



Society of St. Andrew

GLEANING AMERICA'S FIELDS  
FEEDING AMERICA'S HUNGRY

Daily Lenten Devotions

scripture readings • reflections • prayers

# HOPE SPRINGS ETERNAL

Dear Friends in Christ,

Grace and peace to you! This year, February 14<sup>th</sup> is not only Valentine's Day on the calendar but also Ash Wednesday, the most holy day beginning our Lenten season. A solemn, penitential season, we can journey through it with the hope of the glorious Resurrection on Easter Sunday.

With everything going on in the world today, we need reminders and reflections of God's hope around us. This devotional booklet is titled "Hope Springs Eternal" to help you daily on your journey. The writers of these offerings read and prayed about Lamentations 3:25:

*"The LORD is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him;"*

Based on this or another favorite scripture about hope, these devotions were written to feed your spiritual hunger and inspire you to recognize and thank God for your own story of hope.

Praying, fasting, and assessing our spiritual health during Lent, we journey to the cross throughout the 40 days of the season. While using the tools of prayer, self-examination, confession, and repentance, and reading "Hope Springs Eternal," we gain a deeper knowledge and understanding of what Jesus did for us and how that gives us hope today.

As your spiritual hungers are sustained by these devotions this season, please give back to the Society of St. Andrew to meet the physical needs of those less fortunate. With a monetary contribution, you provide healthy nourishing food for people in greatest need, right here in the United States.

Thank you in advance for using and sharing "Hope Springs Eternal" devotional materials, for telling others about the Society of St. Andrew's gleaning and feeding ministries, and for making a generous gift to feed families in need. Together, let us share the riches of God's hope!

Blessings for a holy Lenten season and glorious Easter! Oh, the joy to come when we sing "Alleluia, He is risen!"



Chesley R. Vohden

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## Love and Ashes

[Scripture: Lamentations 3:25](#)

Amanda came with her parents to the kneeling rail. I stood before her, holding the bowl of ashes and said, “Amanda...” Before I could get the next words out, she looked up at me, smiled, and said “Yes?” I put the ashes on her and said, “Remember you are mortal. From dust you came and to dust you shall return. Repent and believe the gospel.” Her face just fell. The smile dropped. My heart broke. I had just told this little girl, this young woman who was bringing so much joy into everyone’s life, someone who had all the great things in the world going for her, she was going to die. My heart aches, and I see her face this time every year.

Yet it is true. The children’s bedtime prayer is not “...if I should die...” It’s “when I die.”

This year Ash Wednesday and Valentine’s Day are the same day. A strange confluence of love and ashes. The Bible tells us that there are some things that never end, never die. Faith, hope, and love to be exact. It also tells us that God is love. When we are connected to God, we are connected to love. And love never ends, love never dies. Love overcomes all.

Yes, Amanda, we are all going to die. But that is not the end. The ashes will wash off, and soon we will celebrate a day when death is no more.

**Prayer: Thank you, God, that love is greater than death. Amen.**

*Michael Henderson — Florence, SC*

## Blessed Assurance

[Scripture: Hebrews 11:1](#)

“Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return” is a part of the Ash Wednesday liturgy. I “serve” ashes on a tiny plate on which is painted: God loves me no matter what. We need to remember: we are less than perfect, and God love us no matter what. At some time in our lives, we are all separated from God through dementia, disease, disappointment, discouragement or doubt. We lose our perspective about who we are and who God is.

During this season of spiritual darkness, I hope we can come so close to God and the light of Christ, to say with conviction, God loves me no matter what. The good news of the gospel is when we are searching for God, it is because God has already found us...knows us, has made a covenant with us to save us, even from ourselves, suffers with us however life bruises and batters us. With that assurance, it should be easier for us to risk seeking the Light in the darkness, knowing there is someone to lead us out of the wilderness and into the Promised Land.

**Prayer:** Lord, you know the weaknesses of each of us. Guide us during this Lenten season to come to know you more fully and truly believe that you know and still love us no matter what! Amen.

*Kathleen Vermillion Price — Williamsburg, VA*

Friday, February 16

## Troubled?

[Scripture: 2 Corinthians 4:17-18](#)

“When you’re down and troubled... And you need some loving care...and nothing, nothing is going right...”

That song started running through my head when I was pondering the idea of hope. If it isn’t already running through YOUR head, those are the opening lines to You’ve Got a Friend by Carole King. And we’ve got no better, closer or more loyal friend than God!

Remember when Elijah was running for his life from Jezebel? (1 Kings 19) I’m grateful that in all the trials of my existence, I have not had to run for my life! But I have had times that I felt like Elijah when he whined to God that he was the only prophet left and was just going to curl up under the broom tree and die.

I had just started vacation and was headed down to sit on the beach to read - before I left my phone at the house, I decided to check my email. The world crumbled around me as I read that I was terminated from a job that I loved. Suddenly I couldn’t breathe, didn’t know which way to turn. Didn’t understand why. Wanted to curl up under the broom tree...

Friends and family supported me and helped me hope again. THEY were the embodiment of God’s love. Sometimes that is how He responds, sending loving humans with physical hugs.



**Prayer:** Loving God, thank you for all the ways you send hope. Help me to wait with an open, patient heart. Amen.

*Chris Howell — Madison Heights, VA*

Saturday, February 17

## A Light in the Window

Scripture: Romans 5:1-5

My mind was percolating, bubbling up memories and plans, as I drove across town to the quiet residential neighborhood. Pat had called earlier that cold December morning. “It’s a good day,” she said. “Can you come by this afternoon so we can plan my service?”

Just before Thanksgiving four years earlier Pat’s husband had dropped dead, suddenly and unexpectedly, while he was dressing to serve as a pallbearer at a friend’s funeral. I, their pastor, was on maternity leave, recovering from an emergency C-section, and unable to be with her during that chaotic, sad time. But in the years since I had seen Pat navigate her changed, widowed life. And then I had watched as the congregation rallied around her through the shock of her own devastating diagnosis.

Twilight was rapidly descending as I pulled into the driveway of her tidy house. Up and down the street holiday decorations were glowing but the light that caught my eye was the one candle in her front picture window. That small bright light!

Pat hugged me when I entered the house. Smiling, I said, “I love the candle! What a sign of hope!”

So often since then I’ve remembered that one small candle and prayed that I can offer an equally visible witness of hope no matter the troubles around or within me.

**Prayer:** Holy Jesus, Saving Christ, may everyone receive the help they need: a shared meal, a caring conversation, a generous gift. We place all our hope in you. Amen.

*Kathleen Overby Webster — McGaheysville, VA*



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## The Best Food to Those Who Need it Most

The Society of St. Andrew began in 1979 in the hills of Virginia and has grown into the largest field gleaning organization in the country. Working in a collaborative effort with thousands of farmers, tens of thousands of volunteers, and thousands of feeding programs in all 48 contiguous states, SoSA provides healthy food to those who have little or no access to it.

This nutritious, but excess, bounty is sent directly from the point of surplus (field or packing facility) to food banks or feeding programs that will share it directly with people in greatest need. The Society of St. Andrew's remarkable and efficient programs have proven extremely successful at providing nutritious food to those who need it most.

Your gifts make this possible!

### **2022 STATISTICS**

**20,77,530 pounds of  
nourishing food shared**

**3.85 billion servings shared  
in our 44 year history**

**Less than 5¢ per serving**

**Overhead: 6.1%**



## A Living Hope

[Scripture: 1 Peter 1:3-9](#)

Touring the Holy Land some thirty-five years ago, we walked where Jesus walked. In Jerusalem we visited two sites of Jesus' resurrection—the traditional site known as the Church of the Holy Sepulchre; and the Garden Tomb, a biblical image of the empty tomb, adjacent to a rocky knoll known as Skull Hill.

