



Benson Memorial United Methodist Church

LENTEN DEVOTIONAL

WELCOMING • COMMUNITY • DISCIPLESHIP
OPEN-MINDEDNESS • DIVERSITY • JUSTICE

AN INVITATION FOR THE SEASON

This Lenten devotional is an invitation, not a checklist. Over the weeks of Lent, you'll find simple prayer practices, scriptures, and reflections shaped around our shared church values: welcoming, community, discipleship, open-mindedness, diversity, and justice. Each day offers a small way to pause, notice God's presence, and reflect on how faith takes shape in our lives and in the world. We hope you'll use this devotional in whatever way fits your season—daily or occasionally, alone or with others, with curiosity rather than pressure. Our prayer is that these practices will create space for listening, for unlearning, and for compassion. As we journey together toward Easter, may you find yourself a little more grounded, a little more open, and a little more aware of God at work within you and among us.

Mission Meals

During Lent, we're setting aside our usual Wednesday night dinner and study to gather for Mission Meals! It's an evening of shared food and shared purpose. Each week, we'll meet in the Fellowship Hall for dinner at 5:45 p.m., then work side by side on a hands-on community service project together. Our hope is that these nights will help us slow down, practice attentiveness to one another, and remember that faith is formed not only through words, but through tangible acts of care. Lent invites us to notice where suffering and need exist and to respond with love, humility, and intention. Everyone is welcome. Come as you are, bring a friend, and join us at the table and in the work, trusting that small, faithful actions can shape both our community and our hearts.

MISSION MEALS DATES

February 25

March 4

March 11

March 18

March 25

Sunday Service Projects

Throughout Lent, we'll have weekly Sunday Service Projects that can be done individually or as a household during the week. These projects are rooted in our shared church values (welcoming, community, discipleship, open-mindedness, diversity, and justice), as we seek to live out our faith beyond Sunday morning. Each week, you'll be invited to reflect, pray, and respond through tangible acts of care: creating cards for moms-to-be at the women's prison, collecting supplies for Family Promise of the Triangle, North Raleigh Ministries, and Jeffreys Grove, or gathering items to assemble summer reading packs for students at Jeffreys Grove. We hope that these practices will help us grow as disciples who notice the needs around us, honor the dignity and experiences of others, and respond with compassion and humility. As you bring these items with you to worship on Sundays, remember that we are called to gather as a community shaped by shared values and a faith that is practiced with intention and love.

SUNDAY SERVICE PROJECTS AT-A-GLANCE

February 22: Cards for Moms-to-Be

March 1: Family Promise of the Triangle Donations

March 8: Donations for Summer Reading Packs for K-2 Jeffreys Grove Students

March 15: Donations for Teacher & Staff Appreciation Gifts for Jeffreys Grove

March 22: North Raleigh Ministries Donations

WELCOMING

*Lent opens with an invitation: Return to the Lord.
Before we could do anything to earn God's love,
we were already welcomed by it. This week invites us
to reflect on the ways God receives us fully, even in
the midst of our messiness, imperfection, and incompleteness.
We are then challenged to consider how that very welcome
shapes the way we receive others. As we pray, reflect,
and practice, we are invited to notice who feels welcome
in our lives, our church, and our community,
and where God may be calling us to widen the circle.*

WEEK 1

February 18 - 28

ASH WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 18

Meager Meal at 5:45 p.m.

Worship Service at 6:30 p.m.

Scripture Readings:

Psalms 51, Joel 2:12-13, Genesis 3:19

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 19

Sunday Service Project:

This week, make an encouraging and uplifting handmade card for a mom-to-be at the women's prison. Our team will take them to the moms during their March visit. Bring your finished card(s) with you to the church service this Sunday, February 22.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 20

Scripture: Romans 15:7

Reflection: Where in your life have you experienced being welcomed without having to earn it? What did that feel like?

When you think about *welcome*, who naturally feels included in your life or church community? Who might unintentionally be left on the edges?

How could practicing a deeper welcome (toward yourself and others) be an act of faith this week?

Prayer: *Gracious God, open my eyes and heart to those who may feel unseen or unheard in my life and community. Give me the courage and compassion to make room where I once drew boundaries. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 21

Scripture: Matthew 11:28

Reflection: What parts of yourself do you find hardest to believe God welcomes? What might it mean to trust that God receives you fully, even there?

