



Stronger and Better Together

*On
The
Way*

Luke 24:13-34

Many Members. One Body of Christ.

We will be spending next few months in a synod-wide devotional practice to help us prepare for the 2019 Synod Assembly to be held at Wittenberg University on June 7-8, 2019.

At this Synod Assembly, we will be electing a bishop for the Southern Ohio Synod. Our voting members, our congregation members, our nominees have the important task of discerning how God is calling us to be stronger and better together.

The devotions are meant to be used in a variety of settings - personal devotions, Bible studies, adult forums, prayer groups, devotions before meetings, and so on. The questions provided are starters for conversation; please follow where the Spirit guides!

March 6

Ash Wednesday

Gathering Prayer: Holy God, you confound the world's wisdom in giving your kingdom to the lowly and pure in heart. Give us such a hunger and thirst for justice, and perseverance in striving for peace, that in our words and deeds the world may see the life of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (ELW, Page 23)

Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:10-31

Hymn: I Want Jesus to Walk with Me - ELW #325

Reflection Questions:

- The Corinthian culture was incredibly divided, which led to the Corinthian church being divided - it was what they knew. Where do you see divisions in our society? Where do you see divisions within your congregation? Are there divisions that are the same?
- Paul is beginning his letter to the Corinthians by calling them to look to the cross, to what unifies them. What are reminders for you at what unites us in Christ? Are they physical objects? Words? Songs? Memories?

Sending Prayer: God who calls us each by name, help us to hear your voice in the midst of the busyness of the world. Grant us wisdom to discern your future for each of us, for our congregations, and for our synod. Amen.

March 7

Gathering Prayer: Holy God, you confound the world's wisdom in giving your kingdom to the lowly and pure in heart. Give us such a hunger and thirst for justice, and perseverance in striving for peace, that in our words and deeds the world may see the life of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (ELW, Page 23)

Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:17-24

Hymn: We Eat the Bread of Teaching - ELW #518

Reflection Questions:

- It is no secret to us that there continue to be competing versions of wisdom and truth in our world. We hear contradictory accounts of the same story on the news. We disagree with our friends and family based on these accounts. How can we, as God's people called to live differently than the world wants, engage in these conversations differently? How can we listen better to what our friends and those in authority are saying? How can we share our opinions and wisdom in a way that allows for disagreement but still remain a community connected by Christ?
- At this year's Synod Assembly, those gathered will be electing the next Bishop for the Southern Ohio Synod. For you, as a member of a congregation of this synod, what gifts are important for a Bishop to have? How do you think a Rostered Minister (a pastor or a deacon) would answer that question? If your congregation, as a whole, could answer, what do you think the answer would be?

Sending Prayer: God who calls us each by name, help us to hear your voice in the midst of the busyness of the world. Grant us wisdom to discern your future for each of us, for our congregations, and for our synod. Amen.

March 8

Gathering Prayer: Holy God, you confound the world's wisdom in giving your kingdom to the lowly and pure in heart. Give us such a hunger and thirst for justice, and perseverance in striving for peace, that in our words and deeds the world may see the life of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (ELW, Page 23)

Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:25-29

Hymn: Canticle of the Turning - ELW #723

Reflection Questions:

- Yesterday, we began pondering what gifts are important for the Bishop of our synod to have. But today, Paul is addressing the Corinthian church directly. What gifts do you have, as an individual member within the synod? What gifts does your congregation have? Are they all being used well? Do you think there are undiscovered gifts?
- Who are the individuals, groups of people, organizations, characteristics that are looked down on and despised in our culture? How can we change our attitudes and beliefs toward them? How is God calling us to live in relationship with one another so that God's mission is shown to the world through our living differently?

Sending Prayer: God who calls us each by name, help us to hear your voice in the midst of the busyness of the world. Grant us wisdom to discern your future for each of us, for our congregations, and for our synod. Amen.

March 9

Gathering Prayer: Holy God, you confound the world's wisdom in giving your kingdom to the lowly and pure in heart. Give us such a hunger and thirst for justice, and perseverance in striving for peace, that in our words and deeds the world may see the life of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (ELW, Page 23)

Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:30-31

Hymn: Christ, the Life of All the Living - ELW #339

Reflection Questions:

- If God, through Jesus, is the source of our life, does that make you want to change anything about your thoughts, words, and actions? If everything we do and think flows from God, how are we getting in the way of God acting through us?
- It was commonplace in the Corinthian culture for individuals to boast about their accomplishments or about the accomplishments of someone who had served as a benefactor to them. Paul is still allowing them to engage in this practice of boasting, but telling them to boast in Christ, who served as a benefactor to the world by offering the gift of eternal life. Who are people who have been your benefactors? How would you boast about them?
- If we were to boast about Jesus, what would we say?

Sending Prayer: God who calls us each by name, help us to hear your voice in the midst of the busyness of the world. Grant us wisdom to discern your future for each of us, for our congregations, and for our synod. Amen.

March 10

Gathering Prayer: Lord God, with endless mercy you receive the prayers of all who call upon you. By your Spirit show us the things we ought to do, and give us the grace and power to do them, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (ELW, Page 24)

Reading: 1 Corinthians 2:6-7

Hymn: Beloved, God's Chosen - ELW #648

Reflection Questions:

- What is God's wisdom? Will we achieve it? When?
- If God's wisdom is secret and hidden, how will we know it when we hear it or speak it? What are signs that wisdom is from God as opposed to wisdom that comes from this world? How can we live as a community that helps one another discern the difference?
- God has declared wisdom for God's people "before the ages" - before time even began. How do you think we are doing with listening to and hearing God's wisdom? How can we improve?

Sending Prayer: Dear Lord, as you sent Paul to be your hands and feet to the Corinthians, let us be your hands and feet, doing your work through prayer and action, empowered by your love that never fails. Amen.