It was at the site of the empty tomb, as I stood off from the group, that I had a profound spiritual moment in which I recalled Peter's testimony of "a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, his sacrificial love, became real to me in a way I had not experienced. This "living hope" was more than the future hope of life after death.

Peter was expressing a hope that was alive, even when fellow Christians died or were killed. They believed their hope came along with the new life Christ granted them. A living hope—a hope to live on. Hope points people toward what life can be, despite the sufferings of the present.

Christian hope suggests what we do makes a difference, changing the world for the better. Do we show love to the people we love and more importantly to the people we don't love? Do we help people who need our help? Do we share what we have with a joyful heart? Do we pray, asking God to help us make good decisions? Can we be Jesus' 'living hope' to others?

**Prayer:** Holy God, help us to love you with our whole heart, mind, and soul. Help us to bring "living hope" to others in Jesus' name. Amen.

*Bill Jones — Waynesboro, VA*

Monday, February 19

## What Does God's Goodness Look Like?

[Scripture: Matthew 20:16](#)

"The last will be first, and the first will be last." Imagine the discomfort of the disciples and others gathered around Jesus that day as he shared this parable and the incredulous looks he likely received. This message makes us squirm in our seats!

Underneath the challenge and discomfort, there is a message of love ... a message of God's love for everyone. When we lift our eyes from where we are standing in line and look to someone else in line, we may discover the joy of seeing how God is at work in their life. While we may not see it in the place where we are standing, we will never know the joy someone else may receive witnessing how God is at work in our lives.

Perhaps, one of the greatest things we can do as members of the family of God—perhaps one of the greatest gifts we can give to one another—is sharing with someone the joy we find in seeing how God is at work in their life. Perhaps the greatest joy is giving hope and sight to someone who, because of their own emotional or spiritual blindness, may feel hopeless.

**Prayer:** Lord, in difficult times when we feel blind to what is going on in our own lives ... by sharing these glimpses, may we remove the blindfolds from our eyes and change that line in which we all stand into a circle we all share: the circle of God's love for all of God's children. Amen.

*Matt Rhodes — Lynchburg, VA*

Tuesday, February 20

## **Trust is the Foundation of Hope** Scripture: Proverbs 3:5-6

For about six years of my childhood, at a significant time in my development, my brother and I were raised by a single parent, our mother, Anne. When I reflect upon that time, I do not remember it being a time without hope. I think both Mike and I had such trust in the character of our mother as a caretaker and bread winner that she gave us reason to hope, even when life threw us curve balls, like moving across the country from California to our hometown in North Carolina when we were still in elementary school.

Today, I have hope in the Lord in the same manner because I personally know the character of God in Christ Jesus. I trust His promises to be true. This has been true for me the length of my 71 years. It doesn't mean life has been smooth sailing on calm seas, but when storms and high waves threaten my life, I trust God will be present for me and my family. That includes trying times like the loss of my spouse at 35, and open heart surgery at 61. So, I say thanks be to God.

**Prayer:** Lord, in you alone let us trust, for your word is true and our true hope. Amen.

*Andy Brock — Winchester, VA*

## Fasting and Feasting

**Scripture: Galatians 5:23**

Lent is a season to fast, but Lent is also a season for feasting. Fasting and feasting are not just about eating! We moved from the light of the Epiphany season into the darkness of Lent. We move from how God revealed himself to us to a time to reflect upon how this revelation affects us. As we move from the wilderness of our hearts to the foot of the cross, we can turn our fasting into feasting. As your Lenten discipline, don't just give something up, take something on. Fast and feast at the same time!



Fast from destructive attitudes and closed minds; feast on openness.

Fast from complaining and criticizing; feast on praise.

Fast from bad temper and impatience; feast on gentleness.

Fast from self-pity; feast on joy.

Fast from resentment; feast on contentment. Fast from jealousy; feast on compassion.

Fast from pride; feast on humility. Fast from piety; feast on holiness.

Fast from selfishness; feast on serving others. Fast from doubt; feast on faith.

Fast from fear; feast on hope. Fast from hate; feast on love.

What you need to fast from is a personal matter, but through the fasting and darkness of Lent, you will come to feast on the hope and brightness of Easter, when God wipes every ash from our foreheads and every tear from our eyes!

**Prayer:** Gracious God, help us fast from sinful traits and feast on the fruit of your Spirit. Amen.

*Kathleen Vermillion Price — Williamsburg, VA*



## The Substance of Things Hoped For

**Scripture: 2 Corinthians 1:20 (ESV)**

In the wee hours of the morning, as I lay awake watching the clock, I silently prayed for the concerns weighing on my heart. After falling asleep briefly, I awoke with a start, and the following passage of scripture whispered in my spirit: “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” Hebrews 11:1

As I meditated on that passage of scripture, I had an epiphany... as the children of God, it is our duty to keep our faith, hope, and trust firmly placed in Him. Many times, too numerous to count, the Lord has repeatedly brought me out of trials and tests (and you, too). But it is as if we have spiritual amnesia, and we have forgotten the last blessing, comfort, deliverance, forgiveness, healing, provision, or victory God provided, like he is only as good as our last need that he met! Placing our hope in the Lord, instead of in doubt and fear, will strengthen us.

**Prayer:** Lord, no matter the challenges that we face let us place our hope and trust in you to see us to the other side. In the matchless name of Jesus, we pray. Amen!

*Tracy Porter – Pasadena, CA*

## Don't Forget or Ignore the Needy

**Scripture: Psalm 9:18**

This verse resonates with me because of the work I am blessed to be a part of at The Society of St. Andrew. I firmly know we are assisting the needy and are not forgetting what is absent in their lives. These absences: clean water, a roof over their heads, decent sets of clothes, and of course, food, will not allow them to prosper or even live with dignity or above the poverty level. Am I guilty of forgetting them? Are you? You would probably think an employee at SoSA never forgets the needy. I would say there is truth in that statement. However, I can't say I haven't ignored them. This is not what we are called to do.

So many in my state of Mississippi are hungry on a daily basis. Many school children will experience their last meal of the week at school lunch on Friday. Their next full meal will more than likely not be enjoyed until school breakfast on Monday. We must continue to pray for them, that they will not be forgotten, and



that their hope will continue to survive. Let's continue to pray, even after Lent. We cannot continue letting our children listen to growling stomachs instead of lullabies.

**Prayer:** Dear Lord, I pray for the needy and poor across our country. I especially lift up the children who will turn to you for comfort and love. Amen.

*Langston Moore — Jackson, MS*

Saturday, February 24

## Bright Hope for Tomorrow

**Scripture: Romans 5:3-4**

In May of 2004, about 30 dedicated Christians began to meet together for worship. We strongly believed God was calling us to form a new church. Several guest speakers tried to dampen our spirits and convince us we had too many “gray heads” to be successful. But we had “strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow”, as the wonderful hymn *Great is Our Faithfulness* says. We persevered and moved into our own building in December 2005.

In the following years, we had ups and downs. We had two full time pastors and two interim pastors who led us well. Now in our 20th year with the leadership of a new pastor, we continue to move forward with hope for the future.

Our new pastor gave us a rock on his first Sunday. He asked us to write a word on it that made us think of Grace Hills. My word was hope...hope for the future; hope

to share God's love with others; hope to share the Gospel with our community; and hope to grow and be a light in our world.

In Romans, Paul says, "suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character, and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us." We remain strong today and have bright hope for tomorrow because we follow a Living Christ who died for us on the cross. It is this hope in Christ moving us forward as a church.

**Prayer:** Dear Lord, we pray our hope in Christ continues to give us bright hope for tomorrow. In His Name, Amen.

*Linda M. Mays — Appomattox, VA*

Sunday, February 25

## Who's in Charge?

**Scripture:** [John 4:23-24](#)

Most people view Lent as a season to give up something. The one thing most people need to give up and find the most difficult to let go of, is control. Lent is about giving up control to the Holy Spirit, about letting God control our lives, and recognizing if we are in charge, then God cannot be.

