

Fourth Sunday in Lent

Scripture: Luke 19:37-44 (Contemporary English Version)

³⁷When Jesus was starting down the Mount of Olives, his large crowd of disciples were happy and praised God because of all the miracles they had seen.

³⁸They shouted, "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory to God."

³⁹Some Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, make your disciples stop shouting!"

⁴⁰But Jesus answered, "If they keep quiet, these stones will start shouting."

⁴¹When Jesus came closer and could see Jerusalem, he cried ⁴²and said:

It is too bad that today your people don't know what will bring them peace! Now it is hidden from them. ⁴³Jerusalem, the time will come when your enemies will build walls around you to attack you. Armies will surround you and close in on you from every side. ⁴⁴They will level you to the ground and kill your people. Not one stone in your buildings will be left on top of another. This will happen because you did not see that God had come to save you.

Synopsis: Loving our enemies can sometimes feel like as idealistic a notion as instantaneous world peace, but Jesus showed us that caring even for those who persecute you is a real, actionable mandate that we can carry out by following Jesus' example. Peace isn't just a far-off fantasy. Jesus wept over Jerusalem because the people following him misunderstood his message to be about peace in Heaven instead of on Earth. We call Jesus the Prince of Peace, but do we really believe and **live like peace is possible in our world today?**

Felt need: Highlighted, above.

Media: We did not watch the second video as a group.

- "Know the Word: Love Your Enemies." Length: 1:35. Cost: \$15.00. A young girl thought she knew who her friends were...until she hears them making fun of her behind her back. Watch as she struggles to extend the love of God to them despite their cruelty. The result is life changing. <http://media.preachingtoday.com/mini-movies/14608/know-the-word-love-your-enemies>. **Comments:** The music overpowers the words a bit. Good idea, but the delivery could be better. Betty's rating: 7 or 8 out of 10. Dave: It have been too long to remember what it was like in high school.
- "Love Your Enemy." Length: 1:29. Cost: \$15.00. Simple yet compelling animation that reinforces Christ's greatest command to love one another. <http://media.preachingtoday.com/mini-movies/12278/love-your-enemy>.
- "Check Mate." Length: 3:17. Cost: Free (subscription). A reminder that the greatest commandment is love, this story of two unlikely friends from opposing sides of war encourages viewers to conquer their enemies with love.

<https://journeyboxmedia.com/product/check-mate/> . **Comments:** Very good! It demonstrates loving enemies to the fullest.

Drama: “Courting (D)Anger.” Cast: Two people. Length: 5 min. A woman’s prayer time is interrupted by a seductive visit but familiar “friend.”

<http://www.dramaministry.com/store/courting-danger-678>. **Comments:** It would be good to have “action” (live drama) during worship.

Music: #560 “Help Us Accept Each Other”

GBOD (John 9 passage) - Nurture: The response of the crowds to Jesus’ healing of a man born blind says much about how our congregation can actively “nurture one another in the Christian faith and life, and include these persons now before you in your care,” or fail to do so.

Discussion points: 1) Jesus prays for Jerusalem and those who will persecute him. 2) What does seeking peace look like for us and the world? 3) Even at this point in his ministry, people do not fully understand Jesus. 4) Today’s culture is not so different. The national news was astounded that the shooting victims in the 2015 church shooting in Charleston, NC and the 2006 West Nickel Mines School in Lancaster, Pennsylvania offered forgiveness rather than asking for retribution.

April 2, 2017: “Giving Up Our Lives”

Fifth Sunday in Lent

Important note: The McLouth wedding is on April 1. It is the beginning of Spring Break.

Scripture: Ezekiel 37:1-14 (Contemporary English Version)

¹Some time later, I felt the Lord’s power take control of me, and his Spirit carried me to a valley full of bones.

²The Lord showed me all around, and everywhere I looked I saw bones that were dried out. ³He said, “Ezekiel, son of man, can these bones come back to life?”

I replied, “Lord God, only you can answer that.”

⁴He then told me to say: Dry bones, listen to what the Lord is saying to you, ⁵“I, the Lord God, will put breath in you, and once again you will live. ⁶I will wrap you with muscles and skin and breathe life into you. Then you will know that I am the Lord.”