March 11

Gathering Prayer: Lord God, with endless mercy you receive the prayers of all who call upon you. By your Spirit show us the things we ought to do, and give us the grace and power to do them, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (ELW, Page 24)

Reading: 1 Corinthians 2:8-10a

Hymn: Eternal Lord of Love, Behold Your Church - ELW #321

Reflection Questions:

- Look back to the reading for yesterday to know what 'this' means in the beginning of verse 8! We're still talking about wisdom today!
- What types of things has God revealed to you? Have they been small things? Large things? Has your heart ever been changed because of something God revealed to you?
- What is an example of something God has prepared for us through the Spirit? Do you believe these things are only able to be received by those who love God? Or, were they created for all the world?

Sending Prayer: Dear Lord, as you sent Paul to be your hands and feet to the Corinthians, let us be your hands and feet, doing your work through prayer and action, empowered by your love that never fails. Amen.

March 12

Gathering Prayer: Lord God, with endless mercy you receive the prayers of all who call upon you. By your Spirit show us the things we ought to do, and give us the grace and power to do them, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (ELW, Page 24)

Reading: 1 Corinthians 2:10b-11

Hymn: Spirit of God, Descend upon My Heart - ELW #800

Reflection Questions:

- Imagine for a moment that you are the Spirit, searching the depths of God. What would you expect to find? Love? Goodness? Anger? The heartache of the world?
- It is no secret that our human spirit or human will is still very much alive and well. How often to you feel the physical tug of war between your human spirit and the Spirit that dwells within you, calling you to live as God has called?
- For personal reflection: There are dark places in your heart that you have not been able to share with the world. But, the Spirit searches everything and knows the depths of your pain. Spend a few moments in silence reminding yourself that God still loves you, in spite of everything you work so hard to keep hidden away so that you can face the world. You, with all of those hidden places, have a place in God's kingdom here on earth.

Sending Prayer: Dear Lord, as you sent Paul to be your hands and feet to the Corinthians, let us be your hands and feet, doing your work through prayer and action, empowered by your love that never fails. Amen.

March 13

Gathering Prayer: Lord God, with endless mercy you receive the prayers of all who call upon you. By your Spirit show us the things we ought to do, and give us the grace and power to do them, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (ELW, Page 24)

Reading: 1 Corinthians 2:12-13

Hymn: Gracious Spirit, Heed Our Pleading - ELW #401

Reflection Questions:

- What kinds of gifts has God given to you? How do you think God wants you to use them to benefit your congregation, your family, our synod?
- How are the spirit of the world and the Spirit of God different? Have you heard evidence of the spirit of the world in the church? Have you heard evidence of the Spirit of God in the world?
- How does the way we talk about church things - worship services, events, synod involvement - prevent people from knowing what is happening? How often do we use insider language and expect visitors and guests to understand what we mean? Take time this week to look through your congregation's bulletins and any church-related e-mails you receive - how would someone new to the church read them? Would they be able to participate fully?

Sending Prayer: Dear Lord, as you sent Paul to be your hands and feet to the Corinthians, let us be your hands and feet, doing your work through prayer and action, empowered by your love that never fails. Amen.

March 14

Gathering Prayer: Lord God, with endless mercy you receive the prayers of all who call upon you. By your Spirit show us the things we ought to do, and give us the grace and power to do them, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (ELW, Page 24)

Reading: 1 Corinthians 2:14

Hymn: In the Cross of Christ I Glory - ELW #324

Reflection Questions:

- Do you think this reading means that some individuals have spiritual gifts and others do not? If God's Spirit is present in each of us, and has been from creation, how do we reconcile this?
- What are different ways that a group can discern whether or not a gift, action, statement, piece of wisdom is from the Spirit?
- Do you think our ability to use our spiritual gifts is directly tied to how well we understand? (Be mindful of those with cognitive disabilities, learning disabilities, and those who are not neurotypical as you respond.)

Sending Prayer: Dear Lord, as you sent Paul to be your hands and feet to the Corinthians, let us be your hands and feet, doing your work through prayer and action, empowered by your love that never fails. Amen.

March 15

Gathering Prayer: Lord God, with endless mercy you receive the prayers of all who call upon you. By your Spirit show us the things we ought to do, and give us the grace and power to do them, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (ELW, Page 24)

Reading: 1 Corinthians 2:15-16a

Hymn: Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying - ELW #752

Reflection Questions:

- Who has God gifted with the ability to instruct? Do you think it is something we are born with or it is something we develop through our faith life?
- If those who are spiritual are “subject to no one else’s scrutiny,” why do you think we are often critical of our faith leaders? Think back to past conflicts affecting your congregation or our synod. What was handled well? What would have benefited from more listening to the Spirit?
- What is your typical response to a conflict? Are you someone who reacts quickly? Do you quietly observe? Do you leave the room? How can you make time to breathe and pray during a conflict or during discernment?

Sending Prayer: Dear Lord, as you sent Paul to be your hands and feet to the Corinthians, let us be your hands and feet, doing your work through prayer and action, empowered by your love that never fails. Amen.

March 16

Gathering Prayer: Lord God, with endless mercy you receive the prayers of all who call upon you. By your Spirit show us the things we ought to do, and give us the grace and power to do them, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (ELW, Page 24)

Reading: 1 Corinthians 2:16b

Hymn: Blest Be the Tie That Binds - ELW #656

Reflection Questions:

- What does it mean to have the mind of Christ? If a person has the mind of Christ, what responsibilities or opportunities come with that?
- At this point, Paul is addressing the Corinthian church; that is the “we” in this verse. Could this verse be true of your congregation? The congregations in your community? Our Synod? How can we work toward becoming “we”?

Sending Prayer: Dear Lord, as you sent Paul to be your hands and feet to the Corinthians, let us be your hands and feet, doing your work through prayer and action, empowered by your love that never fails. Amen.