No one plans to be a hypocrite. We practice our religion hoping to have an impact on our families, our church, our community, but slowly and often imperceptibly, we are drawn into the need for human approval until it becomes the "idol" we worship. We want people to like us; to think we are good; to think we are people of God. If the liturgy is perfect, God will be pleased. If we pray well, God will hear us. If we make our pledge big enough, God will reward us.

Self-examination helps us discern whether we are doing things for God's purposes or our own. Prayer and piety, liturgy and worship, are good things. What gets us in trouble with these are our motives. True faith is expressed in true worship. True faith is seeking God's approval, not our friends', pastors' or the world's. True faith is praying, whether or not we are seen. True faith is reaching out to those in need.

**Prayer:** Lord, help us practice true faith, worshiping in spirit and in truth, and reaching out to those in need. Amen.

*Kathleen Price — Williamsburg, VA*



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## Preventing Waste, Feeding Hungry People

With your help, The Society of St. Andrew (SoSA) addresses this crucial issue in two ways. In each, SoSA gathers up food that would otherwise be wasted. This fresh and nutritious food is then provided, at no cost, to food banks, pantries, and programs to feed or provide food to those most in need.

SoSA distributes food donated from a variety of sources including farms, fields, orchards, packing houses, and grocers. This is accomplished through the coordination of thousands of volunteers and events, each year.

Volunteers serve in a variety of roles. This includes gleaning fields and orchards, delivering packaged produce to hunger relief agencies, and unloading and distributing truckloads of food directly into the local community. In 2022 alone, SoSA distributed more than 20 million pounds of good food to families who might otherwise have gone without.

Often the food is surplus, inconveniently-sized, or cosmetically imperfect. Sometimes, it's marketable but the farmer or grower wants to share it with the local community to address urgent needs.

# Society of St. Andrew

GLEANING AMERICA'S FIELDS ~ FEEDING AMERICA'S HUNGRY



## Christ is Our Living Hope

Scripture: 1Peter 1:3-4 NIV

When we were children we were always hoping for something. We hoped for the latest toys for Christmas. There was always something we hoped for that we might not receive. Throughout the scripture, we realize the word hope means a sure thing. Through faith, our hope in Christ is real.

I recently received the shocking news that I had cancer. When you hear those words for the first time, you realize this is your reality, and it is a shock. The doctors believed surgery would be the answer. This was, for me, a test of faith and there was no other help but turning it over to my Lord. After much prayer, I received peace that God was in control and the surgery did take care of the problem.

The promises of hope and salvation are always available through surrender and faith. God is always in control and will answer our prayers. The Holy Spirit will never leave you and will see you through whatever challenges you are going through. Christ is our “living hope.”

**Prayer:** Thank you for each day that we are able to praise you. We seek the peace and hope that your salvation brings. Amen.

*Doris Hedrick — Natural Bridge, VA*

## High Hopes

Scripture: I Corinthians 13:13

“High Hopes” was the title of a song in an Academy Award winning movie. Do you have high hopes? As I look back to my youth perhaps my first high hope was that I would go to college. My mother’s love of school and strong desire to learn inspired me. Her sacrifices enabled me to complete my education and to become a teacher of others.

What were your hopes growing up? Becoming an athlete, or a famous rock or movie star? Being married and having a family? What are your hopes now?

Do you hope for a new or rewarding job? For good health and a secure retirement? Or are your hopes more basic...money for groceries, the electric bill, weekly/monthly rent or enough to meet the minimum due on your credit card?



By God's grace many hopes in my life have been met; many hopes fulfilled. But my highest and finally most important hope is the one given to me in the Good News of the life, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

"My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus' name."

Can you imagine a higher or more ultimate hope? I can't.

**Prayer:** Heavenly Father, we thank you for your gifts of faith, hope and love that you bring to our lives in your Son Jesus, in whose name we pray. Amen.

*William Nash Wade — Strasburg, VA*

Wednesday, February 28

## Fairy Princess Doll

**Scripture: Matthew 7:9-11**

My Aunt Margie was an amateur film maker, quite renowned in the Chicago area. One year she decided to make a movie about a little girl who hopes for a dancing fairy princess doll at Christmas. Incredibly, she picked me, her 7 year old niece, for the role of the little girl.

In the story, despite my efforts to be good—wash dishes, clean my room, be nice to my obnoxious big brother—I was very unhappy Christmas morning to find out the doll under the tree would not dance. On cue, I stomped my feet and pouted dramatically. Suddenly Santa appeared, giving me the magic crown I needed to bring the doll to life.

Although it was never Aunt Margie's intention, I realize the story has a few uncanny similarities to my faith walk. Despite my best efforts to be good, sometimes I still behave like that little girl, disappointed when I don't get what I hoped for. Too often I forget God's timing is purposeful and perfect, and that I am the child of a King who has a crown waiting for me. That old doll still makes me smile, but now I hope with confidence and trust to dance in His kingdom one day.

**Prayer:** Father God, thank you for loving us even when we behave badly. Fill us with the assurance that what we hope for is what you have promised: life eternal with you. Amen.

*Lynda Imirie — Moneta, VA*

## Seek Me and Live

**Scripture: Amos 5:1-17**

Looking at the theme text, Lamentations 3:25, my eye fell on the expression that God “is good to the one who seeks God.” What does it mean to “seek God?” Lamentations does not spell it out, but Amos 5:1-17 presupposes a situation similar to Lamentations and offers a bracing notion of seeking God.

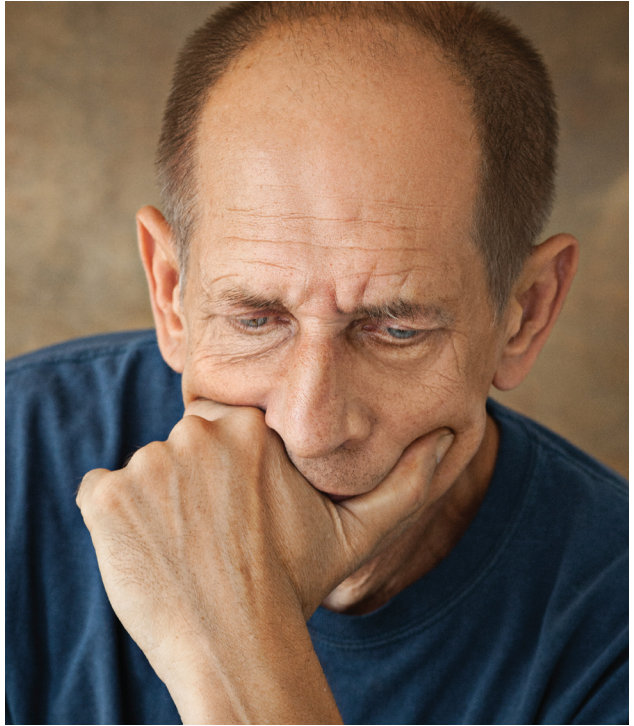
Amos lived earlier than the writer of Lamentations, but when disobedience, especially idolatry and injustice, threatened to bring divine punishment on the community. The writer of Lamentations lived at a later time when the community suffered because God inflicted punishment for disobedience, especially idolatry and injustice.

Through Amos, God says, “Seek me and live” (Amos 5:4; 5:6). For Amos, to seek God is to repent of idolatry and injustice

and to turn towards living in covenant with God and community. Lamentations presupposes this emphasis in Lamentations 3:25. God will be good to those turn away from idolatry and injustice and turn towards God and justice.

