

*Reflection:*

- When have you caught yourself justifying a good action, only to realize that you were acting on your own self-interest rather than love of neighbor? In what ways did you feel God's grace in this realization?
- Think about a time when God made a way in your wilderness or river in your desert. What surprised you most? What did you hold on to? Let go of? How does that experience affect your outlook now?

**March 28, 2010**

Palm Sunday

Palm Readings: Luke 19:28-40;

Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29;

Passion Readings: Isaiah 50:4-9a;

Psalm 31:9-16; Philippians 2:5-11;

Luke 22:14-23:56

With unexpected presence, Jesus comes to us in humility, showing us how deceptive appearances can be. We are reminded that the way of the cross can seem upside-down, yet God is ever loving and present.

*Reflection:*

- What has caught your attention during these weeks of Lent? What insights, recognitions, or areas of control have you found? What have you discovered about God and yourself?
- What phrases stand out to you in the Scripture texts this week? Are they inviting you to name something to hold on to? Something to release?

## New Heavens and New Earth

**April 4, 2010**

Easter Sunday

Isaiah 65:17-25; Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24; Acts 10:34-43; 1 Corinthians 15:19-26; John 20:1-18

Grieving all that has gone wrong, and remains wrong, we meet Jesus. The one who sends us out to tell the deeper truth of God's plan to make all things new. Like Mary, we speak in a new voice, recounting the stories of resurrection we see around us.

*Reflection:*

- What signs of hope and renewal do you see in yourself? In our congregation? In our city? In our world?
- Henri Nouwan writes: "God invites us to discover ways to be less self-righteous, to sit at the same table together, and see each other with welcoming and accepting eyes." When have you experienced this from others? What stands out to you from their actions, words, or ways of being?

Written by Lorie Hershey in conjunction with the  
*Leader* worship resources.

## Lenten Prayer Guide

*West Philadelphia  
Mennonite Fellowship*

February 21 - April 4, 2010

### ***Holding On & Letting Go***

Lent is an invitation to join a spiritual pilgrimage. It is a journey toward deeper understandings of God, ourselves, and our calling as disciples of Jesus. These weeks remind us to pay attention to our direction and to keep turning towards Jesus. We are encouraged to return to the God who throws parties and is excited to see us walking back home, no matter what our condition.

This year's theme invites us to hold on to that which is most important, and let go of that which gets in the way of deeper relationship with God and one another. We are reminded of Jesus, who was willing to hold on to authenticity and speak to the sins and injustice around him. Yet also willing to let go of his very own life.

May we experience the love and freedom of Christ as we let go and hold on to God.

## February 21, 2010

Deuteronomy 26:1-11, Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16, Romans 10:8b-13, Luke 4:1-13

With reminders of God's strength and refuge and the Holy Spirit empowering us, we find the courage to let go of those things that tempt us to take control into our own hands. We can hold onto the Word written on our hearts and spoken from our lips.

### *Reflection:*

- What reminds you of God's strength and care for you? Think of ways to create reminders of God's care at home or work. A certain piece of art, a lit candle, eating bread, a certain tool, appliance, or instrument used can be "reassigned" as a reminder of God's love.
- Take time to pause, even for just 5 minutes daily. Ask God what is important to hold on to right now. Be open to see the things of which you may need to let go.

## February 28, 2010

Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18; Psalm 27, Philippians 3:17-4:1; Luke 13:31-35

Even in deep darkness and impossible circumstances, our sheltering God holds us. We release our grip on the things that distract us and open ourselves to God's transformation. We hold on to a faith that laments and questions, but continues to hope.

### *Reflection:*

- What seems impossible right now? What do you fear in those situations? What happens when you imagine placing those situations in the hands of Jesus?
- What are the "earthly things" that get in the way of seeing hope? What do you need from God to transform your sight?
- When have you questioned God's presence and power? What similarities and differences do you notice about these times?

## March 7, 2010

Isaiah 55:1-9, Psalm 63:1-8, 1 Corinthians 10:1-13, Luke 13:1-9

We can easily look to outside things to feel worthy: the right kind of clothes, good food, enough money, status-filled work, and admirable accomplishments. While these things are part of our life, we are reminded that they don't satisfy for long. Genuine relationship with Jesus...being able to see our faults as well as God's love...is like water on a thirsty desert. This is what truly satisfies.

### *Reflection:*

- What are things that draw your attention and energy? Where are they turning you...towards or away from God?
- What helps you bring your whole self into your relationship with Jesus? What parts do you tend to hold back?

## March 14, 2010

Joshua 5:9-12, Psalm 32, 2 Corinthians 5:16-21, Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

When we resist opening ourselves before God, and become attached only to our own way, we find ourselves wasting away in silence. When we turn toward God, naming our sins, we see ourselves as God sees us, and find that love has been there all along.

### *Reflection:*

- Henri Nouwan writes: "Gratitude is the opposite of resentment, and 'returning' is an inner passage from resentment to gratitude." In what circumstances is Jesus asking you to 'return'?
- What keeps you open to God? What hinders you? How does this affect your openness to yourself and others?

## March 21, 2010

Isaiah 43:16-21, Psalm 126, Philippians 3:4b-14, John 12:1-8

What we once valued seems like trash compared to an honest relationship with Jesus. We realize that what we *do* for Jesus is not the same as being in relationship with him. Letting go of our self-justifying ways, we pour ourselves out as gift.