⁷I did what the Lord said, but before I finished speaking, I heard a rattling noise. The bones were coming together! ⁸I saw muscles and skin cover the bones, but they had no life in them.

⁹The Lord said: Ezekiel, now say to the wind, “The Lord God commands you to blow from every direction and to breathe life into these dead bodies, so they can live again.”

¹⁰As soon as I said this, the wind blew among the bodies, and they came back to life! They all stood up, and there were enough to make a large army.

¹¹The Lord said: Ezekiel, the people of Israel are like dead bones. They complain that they are dried up and that they have no hope for the future. ¹²So tell them, “I, the Lord God, promise to open your graves and set you free. I will bring you back to Israel, ¹³and when that happens, you will realize that I am the Lord. ¹⁴My Spirit will give you breath, and you will live again. I will bring you home, and you will know that I have kept my promise. I, the Lord, have spoken.”

Scripture: John 11:1-45 (Contemporary English Version) **The GBOD has rewritten John 4:5-15, 25-29, 39-42 for two readers (a narrator and Jesus) and the congregation. It weaves #2106 “When Jesus Wept” into the reading. See page 103 of “Living out Our Baptismal Calling.”**

¹⁻² A man by the name of Lazarus was sick in the village of Bethany. He had two sisters, Mary and Martha. This was the same Mary who later poured perfume on the Lord’s head and wiped his feet with her hair.

³The sisters sent a message to the Lord and told him that his good friend Lazarus was sick.

⁴When Jesus heard this, he said, “His sickness won’t end in death. It will bring glory to God and his Son.”

⁵Jesus loved Martha and her sister and brother. ⁶But he stayed where he was for two more days. ⁷Then he said to his disciples, “Now we will go back to Judea.”

⁸“Teacher,” they said, “the people there want to stone you to death! Why do you want to go back?”

⁹Jesus answered, “Aren’t there twelve hours in each day? If you walk during the day, you will have light from the sun, and you won’t stumble. ¹⁰But if you walk during the night, you will stumble, because you don’t have any light.” ¹¹Then he told them, “Our friend Lazarus is asleep, and I am going there to wake him up.”

¹²They replied, “Lord, if he is asleep, he will get better.” ¹³Jesus really meant that Lazarus was dead, but they thought he was talking only about sleep.

¹⁴Then Jesus told them plainly, “Lazarus is dead!

¹⁵I am glad that I wasn’t there, because now you will have a chance to put your faith in me. Let’s go to him.”

¹⁶Thomas, whose nickname was “Twin,” said to the other disciples, “Come on. Let’s go, so we can die with him.”

Jesus Brings Lazarus to Life

¹⁷When Jesus got to Bethany, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. ¹⁸Bethany was only about two miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁹and many people had come from the city to comfort Martha and Mary because their brother had died.

²⁰When Martha heard that Jesus had arrived, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed in the house. ²¹Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²²Yet even now I know that God will do anything you ask.”

²³Jesus told her, “Your brother will live again!”

²⁴Martha answered, “I know that he will be raised to life on the last day, when all the dead are raised.”

²⁵Jesus then said, “I am the one who raises the dead to life! Everyone who has faith in me will live, even if they die. ²⁶And everyone who lives because of faith in me will never really die. Do you believe this?”

²⁷“Yes, Lord!” she replied. “I believe that you are Christ, the Son of God. You are the one we hoped would come into the world.”

²⁸After Martha said this, she went and privately said to her sister Mary, “The Teacher is here, and he wants to see you.” ²⁹As soon as Mary heard this, she got up and went out to Jesus. ³⁰He was still outside the village where Martha had gone to meet him. ³¹Many people

had come to comfort Mary, and when they saw her quickly leave the house, they thought she was going out to the tomb to cry. So they followed her.

³²Mary went to where Jesus was. Then as soon as she saw him, she knelt at his feet and said, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”

³³When Jesus saw that Mary and the people with her were crying, he was terribly upset ³⁴and asked, “Where have you put his body?”

They replied, “Lord, come and you will see.”

³⁵Jesus started crying, ³⁶and the people said, “See how much he loved Lazarus.”

³⁷Some of them said, “He gives sight to the blind. Why couldn’t he have kept Lazarus from dying?”