What of waiting “in silence?” In Psalms 37:9 and 62:1, the singer waits expectantly in silence for salvation. This is the silence of anticipation. Lent is an ideal season in which to ask, “How can we seek God by turning away from idolatry and injustice and by turning towards life in covenant?”

**Prayer:** God help us want to seek you. Help us know how to seek you. Help us embrace the good that comes from such seeking. Amen.



Friday, March 1

## Creation's Hope

Scripture: Psalm 42:5

My beautiful grandchild was two days old when I first saw her, an infant asleep, in perfect repose. I was stunned. How could the Universe, Nature, the Power of Being—God—bring out of the violent vastness of space such calm but totally helpless tenderness? No human will knit this child in its mother's womb. No human will account for its infinite capacity to know and understand. No human will make her reliant on the love into which she was born—and born so as to learn the ways of love.

What narrowness of heart and mind can shrug off such a miracle as this? With the birth of each child, the Universe, Nature, the Power of Being—God—hopes in and plans for Creation's future.

I tremble at the destructive power of our poor earth's changing climate. Our ignorance has brought this about, and its victims now cry out with sighs too deep for words. Yet, even this cry from the depths of souls is the work of God's Holy Spirit in us. Faith's assurance of things hoped for resides not in ourselves, but in the Power of Love that brought us into being in the first place, the God in whom we live, and move, and have our being.

**Prayer:** Come, Holy Spirit, our hearts inspire, and so add our voice to your celestial choir. Amen.

*Richard N. Soulen — Williamsburg, VA*

Saturday, March 2

## Hope Springs Eternal

Scripture: Romans 4:18

A picture popped up as a memory on my social media page and surprised me. I was looking at myself 50 years ago as a young mother with an equally young spouse and toddler son. I could hardly believe my eyes!

Abraham in his very old age could hardly believe his ears when God told him he and his barren wife Sarah would become parents of many descendants. Hoping against hope is believing but not quite believing. Was I ever so slender? Did I ever have long, dark auburn colored hair? The evidence was before me in the picture taken decades ago. The evidence for Abraham and Sarah would be the birth of Isaac. God's hope and purpose is never thwarted. Even when Abraham and Sarah

could not altogether believe they'd have a child, that child led to many more sons and daughters over generations, including you and me.

Waiting quietly for the Lord to bring salvation is seldom easy, but as Christ-followers during Lent, we are called to hope. Forasmuch as belief is linked to hope, so is salvation. While we look forward to the Celebration of the Resurrection, may we linger in Lent patiently, intentionally, and hopefully.

**Prayer:** Gracious God, who gave us salvation in Jesus the Christ, grant that we might become quieter, breathing your Spirit-filled air so we will be refreshed and renewed. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

*Chris Suerdieck — Emmitsburg, MD*

Sunday, March 3

## Flower of Hope

**Scripture:** Lamentations 3:25

I stood by the window, the air, orange grey with smoke. In the distance I could see the glowing outline of the wildfire creeping down the mountain. COVID, like the fire, was violently raging, and a half a mile away in a hospital, my loved one lay dying. I was terrified we'd have to evacuate; I was terrified I'd never see him alive again; I was terrified I'd crumble. I was torn six ways from Sunday as my heart lamented over every decision and lost choice that brought me to this moment. I cried, cried and cried out loud to God "where are you?" I heard no reply, and from where I was standing this sure looked like hell.

Eventually the fire was contained, and the smoke cleared. Rain came, and my beloved passed. I stood by that window again, this time with a fresh open wound of grief and a new set of tears. Where is God? I'm not giving up! I know you're here somewhere. I prayed, cried, and finally it dawned on me. God is not just a reply to prayers, but He is in the praying. He was here all along in my reaching for him. And come springtime, I know for certain, that charred mountain will blossom with new life.

**Prayer:** God thank you for being there in the emptiness, in moments when all seems lost and broken, verging on hopeless, and your love breaks through like a bold flower from the hard winter ground. Amen.

*Leslie Azentrekin — Lackawanna, PA*

## God and Jesus Never Lose Hope

Scripture: Micah 7:7

In the fading gray of a late winter day, Lent arrives. I'm a Lent pretender—never fully committed to its journey. A presumed Christian shouldn't make that admission. Even with regular church attendance growing up, Lent didn't make much of an impression on me. But, I do remember Easter Sunday with the never forgotten family gathering for lunch.

Last year, I turned seventy. I think about the past and the future. My trips into the past remind me of my mother and father. I know through their families, they learned from experience about hardships, sacrifice, and hope. I feel certain there were many days when Micah 7:7 was all they had: "But as for me, I watch in hope for the Lord, I wait for God my Savior; my God will hear me." Those words must have been embedded deep in their souls.

I wonder if Mary and Joseph understood the last days of their son's journey? I wonder if they lost the hope found in the words from Micah? Some days, work overwhelms me. Hope disappears. I can say the same when a troubling news story breaks. My hope sinks. But, then there are those out of the blue days, unexplainable days when something good happens, and my faith, my hope returns. Why is that?

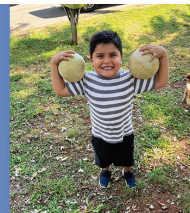
My answer—as troubling as we can be, God and Jesus never give up hope in us.

**Prayer:** God and Jesus, may we never lose our eternal hope. Amen.

*Bill Pike — Richmond, VA*

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## Quietly Waiting

[Scripture: Psalms 46:10](#)

This Psalm says simply—be still and know that I am God. Several translations make that “stop striving” and know... That can be a real problem for me because I am, at my very core, a troubleshooter.

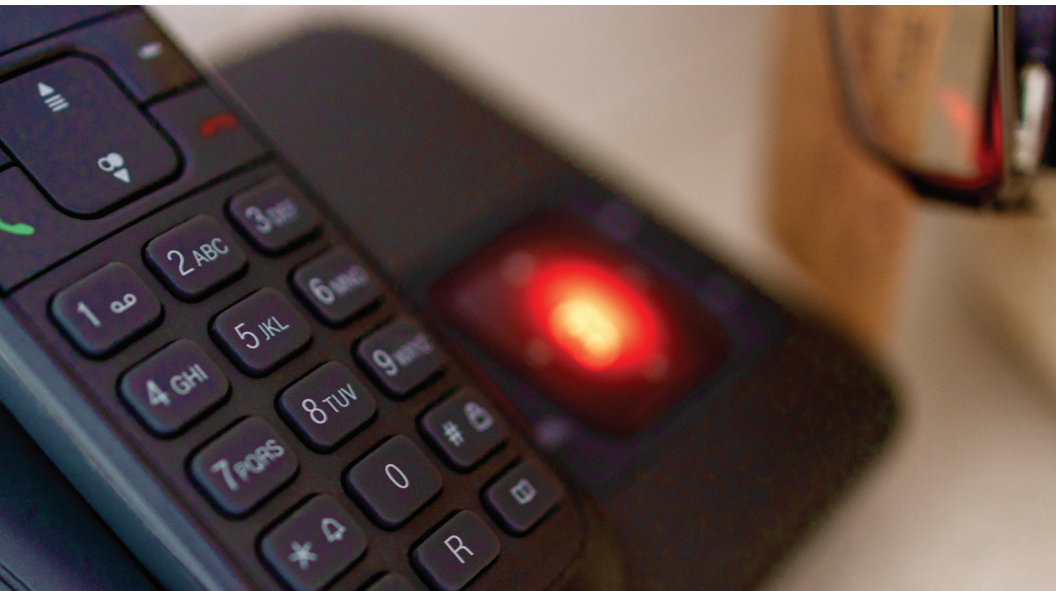
I spent several years of my life working in TV production, and to this day, I cannot abide a blinking light. In that line of work, blinking lights meant there was something you had to do NOW to correct the problem. Now, in a different line of work, I should be able to walk past a co-worker's phone blinking to alert them to waiting voicemails without feeling panic rise, but I have a hard time with being still.