March 17

Gathering Prayer: Lord God, source of every blessing, you showed forth your glory and led many to faith by the works of your Son, who brought gladness and salvation to his people. Transform us by the Spirit of his love, that we may find our life together in him, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (ELW, Page 22)

Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:1-3

Hymn: Creating God, Your Fingers Trace - ELW #684

Reflection Questions:

- Of what does God want us to be informed? For what purpose does God want us to be informed? What harm is there in remaining uninformed?
- How do we know the difference between a spiritual gift and something that we are naturally gifted at doing? If all types of ability comes from God, is there a difference?
- We continue to lose sight of God's foremost presence in our lives. What are the idols that continue to lead us astray today?

Sending Prayer: Dear Lord, thank you for the Holy Spirit that lives in each of us and for the gifts that you have given to each of us. Help each of us discern what gifts have been given to us so that we might honor You by using those gifts as you have intended for the common good. Amen.

March 18

Gathering Prayer: Lord God, source of every blessing, you showed forth your glory and led many to faith by the works of your Son, who brought gladness and salvation to his people. Transform us by the Spirit of his love, that we may find our life together in him, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (ELW, Page 22)

Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:4-6

Hymn: For the Fruit of All Creation - ELW #679

Reflection Questions:

- We know that different people possess different gifts. Where do these gifts come from? What gifts have you been given?
- What gifts do we recognize in others? How do these gifts in others “fit together” with the gifts that you possess?
- As individuals and congregations, we are not gifted with the same abilities. How does this relate to our Synod mission statement: “Stronger and better together.”?

Sending Prayer: Dear Lord, thank you for the Holy Spirit that lives in each of us and for the gifts that you have given to each of us. Help each of us discern what gifts have been given to us so that we might honor You by using those gifts as you have intended for the common good. Amen.

March 19

Gathering Prayer: Lord God, source of every blessing, you showed forth your glory and led many to faith by the works of your Son, who brought gladness and salvation to his people. Transform us by the Spirit of his love, that we may find our life together in him, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (ELW, Page 22)

Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:7

Hymn: We Are an Offering - ELW #692

Reflection Questions:

- We have all eaten food with a fork, knife, and spoon. Have we attempted to eat soup with a fork, or cut our meat with a spoon, or lift peas from a bowl with a knife? Yet the fork, knife, and spoon, are used for the same purpose of feeding the body. Have I been gifted with a fork, knife, or spoon, or all three? Is the fork more important than the knife, or the spoon more important than the fork?
- For what purposes are we to use our individual gifts?
- If money and time were not boundaries, what is a ministry you would love to be part of?

Sending Prayer: Dear Lord, thank you for the Holy Spirit that lives in each of us and for the gifts that you have given to each of us. Help each of us discern what gifts have been given to us so that we might honor You by using those gifts as you have intended for the common good. Amen.

March 20

Gathering Prayer: Lord God, source of every blessing, you showed forth your glory and led many to faith by the works of your Son, who brought gladness and salvation to his people. Transform us by the Spirit of his love, that we may find our life together in him, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (ELW, Page 22)

Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:8

Hymn: Built on a Rock - ELW #652

Reflection Questions:

- What is “the manifestation of the Spirit? For what purpose or purposes are we to use this manifestation of the Spirit?
- What is the difference between wisdom and knowledge? If the Spirit gives both of these things, can they disagree? How is the Spirit faithful in the midst of disagreement?

Sending Prayer: Dear Lord, thank you for the Holy Spirit that lives in each of us and for the gifts that you have given to each of us. Help each of us discern what gifts have been given to us so that we might honor You by using those gifts as you have intended for the common good. Amen.

March 21

Gathering Prayer: Lord God, source of every blessing, you showed forth your glory and led many to faith by the works of your Son, who brought gladness and salvation to his people. Transform us by the Spirit of his love, that we may find our life together in him, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (ELW, Page 22)

Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:9

Hymn: Healer of Our Every Ill - ELW #612

Reflection Questions:

- Does this scripture invoke the concepts of relationship and interdependence for you? How?
- How do faith and healing work together? How do these two spiritual gifts work together with wisdom and knowledge?
- If you read 1 Corinthians 12 as one reading, it sounds very repetitive; everything comes from the same Spirit. Remember, the Corinthian church was focused on dividing themselves into who had received the best spiritual gift, who was the closest to God, who was doing church the best. What are the ways we still divide ourselves within our congregation and within our Synod, forgetting that it is the same Spirit who empowers each of us with gifts?

Sending Prayer: Dear Lord, thank you for the Holy Spirit that lives in each of us and for the gifts that you have given to each of us. Help each of us discern what gifts have been given to us so that we might honor You by using those gifts as you have intended for the common good. Amen.

March 22

Gathering Prayer: Lord God, source of every blessing, you showed forth your glory and led many to faith by the works of your Son, who brought gladness and salvation to his people. Transform us by the Spirit of his love, that we may find our life together in him, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (ELW, Page 22)

Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:10

Hymn: Lord, Speak to Us, That We May Speak - ELW #676

Reflection Questions:

- How do we honor God, the giver of these gifts and the gifts themselves which are freely given to us?
- When was the last time you heard about someone speaking in tongues in a Lutheran church? Does this mean the Spirit is not active in and through our ministries?
- Do you know of someone in your congregation who is a prophet, calling the congregation back to Christ and listening for what God is calling the congregation to do in the neighborhood?

Sending Prayer: Dear Lord, thank you for the Holy Spirit that lives in each of us and for the gifts that you have given to each of us. Help each of us discern what gifts have been given to us so that we might honor You by using those gifts as you have intended for the common good. Amen.