³⁸Jesus was still terribly upset. So he went to the tomb, which was a cave with a stone rolled against the entrance. ³⁹Then he told the people to roll the stone away. But Martha said, “Lord, you know that Lazarus has been dead four days, and there will be a bad smell.”

⁴⁰Jesus replied, “Didn’t I tell you that if you had faith, you would see the glory of God?”

⁴¹After the stone had been rolled aside, Jesus looked up toward heaven and prayed, “Father, I thank you for answering my prayer. ⁴²I know that you always answer my prayers. But I said this, so that the people here would believe that you sent me.”

⁴³When Jesus had finished praying, he shouted, “Lazarus, come out!” ⁴⁴The man who had been dead came out. His hands and feet were wrapped with strips of burial cloth, and a cloth covered his face.

Jesus then told the people, “Untie him and let him go.”

Synopsis: God creates life from death, nothingness, and hopelessness. The Bible is full of such paradoxes, as Jesus tells us that those who try to keep their lives will die, but those who give up their lives for others will live. We are used to thinking of life in terms of fixed beginnings and ends, but the story of Jesus calls us to throw away our old categories and **embrace God's larger vision of eternal life that begins here and now.**

Felt need: Highlighted, above.

Media:

- “Life from Death.” Length: 3:07. Cost: \$15.00. A reflection for Easter about death and resurrection. Chazown films goal is to offer resources that challenge the viewer to think outside the box, grow in their faith, and usually to laugh along the way!
<http://media.preachingtoday.com/mini-movies/37185/life-from-death>. **Comments:** Irreverent and a bit tacky. Don’t use it.
- “Would You?” Length: 2:24. Cost: \$20.00. A mini-movie about giving up one’s life for another. <http://media.preachingtoday.com/mini-movies/24734/would-you> **Comments:** Don’t use it.
- “The Bridge.” Short version: 9:17. Cost: Free. A father made a conscious decision to save the train passengers at the risk of his son's life. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CjNovbDxZtc>
For more information on this 2003 Czech film visit [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Most_\(2003_film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Most_(2003_film)).

Drama: “Get a Life.” Cast: Two or more. Length: Over 5 min. This reader’s theater piece, written for two readers, is a touching exploration of the places we look for love while ignoring God’s till, small voice telling us, “You’re wonderful. I love you.” **Comments:** We did not read this

together. Karen will post it on the website for everyone to review.

http://www.dramaministry.com/store/search?product_type=Download&term=get+a+life

Activity: Holy Communion. Use pita bread.

Music: #420 "Breathe on Me, Breath of God"; #261 "Lord of the Dance"

Contemporary music suggestion: "One Thing Remains" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vGnpWo9SLuk>)

GBOD -Believe! The faith we confess, and the faith that transforms us, is more than intellectual assent to a theological construct. It is to stake our lives on the Triune God, and so join Martha's confession, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into this world."

Discussion points: 1) What are the parallels between the resurrection story of the dry bones and Lazarus? 2) Resurrection happens, even now. 3) Ask, "Does Jesus still raise people from the dead?"

April 9, 2017: "Giving Up Popularity"

Palm Sunday

Important note: Pastor Mary is on vacation today. It is the end of Spring Break.

Scripture: Matthew 21:1-11 (Today's English Version)

¹As Jesus and his disciples approached Jerusalem, they came to Bethphage at the Mount of Olives. There Jesus sent two of the disciples on ahead

²with these instructions: "Go to the village there ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied up with her colt beside her. Untie them and bring them to me. ³And if anyone says anything, tell him, 'The Master needs them'; and then he will let them go at once."

⁴This happened in order to make come true what the prophet had said:

⁵"Tell the city of Zion, Look, your king is coming to you! He is humble and rides on a donkey and on a colt, the foal of a donkey."

⁶So the disciples went and did what Jesus had told them to do: ⁷they brought the donkey and the colt, threw their cloaks over them, and Jesus got on. ⁸A large crowd of people spread their cloaks on the road while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹The crowds walking in front of Jesus and those walking behind began to shout, "Praise to David's Son! God bless him who comes in the name of the Lord! Praise be to God!"

¹⁰When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was thrown into an uproar. "Who is he?" the people asked.

¹¹"This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth in Galilee," the crowds answered.