Yet, it is in the stillness I experience God the most. The pauses in between the striving are sacred. That is one of the reasons that I find Lent so refreshing...it is a prescribed period of waiting, listening, pondering. I have to work hard at not striving (yes, I get the irony of that statement)!

In this world of go, go, go and being identified with what you can accomplish—it is more critical than ever to take a moment of every day to be still and recognize I am NOT God and the world will continue to turn even if I'm not spinning it!

**Prayer: Lord, help me to be still and know that you are in control. Amen.**

*Jack Kincaid — Alberta, Canada*



Wednesday, March 6

## For in Thee, O Lord, Do I Hope

[Scripture: Psalm 38:15 \(KJV\)](#)

My hope faltered in 2014 when the eye doctor told me that I should prepare for blindness. Having poor vision for over 70 years just seemed to be how it was, is, and would be in the future ... but now this new challenge of possibly being blind seemed to be too much to think about.

Sight and vision issues plagued me for years, but my prayers for my eyes to be healed were ongoing, and faith and hope were ever present. With God and doctors working on my behalf, it continues to seem like there is hope.

God has always given me the tools to do what he has planned for me to do, and my belief is my eyesight and vision are part of that current plan also.

I've often thought that God's timetable and mine don't seem to be aligned, but each morning as I open my eyes and can still see, my prayer is—"Thank You God, please help me to walk in step with you and do what you would have me do."

**Prayer:** Father God, thank you for hearing my prayers for healing and constantly giving me the hope I need. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

*Denny Engle – Gautier, MS*

Thursday, March 7

## Hope in Young Faces

[Scripture: Romans 15:13](#)

There is certainly no lack of bad news these days as we constantly hear about the dire state of the world. In my justice work, I am bombarded with pleas for support to address serious concerns. While it is impossible to help with everything, through prayer and discernment, I help in ways I can make a difference.

However, sometimes the pleas and cries are overwhelming, and it is easy to become filled with fear and anxiety. When discussion becomes despair, I lean on my faith and gain strength by knowing God is present all the time.

This summer, I found hope amongst tragedy as I encountered the alarming reality of injustice surrounding missing and murdered indigenous people in this country. In one instance, a mother lost two of her adult daughters in separate incidents of

murder. While it was hard to hear her story and feel helpless in the face of such pain, I found hope in the joy expressed by her young grandchildren. They are thriving because of the love lavished on them by their family and community grounded in faith in God. Likewise, the Holy Spirit fills us with joy, peace, and hope through the people and creation around us.

**Prayer:** God of Hope, thank you for filling us with joy, peace, and hope in a world full of hatred and heartbreak. As we do the work you have given us to do, make us strong with the power of your Spirit! Amen.

*Annemarie E. Kalke Delgado — Beulah, WY*

Friday, March 8

## God's Promise of Hope

[Scripture: Jeremiah 29:11](#)

After a year-long affair, my husband decided to leave the children and me to start a new life with his girlfriend. I was a corporate wife and a stay-at-home mom, with no current job skills, no money, and I was approaching middle age. To say I was devastated would be a mild understatement! Life looked very bleak and very frightening.

During this time, a friend mailed information I had requested. When it arrived, I put the envelope aside. Two days later when I was very depressed, I saw the envelope and opened it. Besides the information I had asked for, there was also an index card with the following scripture typed on the front: "For I know the plans that I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for a future and hope and not for calamity."

God keeps His promises, and now I had hope. My therapist had recently said my hope might be in my future and not in my marriage. God's timing is perfect. I have held tightly to this verse ever since that time, and it has carried me through numerous difficult and challenging times.

**Prayer:** Dear God, I thank you for your gift of hope and patience while waiting for your perfect timing. My hope remains in you. Amen.

*Carolyn Lee Purdy — Harrisonburg, VA*



Saturday, March 9

## Not Now, Wait

[Scripture: Psalm 37:5 KJV](#)

For many years, our daughter, Reyn, prayed for a home of her own. With two horses, she could never afford what she needed—a piece of land with a simple dwelling and a barn. This past fall, she closed on a property providing both.

A little house painted a happy yellow color called “Overjoy” flanks a multi-stall barn on three acres of woodland and pasture. The gracious seller also left behind furniture, tools and yard equipment, a fully stocked kitchen, and many lovely mementos from her life. After a decade of working and waiting, Reyn was blessed with more than she ever dreamed possible.

God often answers prayers by saying, “Not now.” He instructs us to abide in His will despite our circumstances and sometimes—hard as it may be—to wait. But the Bible teems with examples of faithful men and women whose hope in Him was rewarded with unfathomable bounty after a trying season.

Even the shadow of death comes with a promise for God's people. Because Jesus died and rose again, so shall we live beyond the grave. And what will heaven be if not far more wondrous than anything we can imagine?

Reyn decided to call her small farm "Overjoy Acres." Joy is the ultimate prize for all God's beloved who learn to wait on Him.

**Prayer:** Father, give us patience as we trust you for our every need. May we be grateful that you have provided the One we need most of all. Amen.

*Andi Lehman — Hernando, MS*

Sunday, March 10

## Hope and the Christmas Cactus

[Scripture: Psalm 33:22](#)

Daffodils, tulips, and iris are among the flowers said to represent hope. For me, it's a Christmas cactus. About 15 years ago, I received a 3-inch Christmas cactus as a gift. I put it in a window sill, watered it occasionally, but it didn't grow much and never flowered. In fact, when we packed to move seven years later, I almost threw the withered plant out because it didn't appear to have much hope in ever flourishing. I didn't want to give up on it, though.

The next summer, I noticed it had grown some and looked healthier than ever before. A few months later, when my husband returned home from a two-week hospital stay, with a poor prognosis, I realized my Christmas cactus was blooming for the first time. Perhaps an unusual connection, but seeing the small, red blooms reminded me that no matter what awaited us, God will provide; we must wait patiently and trust in the saving work of Jesus.

Each year since, my husband and I marvel at the growth of the plant and enjoy the beautiful large blossoms that spring forth late in the fall, through mid-winter (yes, longer than normal). That now twice-transplanted, very large Christmas cactus continues to remind us of the beauty in patience, hope and gratitude.

**Prayer:** Lord, this Lenten season, may we especially feel the depth of not only the hope, but also the assurance we have in you to fulfill your promises to us—in so many beautiful ways. Amen.

*Julie Erickson — Olathe, KS*



Monday, March 11

## Out of the Wilderness into the Promise

**Scripture: Romans 8:24-25**

During the season of Lent, we are challenged to seek a deeper and richer relationship with God through Christ. A season rich with potential for personal growth and spiritual development, Lent leads us to Easter and the New Covenant, salvation from our sins through our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Lent is our time in the wilderness to bring us to greater spiritual maturity.

Lent is about seeing things in a new way. Lent is a time for an intense experience of discernment. Who are we in the story of God's people, and how do we respond to God's mighty acts? We have time to examine our motives, impulses, and values that guide our choices.

Discernment is more than making choices, knowing right from wrong. Discernment is about knowing ourselves, our strengths and our limitations. Lent is a time to focus and reflect upon the temptation we all face to simply accept the status quo ignoring the hard questions that face us: Who am I? What does it mean to be a child of God and a follower of Christ?

**Prayer:** Lord, infuse me with the gifts of patience and understanding. Help me put my trust and HOPE in your promise to be with me always, making me pleasing to you as I hold on to the promise of eternal life. Amen.

*Kathleen Vermillion Price — Williamsburg, VA*

Tuesday, March 12

## I Will Trust in the Lord

**Scripture: Psalm 25**

One of my favorite hymns, "I will trust in the Lord," was sung often at Friendship Missionary Baptist Church where I accepted Jesus as my Lord and Savior. My family and I were members, and we faithfully served there. This hymn was sung with such fervor I can still hear the voice of Deacon Moses Thomas as he led the congregation during what was known as devotion service then, now known as praise and worship services in many churches.