What fears, assumptions, or habits make it difficult to widen the circle of welcome? What might God be inviting you to release?

Prayer: *Gracious God, help me to trust that I am welcomed by you just as I am, without earning or proving my worth. Teach me to rest in your love, even in the parts of myself I try to hide. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 22 SUNDAY SERVICE PROJECT

Bring Cards for Moms-to-Be

Bring your card(s) for moms-to-be to the worship service with you.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 23

Throughout the week, collect your donations for Family Promise of the Triangle and bring them to the worship service with you. Much-needed donations are: pillows, paper towels, c-fold paper towels, Fabuloso cleaners, can openers, sensitive-skin laundry detergent pods.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 24

Practice Breath Prayer: A breath prayer is a simple, short prayer that is prayed in rhythm with your breathing. Often one phrase is said as you breathe in and one as you breathe out. Drawn from early Christian contemplative practices, breath prayer helps quiet the mind, center the body, and return our attentiveness to God's presence in the moment. Take a moment to practice with this breath prayer. Sit in a quiet, comfortable place. Take a few deep, slow breaths. Take notice of your breathing. As you breathe in, say, "God of grace, you welcome me." As you breathe out, say, "I rest in your love." Repeat this three times. Then close by saying, "Teach me to welcome as I have been welcomed. Amen."

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 25

Mission Meal, 5:45 p.m., Fellowship Hall

Come work on a community service project with us! All ages are welcome as we serve our neighbors together.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 26

Weekly Wisdom: "We are not meant to live alone. Our salvation is bound up with the salvation of others, and our healing is always, in some way, communal."
—Desmond Tutu

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 27

Scripture: Romans 12:4-5

Reflection: How do your daily choices (your words, actions, or silence) shape the well-being of others in your community?

Where might God be inviting you to show up more fully for the sake of the whole body?

Prayer: *Gracious God, remind me that I do not walk this journey alone. Help me receive the gift of belonging and trust my place within the body of Christ. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 28

Scripture: Galatians 6:2

Reflection: What joys or burdens are you currently carrying alone that might be meant to be shared?

What does it look like for you to live out your faith with others rather than alongside them?

Prayer: *Loving God, teach me to carry both the joys and burdens of others with compassion and care. Shape my choices so they reflect a faith rooted in grace and mutual love. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

COMMUNITY

Even when Lenten practices are quiet and solitary, they are not meant to separate us. Scripture reminds us over and over again that faith is a shared way of life, lived in relationship with God and with one another. This week, we reflect on what it means to belong to the body of Christ, to carry one another's joys and burdens, and to remember that our choices affect more than just ourselves. Lent forms us not only as individuals, but as people learning how to live together in grace.

WEEK 2

March 1 - 7

SUNDAY, MARCH 1 SUNDAY SERVICE PROJECT

Family Promise Donations

Bring your donations for Family Promise of the Triangle with you to the worship service.

MONDAY, MARCH 2

Sunday Service Project: This week, collect the following supplies so we can put together Summer Reading Packs for many K-2 students to keep up their literacy goals throughout the summer: pencils; erasers; colored pencils; composition notebooks; doodle pads; stickers; Step 1, 2, or 3 books. Bring your donations with you to the worship service this Sunday.

TUESDAY, MARCH 3

Practice Metta Prayer: Metta prayer focuses on cultivating loving kindness toward ourselves and others and softens our hearts, expands compassion, and trains us to care for those around us, free of judgment. Take a moment to pray.

Focus on yourself, praying, *"Dear God, may I be safe. May I be happy. May I be well. May I be peaceful. Amen."*

Bring to mind those you love, pray, *"Dear God, may they be safe. May they be happy. May they be well and peaceful. Amen."*

Without judgment, think of those you have a hard time loving and pray, *"Dear God, may they be safe. May they be happy. May they be well. May they be peaceful. Amen."*

Focus on our community, praying, *"Dear God, may they be safe and happy. May they be well. May they be peaceful. Amen."*

Open your heart to focus on the world and pray, *"Dear God, may all beings be free from suffering. Amen."*

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 4

Mission Meal, 5:45 p.m., Fellowship Hall

Come work on a community service project with us! All ages are welcome as we serve our neighbors together.