March 23

Gathering Prayer: Lord God, source of every blessing, you showed forth your glory and led many to faith by the works of your Son, who brought gladness and salvation to his people. Transform us by the Spirit of his love, that we may find our life together in him, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (ELW, Page 22)

Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:11

Hymn: This Little Light of Mine - ELW #677

Reflection Questions:

- Is one type of gift more valuable or important than another in God's eyes? Is one person more valuable or more important than another person simply because of the gifts that he or she possesses or does not possess?
- Is it possible for someone to have received a spiritual gift from the Spirit and have it not be activated? What do you think it takes for a spiritual gift to be activated?
- How do you think the Spirit chooses which spiritual gift to give to which person?

Sending Prayer: Dear Lord, thank you for the Holy Spirit that lives in each of us and for the gifts that you have given to each of us. Help each of us discern what gifts have been given to us so that we might honor You by using those gifts as you have intended for the common good. Amen.

March 24

Gathering Prayer: Blessed Lord God, you have caused the holy scriptures to be written for the nourishment of your people. Grant that we may hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that, comforted by your promises, we may embrace and forever hold fast to the hope of eternal life, through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (ELW, Page 23)

Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:12-31

Hymn: One Bread, One Body - ELW #496

Reflection Questions:

- Where have you heard this reading before? Retreats? Bible studies? Camp? Installation services for leaders in the congregation?
- What are examples of how you have seen the body of Christ functioning well - in your congregation, in your community, in our synod, in the ELCA?
- Why does the Spirit gift different gifts to different parts of the body? What would happen if all of the elbows of the body of Christ were given the gift of healing? It sounds silly, but think about how each part of the body of Christ is designed for the gift it has received.

Sending Prayer: God of grace, you have gifted your church abundantly. Help us see the places where we are broken and mend us back together, to do your work in the world. Amen.

March 25

Gathering Prayer: Blessed Lord God, you have caused the holy scriptures to be written for the nourishment of your people. Grant that we may hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that, comforted by your promises, we may embrace and forever hold fast to the hope of eternal life, through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (ELW, Page 23)

Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:12-13

Hymn: We All Are One in Mission - ELW #576

Reflection Questions:

- Are we members of the body of Christ before we are baptized? What about adults who are actively participating in the life of the congregation but have not been baptized? What about small children who have not yet been baptized?
- How does our baptism change our function/place in the body of Christ?
- For the Corinthian church, it would have been radical that ALL people were included as part of the body of Christ. Who is radical for us to recognize as part of the body of Christ today? Do we see them as equal members of the body?
- If we all belong to the body of Christ and we are all necessary for the body of Christ to function well, how are we doing at working with our brothers and sisters in Christ - within our congregation, within our community, within our synod, within the ELCA? What steps can we take ourselves to improve these relationships?

Sending Prayer: God of grace, you have gifted your church abundantly. Help us see the places where we are broken and mend us back together, to do your work in the world. Amen.

March 26

Gathering Prayer: Blessed Lord God, you have caused the holy scriptures to be written for the nourishment of your people. Grant that we may hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that, comforted by your promises, we may embrace and forever hold fast to the hope of eternal life, through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (ELW, Page 23)

Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:14-26

Hymn: Draw Us in the Spirit's Tether - ELW #470

Reflection Questions:

- What ministries are you involved in locally and with the wider church? What ministries is your congregation involved in locally and with the wider church?
- What ministries do you wish existed in your congregation? Why?
- What is the difference between specializing in a particular ministry and drawing a line in the sand saying you are not willing to do another type of ministry?

Sending Prayer: God of grace, you have gifted your church abundantly. Help us see the places where we are broken and mend us back together, to do your work in the world. Amen.

March 27

Gathering Prayer: Blessed Lord God, you have caused the holy scriptures to be written for the nourishment of your people. Grant that we may hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that, comforted by your promises, we may embrace and forever hold fast to the hope of eternal life, through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (ELW, Page 23)

Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:14-26

Hymn: Take My Life, That I May Be - ELW #685

Reflection Questions:

- Are there ministries in your community being duplicated? For example, do multiple congregations in your community offer food assistance? How can those ministries work together to provide more holistic care to those in your community suffering from food scarcity? Are there other ministries that are being duplicated in your communities?
- What needs exist in your community that are not being met by any congregation? What needs exist in our synod that are not currently being met? Who is suffering?
- What ministries are thriving in your congregation, in your community, and in our synod?

Sending Prayer: God of grace, you have gifted your church abundantly. Help us see the places where we are broken and mend us back together, to do your work in the world. Amen.

March 28

Gathering Prayer: Blessed Lord God, you have caused the holy scriptures to be written for the nourishment of your people. Grant that we may hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that, comforted by your promises, we may embrace and forever hold fast to the hope of eternal life, through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (ELW, Page 23)

Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:27-31

Hymn: Let Us Talents and Tongues Employ - ELW #674

Reflection Questions:

- What is your working definition of an apostle? Of a prophet? Of a teacher? Why do you think God appointed individuals to these roles in this order?
- Are each of these roles needed? In what situations?
- Who are apostles, prophets, and teachers in your community?
- If God appointed deeds of power, healing, assistance, leadership, and tongues ... what are greater gifts than these? Why do you think “various kinds of tongues” is included in this list?

Sending Prayer: God of grace, you have gifted your church abundantly. Help us see the places where we are broken and mend us back together, to do your work in the world. Amen.

March 29

Gathering Prayer: Blessed Lord God, you have caused the holy scriptures to be written for the nourishment of your people. Grant that we may hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that, comforted by your promises, we may embrace and forever hold fast to the hope of eternal life, through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (ELW, Page 23)

Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:27-31

Hymn: How Clear Is Our Vocation, Lord - ELW #580

Reflection Questions:

- Paul is declaring that the Corinthian church is already the body of Christ, even in the midst of their disagreements and dividing themselves into who is better than another. Even with that occurring in their community, they are the body of Christ, called and gifted by the Spirit to participate in God's mission in the world. How have you seen God at work through disagreement and division?
- How does your congregation provide healing and assistance within your community? How does it lead as a beacon of God's still more excellent way?