Now, I am an adult, who by the grace and mercy of God, matured in my faith. I recently had an epiphany regarding the seeds of hope and trust planted in my

heart in that church. I have never regretted placing my hope in the Lord through the storms of life, nor have I ever been ashamed of trusting the Lord to do as he promised. It hasn't always been easy, but God is a promise keeper!

**Prayer:** Lord, bless and strengthen us to place our hope and trust in you! In the matchless name of Jesus we pray. Amen!

*Tracy Porter — Pasadena, CA*

Wednesday, March 13

## Heavenly Sunshine

Scripture: Psalm 27:1

Hope is the opposite of despair. It is smiles instead of frowns. It is not giving in to giving up. When everything around you is bleak, hope springs into action, invites the sunshine in and brightens your perspective on . . . well, just about everything.

A dear friend always told everyone to be happy. It was her motto, her trademark. She was upbeat and happy, whether it was a fun-filled day or a no-fun-in-sight day. Her smile and happy greeting inspired everyone who even thought about pouting!

Most of us are familiar with, “God has no hands but our hands and no feet but our feet”. I think we could add, “We are all reflections of God’s love and care”.

**Prayer:** Thank you, Lord, for the heavenly sunshine that lights our way through this earthly journey. Help us remember that reflections are all some people see of your creation. Amen.

*Carolyn P. Maness — Lynchburg, VA*

Thursday, March 14

## Hope in Christ

Scripture: Romans 5:1-4

So often, we put our hopes and expectations on other people, and we are let down. Emotional strongholds—anger, guilt, shame, depression, bitterness and much more—hold far too many Christians hostage. I have been disappointed by other people, but I have learned to be gracious to people and put my hope in Christ alone.

Sometimes this lifeline of hope in Jesus is all that gets us through one week, or one day, or one hour and on to the next. Christian hope is like a life-saving flotation

device for our souls. God's greatest gift is hope. We have hope in the promises He has made to us. It is that hope that helps us through our disappointments. Hope in Christ is not just a wish for something to come true, but a guarantee that God will do what he has promised.

People all around us feel hopeless. Christ means hope to the person out of work, to the struggling single mother, to the dying believer. Even if you're just slogging your way through the disappointments of life, if you have Jesus, you have hope. And He is not a false hope, a childish fairy tale that we wish will have a happy ending. Because of our Hope in Christ, we seek to be genuine in love, patient in tribulation, constant in prayer and compassionate to all.

**Prayer:** Lord, help us to keep our hope in Christ through difficult circumstances and to share that hope with others. Amen.

*Lucianne Warren — Red House, VA*

Friday, March 15

## Pray Without Ceasing

[Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 5:17 \(KJV\)](#)

An elderly friend had extensive open-heart surgery two weeks ago, one year later than originally planned because of procedural “hiccups” that continued right up until the actual time of surgery.

The operation was a success, and the recovery and healing were going smoothly except for more hiccups.



His wife is a strong Christian whose faith and trust in God comforted her with a feeling that all would go well. But a number of small setbacks began to open opportunities for the devil to tempt her to worry.

Her prayers and those of a strong group of prayer warriors with ongoing petitions for the two of them rescued the situation with healing and much needed peace and calm.

The lady's non-Christian daughter teases that her mom's faith is so strong, it is like she is not

worrying at all, but is in “la-la-land.” Oh, that all our faith might be that strong!

We often find that when the level of prayers peak, Hope Springs Eternal as the worry is replaced by complete faith and trust in our Great God ... allowing us to walk in step with Him.

The very simple thought “pray without ceasing” keeps our focus on Him...

**Prayer:** Dear Father, thank you for hearing our prayers and granting us the needed Hope to continue on. Amen.

*Denny Engle – Gautier, MS*

Saturday, March 16

## Hope is a Gift

Scripture: Job 14:7

The gift of hope in Christ is available to all people. Yet, the reality is that some people struggle more than others—some of the people we love most don’t seem to be able to live into hope the way others do. Is it a personality thing?

While some folks see the cloud, others focus on the rainbow. While some folks see the dis-ease, others focus on the learnings. While some folks see the cross, others focus on the empty tomb. God knows this, and God loves even those who struggle with their faith.

When life gets too \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in the blank: too hard, too overwhelming, too sad, too unfair), it is the gift of hope in Christ that helps us keep things in perspective. We have hope, not because our circumstances are good or because of anything we do, but because of Christ’s faithfulness. His perfect love lets us start fresh every day.

We need not fear anything—even death. Sometimes it helps to recall the words of Jane Parker Huber’s 1976 hymn, *Live into Hope*. “Live into hope of captives freed from chains of fear or want or greed. God now proclaims our full release to faith and hope and joy and peace.”

**Prayer:** God of “sorrow and love” that flows, mingled, down from the cross, in response to the gift of your Son, help us choose hope and love. No exceptions. Amen.

*Katy Brungraber – Chambersburg, PA*

Sunday, March 17

## Hope Beyond the Door

Scripture: Hebrews 11:1

Some of God's creations I find a bit puzzling. I'm certain He had a purpose in mind, but I struggle to understand why he created ticks or poison ivy or giraffes with long necks. Most things I can find a reason for, although I could gladly do without snakes and spiders and crabgrass. Their appearance is always disturbing.

On the other hand, I have no doubt why God created spring. Besides being a joy to see color filling up the landscape after months of a cold, dark winter, I think God definitely had a message for us when he added spring to the cycle of life on earth.

It reminds me of when Dorothy cautiously opened the door to her tornado-tossed house and stepped outside into Oz, in full wonderful color. That is what spring is like.

When the trees are bare, when the fields are brown, when the skies are grey, we can put our hope in His promise: spring will come. Just like when things seem endlessly dark, when joy is hard to find, when life seems to have crash landed and is over, God wants us to trust Him and have faith and hope for what's beyond the door.

**Prayer:** Father, thank you for spring, your message to us that there is will be a glorious new life after this one, a life we can only imagine if we have hope beyond the door. Amen.

*Lynda Imirie — Moneta, VA*

Monday, March 18

## Hope is Like a Light Switch

Scripture: Romans 8:24-25

The relationship between "faith" and "hope" has fascinated me for years. In my teens, my classmates and I were dumbfounded when our Sunday school teacher asked us to explain the difference between these two powerful words. After what felt like a silent eternity, the teacher pointed to the light cover on the wall. "What is that?" Half giggling, we said in unison "a light switch." "What does it do?" Staring at one another, we mumbled, "it turns on the light" "How do you know?" We were puzzled. "How do you know when you flip that switch, the light will come on?" Another awkward, long pause. One older kid mentioned electricity. After a bit of probing, we concluded: every time we entered a dark room, we hoped the light

switch would work. We couldn't see the wires and circuits hidden in the wall yet expected something to happen with the flip of the switch. After seeing this work after so many years, our faith grew.

Hope is an integral part of faith. If faith is our heart muscle, hope is its pulse. It can be fast, slow, or steady. We cannot see it. Yet, I know hope sparks my faith. As long as I have hope, I will continue to build my faith.

**Prayer:** Lord, thank you for teachers that challenged us. Help us to realize hope ignites our faith. May we continue to be inspired by your Word. Amen.

*Kelly Deschas-Estes — Glen Allen, VA*

Tuesday, March 19

## A Child's Hope

[Scripture: Lamentations 3:25](#)

A few years ago, my ten-year-old son helped determine an outreach to our community. He wanted to show the movie *Wonder* for free, invite local school children, provide food, and invite a speaker. The group of pastors involved agreed and we set a plan in motion. I set out to secure an appearance from the author of the story to talk to the audience about the theme of the book, choosing kindness.