THURSDAY, MARCH 5

Weekly Wisdom: "Spiritual formation is not about steps or stages on the way to perfection, but about the slow transformation of our being in the presence of God." *—Henri Nouwen*

FRIDAY, MARCH 6

Scripture: Luke 9:23

Reflection: When you hear Jesus' invitation to follow, what feelings or resistance arise in you right now?

What might be ready to be released in this season so that something more life-giving can take its place?

Prayer: *Loving God, help me to listen to your call in the midst of my ordinary days. Teach me to follow you with trust, even when the path feels unclear. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

SATURDAY, MARCH 7

Scripture: Romans 12:1-2

Reflection: What practices, habits, or rhythms are currently shaping your life? Are you choosing them intentionally or not?

Where do you notice growth or transformation already unfolding, even in small or quiet ways?

Prayer: *Forming God, gently shape my life through practices that lead toward love and wholeness. Give me patience to trust the slow work of transformation. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

DISCIPLESHIP

To follow Jesus is to practice his way, moment by moment, until it becomes the shape of your life. In the middle of Lent, we pause to reflect on the practices and habits that are shaping us. Discipleship asks us to pay attention to where we are being formed and who we are becoming. This week invites us to listen deeply to Jesus' call, to gently notice what is ready to be released or renewed, and to trust that transformation unfolds one faithful moment at a time.

WEEK 3

March 8 - 14

SUNDAY, MARCH 8 SUNDAY SERVICE PROJECT

Reading Packs for Jeffreys Grove

Bring your donations for Summer Reading Packs for Jeffreys Grove K-2 students with you to the worship service.

MONDAY, MARCH 9

Sunday Service Project: Throughout this week, help us collect the following supplies so we can put together appreciation packs for the teachers and staff at Jeffreys Grove Elementary: nice pens (any color), Sharpies (any color and size), lip balm, clips, small notebooks, chocolate candy, mints, and \$5 coffee shop gift cards. Bring your donations with you to the worship service this Sunday.

TUESDAY, MARCH 10

Practice the Examen: The Examen is a reflective prayer practice from the Jesuit tradition that invites us to look back over our day with honesty and gratitude. It helps us notice where we sensed God's presence and where we felt distant, not for judgment, but to grow in awareness and attentiveness to God's movement in our lives.

At the end of the day, find a quiet place to reflect on your day, journaling or holding your reflections in prayer. In gratitude, turn to God and ask for the grace to recognize Christ present in all things.

God, where did I see you in my home, my routines, and the ordinary moments of the day? Where did I miss you or rush past your presence?

Where did I forget to give thanks? Where was I ungrateful?

God, how did I encounter you in my meals and in my neighbors—family, friends, and coworkers? When did I fail to love as you love? God, guide me in the day ahead.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11

Mission Meal, 5:45 p.m., Fellowship Hall

Come work on a community service project with us! All ages are welcome as we serve our neighbors together.

THURSDAY, MARCH 12

Weekly Wisdom: "If you believe you have understood God, then what you have understood is not God." —St. Augustine

FRIDAY, MARCH 13

Scripture: John 3:8

Reflection: Where in your life or faith do you feel most certain? How might God be inviting you to hold that certainty more loosely?

How do you tend to respond when you feel unsure, challenged, or uncomfortable? What might change if curiosity was your response?

Prayer: *Gracious God, help me approach others with curiosity rather than judgment. Give me the courage to be changed by what I hear and learn. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

SATURDAY, MARCH 14

Scripture: Proverbs 18:13

Reflection: When have you learned something meaningful by listening to a perspective different from your own?

What could it look like to trust that God is present even when clear answers are not?

Prayer: *God of wisdom, quiet my own perspective and open my heart to listen more deeply. Teach me to trust that you are at work beyond what I already understand. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

OPEN- MINDEDNESS

Lent is a season of unlearning as much as learning. Again and again, Jesus challenges assumptions, loosens our certainty, and invites us to see God and one another with new eyes. This week, we practice the holy act of curiosity, opening ourselves to new perspectives and deeper understanding. Rather than rushing toward answers, we make space for questions, trusting that God often works through humility, attentive listening, and a willingness to be changed.

WEEK 4

March 15 - 21

SUNDAY, MARCH 15 SUNDAY SERVICE PROJECT

Teacher & Staff Appreciation Gifts

Bring your donations for the teacher and staff appreciation gifts for Jeffreys Grove with you to the worship service.