Synopsis: What a welcome Jesus got as he entered Jerusalem. "Hosanna!" the people cried, hailing him as an honored king. The crowds loved Jesus on Palm Sunday, but just a few days later a different crowd was calling for his death and the release of a murderer. Popularity and acclaim in the eyes of others is fleeting, and if we put all our faith in it we will be very disappointed. Instead, God calls us to **put our faith in God's unending love and grace** - something that will never go away, and will sustain us through the times when others have abandoned us.

Felt need: Highlighted, above.

Drama: "Crucify Him." Cast: 4 or more. Length: Under 5 min. A man stumbles into the mob calling for Jesus' death and joins right in until he hears who the crowd wants to execute. <http://www.dramaministry.com/store/crucify-him-241>. **Comments:** Could we incorporate "Hosanna" from "Jesus Christ Superstar" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=14rSHAnFW3E>)? Include the scene in the Garden (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-PrLuDicn8s>) with "Will no one stay awake with me?" Mary was moved by the torment in Jesus' voice. Maybe Michael could sing Jesus' parts.

Music: #2111 "We Sang Our Glad Hosannas"#278 "Hosanna, Loud Hosanna"; #279 "Filled with Excitement"; #280 "All Glory, Laud, and Honor"

Discussion points: We'll need to move from Palm Sunday to Passion Sunday. See notes under the drama.

April 16, 2017: "Giving Up Death"

Easter Sunday

Scripture: Acts 10:34-43 (Contemporary English Version)

^{34E} Peter then said:

Now I am certain that God treats all people alike. ³⁵God is pleased with everyone who worships him and does right, no matter what nation they come from. ³⁶This is the same message that God gave to the people of Israel, when he sent Jesus Christ, the Lord of all, to offer peace to them.

³⁷You surely know what happened everywhere in Judea. It all began in Galilee after John had told everyone to be baptized. ³⁸God gave the Holy Spirit and power to Jesus from Nazareth. He was with Jesus, as he went around doing good and healing everyone who was under the power of the devil. ³⁹We all saw what Jesus did both in Israel and in the city of Jerusalem.

Jesus was put to death on a cross. ⁴⁰But three days later, God raised him to life and let him be seen. ⁴¹Not everyone saw him. He was seen only by us, who ate and drank with him after he was raised from death. We were the ones God chose to tell others about him.

⁴²God told us to announce clearly to the people that Jesus is the one he has chosen to judge the living and the dead. ⁴³Every one of the prophets has said that all who have faith in Jesus will have their sins forgiven in his name.

Scripture: John 20:1-18 (Today's New International Version)

¹Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance.

²So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"

³So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. ⁴Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, ⁷as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus' head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen. ⁸Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and

believed. ⁹(They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) ¹⁰Then the disciples went back to where they were staying.

¹¹Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb ¹²and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

¹³They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?"

"They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." ¹⁴At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

¹⁵He asked her, "Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?"

Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him."

¹⁶Jesus said to her, "Mary."

She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means "Teacher").

¹⁷Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.' "

¹⁸Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her.

Synopsis: Jesus' rising on Easter morning was more than a showy miracle to shock and awe his attackers and followers. When Jesus rose, he turned the entire order of the universe on its head. The Resurrection shows us that Death does not have the last word. God has the last word, and that word is Life. Suffering and Death end, but God's Kingdom lasts forever.

Felt need: To share the good news that suffering and death end, but God's Kingdom lasts forever.

Media:

- "The Risen Way." Length: 3:35. Cost: Free (subscription). Remind your community that the power of the resurrection is the same power that can help them to overcome loss, defeat, doubt, and death. Perfect for Easter Sunday, and designed to work with our Easter Invite video, "Good News." <https://journeyboxmedia.com/product/the-risen-way/>. **Comments:** Great! It perfectly captures Peter's guilt from denying Jesus and the resurrection's drama through the sights and sound (music/heartbeat).
- "Death to Death." Length: 3:06. Cost: \$19.98. Because of what Jesus did on the cross, He overcame darkness once and for all and brought death to death. This encouraging motion graphics piece celebrates what Jesus did and what it means for us today. <http://media.preachingtoday.com/mini-movies/58583/death-to-death>

Music: #302 "Christ the Lord Is Risen Today"