The author turned down our offer, and I was beyond disappointed. When I told my son, he simply told me God was going to use the movie, and everything would work out.



Two months later, we showed the movie to hundreds of children and their families. A teenage actress from the movie spoke about choosing kindness and met with every person who wanted an autograph. The actress' family donated \$10,000 for a scholarship at the local high school for a graduating senior who showed a caring character to others.

Sometimes, hope shows up in the hearts of those around us, and drives us closer to a place where God can really use us.

**Prayer:** Holy God, help us to believe in what you can do, and remind us of the ways you showed up in the past. Give us ears to hear the hope that others share with us and mouths to tell each other of the hope we have. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

*Jacob Sams — Chesterfield, VA*



## Light in the Darkness

Scripture: Lamentations 3:25

This verse is among a few other verses where the writer affirms hope in God. These words of hope in Lamentations are like fireflies in the night. For Lamentations is not a hopeful book. Mostly, its words are the opposite of hope: terms like distress, woe, groaning, weeping, ruin, darkness, and such. Why? Their nation had been destroyed, and its people taken captive.

Hopelessness is a familiar experience. Consider the wildfires that brought death and destruction in Maui last summer. Also, many natural disasters over the years were reason for hopelessness, like the unrelenting suffering due to war. Many reading this page can cite personal examples of hopelessness. Maybe you are one. Yet, in God you have found hope.

Even Jesus, facing rejection, suffering, and death, was deeply grieved, and prayed, "If possible, let this cup pass from me." (Matthew 26:39). Yet, even in seeming hopelessness, he could exclaim, "I have conquered the world!" (John 16:33).

Sometimes the hopeless receive renewed courage through the help of others. Hunger causes a special kind of hopelessness and many experience it daily. The Society of St. Andrew gives hope to many by providing nourishing meals for hungry people. It is a ministry of hope!

**Prayer:** O God, who brings light in darkness, and courage in despair, help us to find renewed hope in you, and to share it with others. Amen.

*Hasbrouck Hughes — Williamsburg, VA*



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Thursday, March 21

## Hope Manifests as Prayer

Scripture: Psalm 71:14 (NIV)

By simplified definition, hope is a desire for certain things to happen. In our developmental years, some hopes are essentially wishes. As children, we may hope for special toys for Christmas or birthdays. As we age, our wishes become more focused. We hope to do well on school exams or in sporting events. We hope friends might invite us to gatherings or a certain friend might ask us out on a date. We hope for healing when we, or those close to us, are sick or injured. Sadly, some must hope for enough food to eat, a safe place to live, or family to love them.



Growing older, and especially when becoming followers of Jesus, hopes can manifest themselves in something more powerful than wishes for better outcomes in current situations. Hopes can become prayers. When I hope a family member or friend feels better while suffering from illness or for difficult situations to improve, I'm lifting a brief prayer to the One from whom our hope comes. In merely telling someone to have a good day, I'm praying for God's presence in their lives. When I hope for unity in our nation, for no one to suffer at the hands of others or from hunger, I'm asking for God's help in those situations. Above all, we wait quietly, gratefully hoping/praying for the salvation of the Lord!

**Prayer:** Merciful God, with highest praise and thanks, we place our hope in you for our temporal concerns and in our life eternal. Amen.

*Julie Erickson – Olathe, KS*

## Hoping for Some Good News

Scripture: Isaiah 52:7

The news is tough to watch on a good day, and there haven't been many of those recently. For a time, I couldn't watch because of all the school shootings . . . now they happen everywhere – stores, offices, churches, celebrations, and, of course, schools. Nowhere feels safe because there could always be some self-entitled individual who feels they have been wronged, not given what they thought they deserved, or were just looked at in a wrong way. I'll never know what possesses a person to believe they can just take out another person – often someone they've never seen or met.

With all the insanity, I still have hope—deep-rooted, sincere hope—that we will get through the anger, madness, and the pain. I have hope one day we will all love each other the way it is meant to be. I truly believe human beings have the capacity to love, to live among others without animosity, greed or envy.

I have hope America can share our great wealth with the rest of the world. My hope abounds that we will teach our children not to feel entitled, that they are no better than others; to feel compassion and to share, to help others whenever they can, and not to judge. I hope and pray this will become the norm, and not the exception.

**Prayer:** Heavenly God—teach us to love each other; help us teach our children by our own example. Amen.

*Kathi Wise — McLean, VA*

## Hope Springs Eternal

Scripture: Lamentations 3:25

Once a bricklayer talked about clinker bricks. “They are heavier, and they clink when you tap them. They are misshaped and even off-color. They may have been fired too close to others, or the mixture isn't right. We usually toss them.”

Too often people see themselves as clinkers, badly made and hopeless. Peter calls us: “Come to Christ, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and like living stones let yourselves be built into a spiritual house” (1 Peter 2:2-5a).

Peter was a rock, so called by Jesus himself. Too often he clinks—loud, self-centered, afraid, questioning Jesus. Peter went from denying Jesus to being a powerful witness to the risen Christ. In his letter he tells us, “Come to Jesus, the great clinker, rejected and despised, but precious in God’s sight, and let him make you, my fellow clinkers, into a spiritual building, God’s witnessing people, a community of faith serving God.”

This is the unfailing hope to which God calls us, whoever and wherever we are.

**Prayer:** **Renewing God, speak to us Peter’s words of hope. Build us into your new creation of faith, hope, and love, so the world may see us and be reborn. Amen.**

*Bill Olewiler — Fleming Island, FL*

Sunday, March 24

## Is Hope a Feeling or a Virtue?

**Scripture: [Romans 8:25 ESV](#)**

Last year at this time, I was at a crossroads. My former employer went through a reorganization, and I was launched on an unexpected job hunt just a few years short of retirement. I had many friends, colleagues and family members to encourage and to support me, for whom I give thanks. Receiving a deluge of optimistic, hopeful wishes, in a time when my feelings were subject to every wind of chance and change, was the fuel I needed to keep applying for jobs, networking and accessing the possibilities each lead presented. I had hope, or did I? Did I rally my inner fortitude and turn my face forward to the next phase of life, or did I lift my eyes to Him and step forward?

You see, hope is a virtue. It is not a wish or a feeling. It is a rock hard certainty built upon Christ. It is a response to God’s promises. It is the simple acceptance of Him. It took me a while to understand I was asking for His guidance and help and longer still to surrender to His promise.

I challenge you to think about how hope appears in your thoughts. Are you expressing a feeling, a wish or reaffirming a virtue?

**Prayer:** **Lord, lead me and guide me for I do not see you, yet I hope as I wait patiently for thee. Amen.**

*Kimberly Kertis — Harrogate, TN*

## Hopeful

Scripture: Lamentations 3:25

I'm feeding a stray black cat. When he first began appearing at our house, patches of fur were missing all over his body, and he was so thin the bones protruded from his hips. His one eye was a deep, golden pool of sorrow, but I named him Hopeful, because that's what he was—hopeful I would feed him.

Hopeful is very wary of me and will be for some time, but he's learning he can trust me for the food he needs. Besides being hungry, he seems very lonely. He will linger in the yard each evening and let me sit about 10 feet from him. I tell him every night if he will stay, I will take care of him.

Just like my stray cat, we are often bruised and broken by the world we live in. When we approach God in prayer, we are hopeful He'll help us. We often forget God not only meets us in our prayers, He welcomes us! He is waiting for us! Psalm 147:11 says, "The Lord delights in those who fear him, who put their hope in his unfailing love."

I'm surprised by how delighted I am to see this poor bedraggled cat at the end of each day. Isn't it amazing to think God is even more delighted to be with us?