MONDAY, MARCH 16

Sunday Service Project: Throughout this week, help us collect much-needed donations to go to the North Raleigh Ministries Food Pantry. Check out their website for the most needed donations, and bring them with you to the worship service this Sunday.

TUESDAY, MARCH 17

Practice a Prayer for Illumination: In the Christian tradition, this prayer names our dependence on the Spirit to loosen certainty and deepen understanding, rather than relying only on what we already know. Find a quiet and comfortable place and pray this prayer:

God of the living Word, quiet our need to be right and open us to be present.

By your Spirit, help us listen deeply, receive generously, and be changed by what we hear.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 18

Mission Meal, 5:45 p.m., Fellowship Hall

Come work on a community service project with us! All ages are welcome as we serve our neighbors together.

THURSDAY, MARCH 19

Weekly Wisdom: "Community cannot be nurtured in isolation. It must be lived among people, recognizing difference and celebrating it." *—Howard Thurman*

FRIDAY, MARCH 20

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:18-20

Reflection: According to Paul, God intentionally arranges the body with many different parts. Where do you see difference as a gift in your community? Where do you struggle to receive it that way?

How might your understanding of unity change if differences were not something to manage, but something to celebrate?

Prayer: *Loving God, help me to remember that you arrange the body with care, and help me to honor every part as essential and beloved. Shape our community into a place where unity makes room for difference and all belong. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

SATURDAY, MARCH 21

Scripture: Revelation 7:9

Reflection: Revelation paints a picture of God's kingdom as richly diverse, with many nations, peoples, and languages. What does this vision awaken in you—hope, discomfort, curiosity, resistance?

Whose voices or experiences are easiest for you to value? Whose are harder to hear or honor?

Prayer: *God of every people and language, thank you for the beautiful diversity of your kingdom. Teach me to rejoice in difference and to see it as part of your holy design. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

DIVERSITY

The body of Christ is made up of many voices, stories, and lived experiences. Scripture reminds us that God meets people where they are and works in beautiful and varied ways. This week we reflect on unity that does not erase differences, and belonging that makes room for diversity. As we pray and practice, we are invited to honor experiences beyond our own and to listen for how God speaks through the fullness and shared life of the whole community.

WEEK 5

March 22 - 28

SUNDAY, MARCH 22
SUNDAY SERVICE PROJECT

North Raleigh Ministries

Bring your donations for the North Raleigh Ministries Food Pantry with you to the worship service..

MONDAY, MARCH 23

Come up with a way that you or your family can serve your immediate neighbor(s). Share your experience with people in your Sunday School class or small group.

TUESDAY, MARCH 24

Practice a Prayer for Diversity: Find a quiet and comfortable place and practice this prayer for diversity:

Gracious God, may all who gather in this community be safe and held in God's love. May all who feel unseen or unheard be seen, honored, and valued. May those whose experiences differ from my own be met with curiosity and care. May the gifts of every person be celebrated, and every voice have a place at the table. May I release judgment, assumptions, and fear, and open my heart to God's transforming love. May we live together in peace, humility, and faithful compassion, embracing the fullness of the body of Christ. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 25

Mission Meal, 5:45 p.m., Fellowship Hall

Come work on a community service project with us! All ages are welcome as we serve our neighbors together.

THURSDAY, MARCH 26

The Prayer of Confession and Pardon is an act of honest humility that names our brokenness, turns us toward God, and opens us to lives transformed by grace, justice, and love. Find a quiet place to pray:

Merciful God, we confess that we have not loved you with our whole heart. We have failed to be an obedient church. We have not done your will, we have broken your law, we have rebelled against your love, we have not loved our neighbors, and we have not heard the cry of the needy. Forgive us, we pray. Free us for joyful obedience, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

FRIDAY, MARCH 27

Scripture: Micah 6:8

Reflection: As you consider the journey toward the cross, where do you see Jesus most clearly engaging in suffering, injustice, or misuse of power?

What forms of suffering or injustice are closest to your daily life (those you see often or are directly connected to)?

Prayer: *Loving God, teach me to love in ways that are costly, honest, and healing. As I walk toward the cross, align my heart with Jesus' work of restoration in the world. In his name, Amen.*

SATURDAY, MARCH 28

Scripture: Matthew 25:40

Reflection: How do you tend to respond when you become aware of injustice? What might it look like to practice justice not from guilt, but from love and mindful awareness?