Sending Prayer: God of grace, you have gifted your church abundantly. Help us see the places where we are broken and mend us back together, to do your work in the world. Amen.

March 30

Gathering Prayer: Blessed Lord God, you have caused the holy scriptures to be written for the nourishment of your people. Grant that we may hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that, comforted by your promises, we may embrace and forever hold fast to the hope of eternal life, through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (ELW, Page 23)

Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:12-31

Hymn: Lord, Let My Heart Be Good Soil - ELW #512

Reflection Questions:

- How do you see yourself functioning as a member of the body of Christ in your congregation?
- How do you see your congregation functioning as a member of the body of Christ in our synod?
- How do you see our synod functioning as a member of the body of Christ in the ELCA and the global church?

Sending Prayer: God of grace, you have gifted your church abundantly. Help us see the places where we are broken and mend us back together, to do your work in the world. Amen.

March 31

Gathering Prayer: Blessed Lord God, you have caused the holy scriptures to be written for the nourishment of your people. Grant that we may hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that, comforted by your promises, we may embrace and forever hold fast to the hope of eternal life, through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (ELW, Page 23)

Reading: 1 Corinthians 13:1-7

Hymn: Although I Speak with Angel's Tongue - ELW #644

Reflection Questions:

- Many of us have heard this passage read at weddings, possibly even our own! Where else have you heard this reading shared?
- This reading talks about different characteristics of love that we hope to embody in our lives. But, in the Greek, this is a particular type of love, calling each party to a life of self-sacrifice. The word for this is agape (ah - GAH - pay). This is the type of love shown to us through Jesus' life, death, resurrection and ascension. What are other examples, from real life, from fiction writing, or from the Bible, of individuals who embody this kind of love?

Sending Prayer: God of grace, you have gifted your church abundantly. Help us see the places where we are broken and mend us back together, to do your work in the world. Amen.

April 1

Gathering Prayer: Almighty and ever-living God, increase in us the gifts of faith, hope, and love; and that we may obtain what you promise, make us love what you command, through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (ELW, page 23)

Reading: 1 Corinthians 13:1-3

Hymn: God Loved the World - ELW #323

Reflection Questions:

- Why do you think Paul writes that love is important to our speaking, prophesying, faith, and acts of charity? If you do all of these things without love, are they still beneficial? How do our motives change our actions?
- What do you think is the source of the love that motivates us to action? How do we prevent that love from affecting us? What can we change to be more open to God's love entering our lives and going into the world?

Sending Prayer: God of agape, teach us how to love one another as you love us. Direct our words so that we are not noisy gongs. Remind us that your love holds us in the midst of the chaos of life. Amen.

April 2

Gathering Prayer: Almighty and ever-living God, increase in us the gifts of faith, hope, and love; and that we may obtain what you promise, make us love what you command, through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (ELW, page 23)

Reading: 1 Corinthians 13:1-3

Hymn: I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say - ELW #611

Reflection Questions:

- How have you shown agape in the world? Your congregation? Our synod?
- What things in your life, either tangible or intangible, prevent you from sharing love, especially agape love, with the world?

Sending Prayer: God of agape, teach us how to love one another as you love us. Direct our words so that we are not noisy gongs. Remind us that your love holds us in the midst of the chaos of life. Amen.

April 3

Gathering Prayer: Almighty and ever-living God, increase in us the gifts of faith, hope, and love; and that we may obtain what you promise, make us love what you command, through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (ELW, page 23)

Reading: 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

Hymn: What Wondrous Love Is This - ELW #666

Reflection Questions:

- This is such a hard list to live out! Have you ever known a person who could do all of these things all the time? Of course not! How does God's grace, forgiveness, and mercy play into the love God gives us?
- There is a fine line between bearing all things and bearing things that no person should ever have to bear. How can we bear and endure all things while still maintaining healthy boundaries with the people in our lives?

Sending Prayer: God of agape, teach us how to love one another as you love us. Direct our words so that we are not noisy gongs. Remind us that your love holds us in the midst of the chaos of life. Amen.

April 4

Gathering Prayer: Almighty and ever-living God, increase in us the gifts of faith, hope, and love; and that we may obtain what you promise, make us love what you command, through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (ELW, page 23)

Reading: 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

Hymn: Softly and Tenderly Jesus Is Calling - ELW #608

Reflection Questions:

- Think of examples of times you have not shown love to another person. (You don't have to share or write it down.) Remember: No matter what it is, God's love, grace, and mercy can bear it. You are forgiven.
- We have experienced or heard stories of congregations who have not embodied this kind of love. What could have gone differently leading up to those conversations? What about during the conversations? If disagreement was inevitable, is it possible to disagree but still embody love to one another?
- Can we disagree and still be united? Why or why not?

Sending Prayer: God of agape, teach us how to love one another as you love us. Direct our words so that we are not noisy gongs. Remind us that your love holds us in the midst of the chaos of life. Amen.

April 5

Gathering Prayer: Almighty and ever-living God, increase in us the gifts of faith, hope, and love; and that we may obtain what you promise, make us love what you command, through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (ELW, page 23)

Reading: 1 Corinthians 13:1-7

Hymn: Great God, Your Love Has Called Us - ELW #358

Reflection Questions:

- How do we know that what we are saying comes from the Spirit? How do we know that what someone else says comes from the Spirit?
- What do we do when there are multiple people claiming they are speaking from the Spirit, but what they are saying contradicts one another? How do we know who is right?

Sending Prayer: God of agape, teach us how to love one another as you love us. Direct our words so that we are not noisy gongs. Remind us that your love holds us in the midst of the chaos of life. Amen.