**Prayer:** Father, thank you for your amazing love that welcome us, sustaining us in all our needs. Amen.

*Regina K. Carson — Chesterfield, VA*





## Hope or Wish?

[Scripture: Psalm 42:11](#)

Hope or Wish? They are two different things. To wish is to desire something we'd like, whether or not it's good for us, and whether or not we're willing to sacrifice our comfort to achieve it. We say, "I wish I had a million dollars." Or, "I wish I could lose 40 pounds." To hope (in the biblical sense) is—in the midst of seemingly impossible circumstances—to commit to working toward something seemingly unattainable, and to believe in an outcome of good, based on God's goodness and God's love for God's creatures and creation. As people of faith...

- When we endure centuries-long discriminations, we hope in the Lord's justice.
- When we endure multi-generational poverty, we hope in the Lord's provision.
- When we endure decades-long illness, we hope in the Lord's healing.
- When we endure division, we hope in the Lord's reconciliation.
- When we endure brokenness, we hope in the Lord's restoration.

What's hard to come to terms with is that some of the things we hope for will not be realized in our lifetimes. And that makes our hearts break. Our anger and tears flow. We cry, "How long, O Lord?" Still, with sighs too deep for words, we wait. We turn to God, trusting that, since God is with us in the struggle and since God already conquered death, our hope is secure.

**Prayer:** Holy God, thank you for sending your Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but to show us the way to life eternal with you. It is in you, and you alone, that we have our hope. Amen.

*Katy Yates Brungraber — Chambersburg, PA*

## Hoping Against Hope

[Scripture: Job 6:11](#)

It is difficult (for me) to determine the difference between hoping, wishing and praying for a certain outcome. I hope my children are safe, happy and healthy; I wish for resolution to whatever current predicament I find myself in; and I pray my long-time friend, struggling with an inoperable cancer, will be blessed with a miracle that doesn't seem to be forthcoming any time soon.

Although I consistently hope, wish and pray every day, I am not patient—not given to waiting without angst. For instance, if I'm to meet someone, and they are not



early, I immediately decide I am at the wrong place and/or at the wrong time, or they have been in an accident. It doesn't take more than a few moments for my imagination to run rampant. So—waiting for a word from the Almighty can add to my constant anxiety.

My hopes and prayers do give me some solace. I find prayer is critical to hope—we hope and pray for good health, the safety of loved ones, and peace in the world. Hope, alone as a verb, can seem like just wishing for something to happen, or for life to be as we think it should be. I wish for God to speak to me, pray He will answer me, and give me . . . hope.

**Prayer:** Loving God, hear us when we pray. Make your will known to us and help us to better understand you. Amen.

*Kathi Wise — McLean, VA*

Thursday, March 28

## Accounting for Hope

[Scripture: 1 Peter 3:8-16a](#)

I love inviting people to respond to 1 Peter 3:15. What accounts for the hope within us? Is it grounded in the eternal truths of Scripture? Supported by the promise of God's presence? Affirmed through the wonder of creation? Embraced in the warmth of family and friends? Inspired by the fellowship of a faith community?

No matter how we account for our hope, we know it is a precious, and at times fleeting, gift. In a world full of divisions and distractions, pettiness and pain, it can be easy to abandon any hope for the future. On the hardest of days, when darkness closes in and tears come easier than laughter, we are tempted to throw up our hands in surrender.

The good news is that we're not alone in this struggle. Early Christians were ostracized, punished, and sometimes even killed because of their faith. Peter insisted such hostility made it all the more important for them to live like Jesus. Instead of matching the fear and cruelty of a broken world, he urged believers to model kindness, practice forgiveness, extend grace, and embody love.

As you approach the cross of Good Friday and the empty tomb of Easter Sunday, may you be guided by Peter's advice to repay everything, even evil, with a blessing, as you celebrate the greatest blessing of all.

**Prayer:** Lord, free us from fear and deliver us from despair. Fill us with your undying love, unending hope, and amazing grace. Amen.

*David Vaughan — Stuarts Draft, VA*

Friday, March 29

## My Hope Is Found in You, Lord

[Scripture: Romans 5:1-5](#)

In contemplating the meaning of hope, I find it can be a complicated emotion. I hope to wake up with less aches in the morning, hope for a victory for my favorite sports team, and I hope to land a big fish on my next cast in the surf. Needless to say, sometimes I am disappointed in the results. However, my hope in God and his salvation feels quite different.

The season of Lent is a helpful time to quietly ponder my relationship with Jesus and the real meaning of hope. With the passage of time, there is wisdom in knowing that my hopes, (and worries), about most things here are transitory and obscure life's big picture. The Apostle Paul writes about the peace of God through our Lord, Jesus overcomes our earthly trials and tribulations, and ultimately "hope does not disappoint us."





This is wonderful news and the kind of hope to hold onto! As we prepare for Easter, I invite all of us to draw closer to Jesus in understanding He is our hope. Everything else pales, and life's difficulties and disappointments will surely pass. Jesus, however, never disappoints, and because He went to the cross for us, we can choose to live each day in confidence of spending eternity with Him.

**Prayer:** Thank you, Lord, for your steadfast love and promise of eternal life and salvation. Help us to put all of our trust and hope in you. Amen.

*Bob Brooks – Swansboro, NC*

Saturday, March 30

## What Good Is Waiting?

[Scripture: Lamentations 3:22-24](#)

How long does it take to hear the call of God to his work and that work to begin?



For some immediately, for some a short time, for others it takes 15 years. I was a high school student when I began to sense a “call” to be deeply involved with God’s work in the church. I did not have a well-focused idea of what that would be, but I knew it was a place I wanted to be.

About 15 years later I was asked to pastor a local congregation and sensed I was coming to a place I had been heading to for a long time. As I looked back on those years, I could see many events, people, and jobs went into preparing me to care for that congregation. Likewise much went into



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forming me that I did not initially notice. I was not always waiting patiently, but in time I saw the connection between waiting and hope. Not “wishful thinking,” but an active sense of trust, of hope, that God is forever present in the waiting.

The words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer help me understand and appreciate the connection between waiting and hope: “Whoever does not know the austere blessedness of waiting—that is, of hopefully doing without—will never experience the full blessing of fulfillment.”

**Prayer:** Gracious Abba, help me remember that nothing is lost and hope is nurtured, as we wait with you in all circumstances. Amen.

*Charles Gambrell — Saraland, AL*

Sunday, March 31

## Waiting Quietly in Hope

Scripture: Lamentations 3:25

I wait quietly in the darkness, before the world awakens where I live – just before the early ones announce the time of the sun’s rising. I wait without words, listening. It is God for whom I listen, and God answers without words. Though it is beyond my limited reasoning, it is very real. The waiting in the darkness also allows my eyes to readjust, and I come to see life in a different way. This stillness becomes my prayer to welcome the day.

I wait quietly as the soft colors of early dawn appear—the first sweet sense of small salvations to reach me. Hope is also quiet in these early hours, waiting for me to recognize the gift that each day embodies. Peace and hope abound and the urge to stay is incredibly tempting.

As the day unfolds and my schedule fills, I find that even in the noise and bustle, the Lord provides morsels of hope that find a pathway into my soul. Stored away, they provide nourishment for another time when hope is most needed. God’s goodness and grace is forever abundant and therein is my genuine hope.

**Prayer:** Guide my hours, O Lord, that all my waiting is blessed with the quiet certitude of your everlasting love. Amen.

*Nancy Severin — Fort Morgan, CO*







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**Harvest of Hope** — A hunger-focused work/study mission program. Participants glean and distribute produce remaining in fields after harvest each morning and learn about the realities of hunger each evening. Bible study and dynamic worship round out days of Christian community and service, providing a basis for on-going commitment to ending hunger. Harvest of Hope offers middle school, high school, and intergenerational events throughout the summer. Alternative College Spring Break programs also available.

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