Where do you sense God inviting you into a small act of repair, solidarity, or care?

Prayer: *God of justice and mercy, open my eyes to the ways my life touches the lives of others. Let compassion guide my attention and shape my response. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

JUSTICE

As Lent draws toward its close, our attention turns outward. The journey to the cross reveals a Jesus deeply engaged with suffering, injustice, and the misuse of power. This week we reflect on how faith takes shape in the world through mindful compassion, deliberate acts of repair, and love that asks something of us. It's not about guilt, but about awakening to the ways our lives touch others, aligning our hearts with God's work of healing and restoration, and preparing ourselves to walk with Christ through Holy Week with awareness, presence, and care.

WEEK 6

March 29 - April 5

SUNDAY, MARCH 29
PALM SUNDAY

*Easter Egg Hunt, 11:30 a.m., Courtyard,
Lunch Provided*

Scripture: Luke 19:28-40

MONDAY, MARCH 30

As we enter Holy Week, we notice the ways God's love holds us and others, inviting us to be fully present in the lives around us. Jesus' journey to the cross shows us the deep interconnection of suffering and care, and reminds us that faith is lived in relationship. This week, we practice attentive presence, as we listen, notice, and act with compassion, allowing God's love to shape our hearts and our community.

Reflection: What habits or patterns might you release or loosen to make space for greater love and welcome?

How can you live out the lessons of justice, diversity, and open-mindedness in the days ahead?

Where do you feel called to carry someone else's joy or burden this week?

Has your sense of community deepened or changed through this Lenten season?

TUESDAY, MARCH 31

Holy Week invites us to live prayerfully in action, observing where our choices touch others. This season we have practiced curiosity, justice, and welcome, and now we bring these practices into the world with awareness and compassion. In the shadow of Christ's suffering, we are called to examine how we respond to the needs of others, how we celebrate differences, and how we walk humbly yet love boldly.

Let this week be a time to reflect, to act, and to open ourselves fully to transformation through God's Spirit, so that Easter morning finds us renewed and ready to embody resurrection hope in the world.

Reflect: How do you see your Lenten practices forming your life, both inwardly and outwardly?

Where are you being called to extend care, justice, or understanding in a concrete way?

How has paying attention to difference and diversity shaped your faith this season?

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 1

No Wednesday Night Dinner

Scripture Reading: Luke 22:3-6

THURSDAY, APRIL 2
MAUNDY THURSDAY

*Holy Thursday Worship Service,
6:00 p.m., Sanctuary*

Scripture Reading: John 13:1-17

THURSDAY, APRIL 2
MAUNDY THURSDAY

*Stations of the Cross, 10:00 a.m.
to 3:00 p.m., Fellowship Hall*

*Good Friday Worship Service,
7:00 p.m., Sanctuary*

Scripture Reading: John 18-19

SATURDAY, APRIL 4
HOLY SATURDAY

Scripture Reading: Romans 6:3-11

SUNDAY, APRIL 5
EASTER SUNDAY

Easter Worship Service, 10:00 a.m., Sanctuary

Scripture Reading: John 20:1-18

HOLY WEEK

Palm-Passion Sunday, March 29

Worship Service, 10:00 a.m., Sanctuary

Join us as we wave palms, hear the unfolding story of Holy Week, and prayerfully reflect on God's presence among us as we move from praise toward the promise of Easter.

Holy Thursday, April 2

Worship Service, 6:00 a.m., Sanctuary

Gather for a sacred time of scripture, prayer, and Holy Communion as we remember Jesus' final night and encounter God's grace in the midst of betrayal and love.

Good Friday, April 3

Stations of the Cross

Self-guided Stations in the Fellowship Hall throughout the day. Walk quietly through the Stations of the Cross at your own pace, praying and reflecting on Jesus' journey of suffering and love along the way to the cross.

Good Friday Worship Service, 7:00 p.m., Sanctuary

Enter the darkness of Tenebrae as scripture is read, candles are extinguished, and we mourn together the death of Christ in solemn and holy worship.

Easter Sunday, April 5

Worship Service, 10:00 a.m., Sanctuary

Celebrate the joy of resurrection as we proclaim Christ risen, sing with glad hearts, adorn the cross with flowers, and rejoice in God's life-giving love.