April 6

Gathering Prayer: Almighty and ever-living God, increase in us the gifts of faith, hope, and love; and that we may obtain what you promise, make us love what you command, through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (ELW, page 23)

Reading: 1 Corinthians 13:1-7

Hymn: When I Survey the Wondrous Cross - ELW #803

Reflection Questions:

- Make a list of individuals who have shown you agape-love recently. Make a second list of individuals you have shown agape-love to recently. Which list is longer? Is it easier to notice agape-love when you are receiving or when you are giving?
- Which characteristic of love (patient, kind, not envious/boastful/arrogant/rude, etc.) do you struggle with the most? Why?
- Which characteristic of love is easiest for you to live out? Why?

Sending Prayer: God of agape, teach us how to love one another as you love us. Direct our words so that we are not noisy gongs. Remind us that your love holds us in the midst of the chaos of life. Amen.

April 7

Gathering Prayer: God of unity, Jesus prayed that his followers might be one. Make all Christians one with him as he is one with you, so that in peace and concord we may carry to the world the message of your love, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (ELW, page 61, edited)

Reading: 1 Corinthians 13:8-13

Hymn: Ubi Caritas et Amor - ELW #642

Reflection Questions:

- Agape never ends. God's life-giving love for the world never ends. God's sacrificing love for you never ends. This is powerful stuff. All of the prophecies, speaking in tongues, and knowledge that has come from the Spirit to us will end, but God's love never will. What would the world be like if only agape existed?
- We still tend to act pretty childish, especially when we feel threatened or majorly disagree with someone. What are some of the childish things we need to put an end to?

Sending Prayer: God of love, you have called us to the still more excellent way of agape. Help us grow in wisdom, understanding, and discernment so that we can become agape incarnate in our world. Amen.

April 8

Gathering Prayer: God of unity, Jesus prayed that his followers might be one. Make all Christians one with him as he is one with you, so that in peace and concord we may carry to the world the message of your love, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (ELW, page 61, edited)

Reading: 1 Corinthians 13:8-10

Hymn: Love Divine, All Loves Excelling - ELW #631

Reflection Questions:

- What are some faith questions you want to ask your pastor or a seminary professor if you had the opportunity? What is a faith question you would like to ask God?
- We live in a time where we don't hear much about new prophecies. Are we in a time where the prophecies have come to an end? What do you think that could mean?

Sending Prayer: God of love, you have called us to the still more excellent way of agape. Help us grow in wisdom, understanding, and discernment so that we can become agape incarnate in our world. Amen.

April 9

Gathering Prayer: God of unity, Jesus prayed that his followers might be one. Make all Christians one with him as he is one with you, so that in peace and concord we may carry to the world the message of your love, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (ELW, page 61, edited)

Reading: 1 Corinthians 13:8-10

Hymn: Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love - ELW #708

Reflection Questions:

- The Corinthian church was using their different spiritual gifts to rank one another - who was better and who was worse? Paul is telling them that their spiritual gifts will cease, some day. How different would their society have been if they had no way to rank themselves as better or worse than another person? What are some of the things we use to rank ourselves?
- When “the partial” comes to an end, how will our lives be different?

Sending Prayer: God of love, you have called us to the still more excellent way of agape. Help us grow in wisdom, understanding, and discernment so that we can become agape incarnate in our world. Amen.

April 10

Gathering Prayer: God of unity, Jesus prayed that his followers might be one. Make all Christians one with him as he is one with you, so that in peace and concord we may carry to the world the message of your love, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (ELW, page 61, edited)

Reading: 1 Corinthians 13:10-11

Hymn: Where Charity and Love Prevail - ELW #359

Reflection Questions:

- Faith is a free gift that comes to us through the Spirit, but it is also a gift that grows as we mature. If you had to give an age to your faith, is it the faith of a child? Of an adolescent? Of a young adult? Of a middle aged adult? Of an octogenarian? Why did you assign that age to it?
- What is one of the big faith questions you are struggling with now? (If sharing in a group - answers to these faith questions aren't necessary. It's important to name the questions we are struggling with.)

Sending Prayer: God of love, you have called us to the still more excellent way of agape. Help us grow in wisdom, understanding, and discernment so that we can become agape incarnate in our world. Amen.

April 11

Gathering Prayer: God of unity, Jesus prayed that his followers might be one. Make all Christians one with him as he is one with you, so that in peace and concord we may carry to the world the message of your love, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (ELW, page 61, edited)

Reading: 1 Corinthians 13:10-11

Hymn: Shine, Jesus, Shine - ELW #671

Reflection Questions:

- What are examples of things children understand that adults struggle to understand? Why do we lose our ability to understand these things as we get older?
- What are some childish behaviors we should not put an end to? What could children teach adults about how to play and imagine about God dwelling among us?

Sending Prayer: God of love, you have called us to the still more excellent way of agape. Help us grow in wisdom, understanding, and discernment so that we can become agape incarnate in our world. Amen.

April 12

Gathering Prayer: God of unity, Jesus prayed that his followers might be one. Make all Christians one with him as he is one with you, so that in peace and concord we may carry to the world the message of your love, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (ELW, page 61, edited)

Reading: 1 Corinthians 13:12-13

Hymn: My Faith Looks Up to Thee - ELW #759

Reflection Questions:

- Take a few moments to remember that you are fully known by God. Recall things from your past that have hurt you. Remember the names of individuals you have hurt. Offer these events and names to God as a confession, reminding yourself that God's agape-love for you never ends. You are forgiven.

- What is your working definition for faith? For hope? For love?

Sending Prayer: God of love, you have called us to the still more excellent way of agape. Help us grow in wisdom, understanding, and discernment so that we can become agape incarnate in our world. Amen.

April 13

Gathering Prayer: God of unity, Jesus prayed that his followers might be one. Make all Christians one with him as he is one with you, so that in peace and concord we may carry to the world the message of your love, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (ELW, page 61, edited)

Reading: 1 Corinthians 13:8-13

Hymn: My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less - ELW #596/597

Reflection Questions:

- Why do you think love is the greatest gift and not faith or hope?
- How are you currently living out agape-love through your congregation's ministries? How is our synod living this out?
- How can this agape-love change our behavior as members of the body of Christ? How does it change your views on members working and worshiping together?

Sending Prayer: God of love, you have called us to the still more excellent way of agape. Help us grow in wisdom, understanding, and discernment so that we can become agape incarnate in our world. Amen.

Holy Week

Because Holy Week falls in the midst of this devotional booklet, we wanted to take a break from our study of 1 Corinthians to focus on the important events of Holy Week. We have included the daily readings and prayers (ELW, Pages 29-32) in this booklet for you to continue your devotional practices this week.

Palm Sunday

Prayer: Everlasting God, in your endless love for the human race you sent our Lord Jesus Christ to take on our nature and to suffer death on the cross. In your mercy, enable us to share in his obedience to your will and in the glorious victory of his resurrection, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Readings:

Isaiah 50:4-9a

Psalm 31:9-16

Philippians 2:5-11

Luke 22:14-23:56

Holy Monday

Prayer: O God, your Son chose the path that led to pain before joy and to the cross before glory. Plant his cross in our hearts, so that in its power and love we may come at last to joy and glory, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Readings:

Isaiah 42:1-9

Psalms 36:5-11

Hebrews 9:11-15

John 12:1-11

Holy Tuesday

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you have called us to follow you. Grant that our love may not grow cold in your service, and that we may not fail or deny you in the time of trial, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Readings:

Isaiah 49:1-7

Psalms 71:1-14

1 Corinthians 1:18-31

John 12:20-36

Holy Wednesday

Prayer: Almighty God, your Son our Savior suffered at human hands and endured the shame of the cross. Grant that we may walk in the way of his cross and find it the way of life and peace, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Readings:

Isaiah 50:4-9a

Psalm 70

Hebrews 12:1-3

John 13:21-32

Maundy Thursday

Prayer: Holy God, source of all love, on the night of his betrayal, Jesus gave us a new commandment, to love one another as he loves us. Write this commandment in our hearts, and give us the will to serve others as he was the servant of all, your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Readings:

Exodus 12:1-4 [5-10] 11-14

Psalm 116:1-2, 12-19

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

John 13:1-17, 31b-35

Good Friday

Prayer: Almighty God, look with loving mercy on your family, for whom our Lord Jesus Christ was willing to be betrayed, to be given over to the hands of sinners, and to suffer death on the cross; who now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

Readings:

Isaiah 52:13-53:12

Psalm 22

Hebrews 10:16-25

John 18:1-19:42

Holy Saturday

Prayer: Eternal giver of life and light, this holy night shines with the radiance of the risen Christ. Renew your church with the Spirit given us in baptism, that we may worship you in sincerity and truth and may shine as a light in the world, through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Readings:

Romans 6:3-11

John 20:1-18

Easter Sunday

Prayer: O God, you gave your only Son to suffer death on the cross for our redemption, and by his glorious resurrection you delivered us from the power of death. Make us die every day to sin, that we may live with him forever in the joy of the resurrection, through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen

Readings:

Acts 10:34-43

Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24

1 Corinthians 15:19-26

Luke 24:1-12

April 22

Gathering Prayer: Draw your church together, O God, into one great company of disciples, together following our teacher Jesus Christ into every walk of life, together serving in Christ's mission to the world, and together witnessing to your love wherever you will send us; for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (ELW, page 75)

Reading: 1 Corinthians 14:1-12

Hymn: My Song Is Love Unknown - ELW #343

Reflection Questions:

- If we are to pursue love and strive for spiritual gifts so that we may prophesy ... what would you prophesy to the church? What is the church doing well? Where do we need a call to return to God? Where does it need encouragement to be braver?
- Here, prophesying is for the sake of building up the church. Where is your congregation strong? Where is our synod strong? How can each be built up further?

Sending Prayer: God of community, you have called us to be stronger and better together, through the gifts of your Spirit. Open our eyes to opportunities to share these gifts with the world. Amen.

April 23

Gathering Prayer: Draw your church together, O God, into one great company of disciples, together following our teacher Jesus Christ into every walk of life, together serving in Christ's mission to the world, and together witnessing to your love wherever you will send us; for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (ELW, page 75)

Reading: 1 Corinthians 14:1-5

Hymn: O Christ, Your Heart, Compassionate - ELW #722

Reflection Questions:

- What is the difference between boasting, speaking in tongues, and prophesying?
- Who are individuals within your congregation or our synod who need to be built up? Who are members of your community who are unseen and need to be noticed, loved, and encouraged?

Sending Prayer: God of community, you have called us to be stronger and better together, through the gifts of your Spirit. Open our eyes to opportunities to share these gifts with the world. Amen.

April 24

Gathering Prayer: Draw your church together, O God, into one great company of disciples, together following our teacher Jesus Christ into every walk of life, together serving in Christ's mission to the world, and together witnessing to your love wherever you will send us; for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (ELW, page 75)

Reading: 1 Corinthians 14:1-5

Hymn: Holy Spirit, Ever Dwelling - ELW #582

Reflection Questions:

- Who are individuals in your families, communities, and congregations who need consolation? What pains and hurts exist? How can the church be a place of comfort for these people? How can we bear our pain together?

Sending Prayer: God of community, you have called us to be stronger and better together, through the gifts of your Spirit. Open our eyes to opportunities to share these gifts with the world. Amen.

April 25

Gathering Prayer: Draw your church together, O God, into one great company of disciples, together following our teacher Jesus Christ into every walk of life, together serving in Christ's mission to the world, and together witnessing to your love wherever you will send us; for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (ELW, page 75)

Reading: 1 Corinthians 14:6-9

Hymn: Soli Deo Gloria - ELW #878

Reflection Questions:

- What are some sources of noise in your life that need to be quieted or silenced so that you can hear God more clearly?
- What are the places where we are not communicating well? (You may define "we" however you want. There are lots of options!)

Sending Prayer: God of community, you have called us to be stronger and better together, through the gifts of your Spirit. Open our eyes to opportunities to share these gifts with the world. Amen.

April 26

Gathering Prayer: Draw your church together, O God, into one great company of disciples, together following our teacher Jesus Christ into every walk of life, together serving in Christ's mission to the world, and together witnessing to your love wherever you will send us; for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (ELW, page 75)

Reading: 1 Corinthians 14:1-12

Hymn: O God beyond All Praising - ELW #880

Reflection Questions:

- How can you, as an individual, participate more fully in your congregation to experience and share God's love?
- How can your congregation participate more fully in our synod to experience and share God's love?
- How can we be stronger and better together?

Sending Prayer: God of community, you have called us to be stronger and better together, through the gifts of your Spirit. Open our eyes to opportunities to share these gifts with the world. Amen.

Many Gifts. One Body of Christ.

We have been on a devotional and prayer-filled journey as a synod through Lent that will continue as we prepare for the 2019 Southern Ohio Synod Assembly.

We are now breaking into 2 different groups for devotions:

- Congregation members who are still in the discernment process as we approach the 2019 Southern Ohio Synod Assembly
- Individuals who have had their names submitted to turn in a Discernment Form ahead of Synod Assembly, to note they would be open to being nominated for the Office of Bishop

For congregation members, your devotions begin on the next page.

For individuals, your devotions begin after this section.

April 27

Opening Prayer: Almighty God, your Holy Spirit equips the church with a rich variety of gifts. Grant that we may use them to bear witness to Christ in lives that are built on faith and love. Make us ready to live the gospel and eager to do your will, so that we may share with all your church in the joys of eternal life; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (ELW, page 76)

Reading: Joshua 1:1

Hymn: Listen, God Is Calling - ELW #513

Reflection Questions:

- What would your thoughts be upon losing a servant leader? Would you feel anxiety, grief, numbness? Would you make changes?

Closing Prayer: Gracious and holy God, give us diligence to seek you, wisdom to perceive you, and patience to wait for you. Grant us, O God, a mind to meditate on you; eyes to behold you; ears to listen for your word; a heart to love you; and a life to proclaim you; through the power of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (ELW, page 76)

April 28

Opening Prayer: Almighty God, your Holy Spirit equips the church with a rich variety of gifts. Grant that we may use them to bear witness to Christ in lives that are built on faith and love. Make us ready to live the gospel and eager to do your will, so that we may share with all your church in the joys of eternal life; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (ELW, page 76)

Reading: Joshua 1:2

Hymn: On Jordan's Stormy Bank I Stand – ELW #437

Reflection Questions:

- What is God saying here? Is God suggesting to keep moving and to follow a new leader or to continue on the path of God's servant, Moses?
- What would you hope to find in your journey?

Closing Prayer: Gracious and holy God, give us diligence to seek you, wisdom to perceive you, and patience to wait for you. Grant us, O God, a mind to meditate on you; eyes to behold you; ears to listen for your word; a heart to love you; and a life to proclaim you; through the power of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (ELW, page 76)

April 29

Opening Prayer: Almighty God, your Holy Spirit equips the church with a rich variety of gifts. Grant that we may use them to bear witness to Christ in lives that are built on faith and love. Make us ready to live the gospel and eager to do your will, so that we may share with all your church in the joys of eternal life; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (ELW, page 76)

Reading: Joshua 1:3

Hymn: This Is My Father's World - ELW #824

Reflection Questions:

- Our feet and other modes of transport take us to new places, old places – think about if you lead or follow on this journey and that every inch as being yours through the gift of God.

Closing Prayer: Gracious and holy God, give us diligence to seek you, wisdom to perceive you, and patience to wait for you. Grant us, O God, a mind to meditate on you; eyes to behold you; ears to listen for your word; a heart to love you; and a life to proclaim you; through the power of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (ELW, page 76)

April 30

Opening Prayer: Almighty God, your Holy Spirit equips the church with a rich variety of gifts. Grant that we may use them to bear witness to Christ in lives that are built on faith and love. Make us ready to live the gospel and eager to do your will, so that we may share with all your church in the joys of eternal life; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (ELW, page 76)

Reading: Joshua 1:4

Hymn: For the Beauty of the Earth – ELW # 879

Reflection Questions:

- As far as the eye can see, and further, we have been gifted. Have you ever looked out and wondered on the beauty of Creation and know it was created by God for you?
- What are the considerations about God's creation in the process of Discernment?

Closing Prayer: Gracious and holy God, give us diligence to seek you, wisdom to perceive you, and patience to wait for you. Grant us, O God, a mind to meditate on you; eyes to behold you; ears to listen for your word; a heart to love you; and a life to proclaim you; through the power of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (ELW, page 76)

May 1

Opening Prayer: Almighty God, your Holy Spirit equips the church with a rich variety of gifts. Grant that we may use them to bear witness to Christ in lives that are built on faith and love. Make us ready to live the gospel and eager to do your will, so that we may share with all your church in the joys of eternal life; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (ELW, page 76)

Reading: Joshua 1:5

Hymn: Abide with Me – ELW #629

Reflection Question:

- God is with us, forever and always, and guides us every step of the way. Have you and this congregation been guided by the spirit? How did you know?
- Consider the easiness or difficulty to put away our own desires and thoughts to truly listen to what the Spirit is telling us.

Closing Prayer: Gracious and holy God, give us diligence to seek you, wisdom to perceive you, and patience to wait for you. Grant us, O God, a mind to meditate on you; eyes to behold you; ears to listen for your word; a heart to love you; and a life to proclaim you; through the power of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (ELW, page 76)

May 2

Opening Prayer: Almighty God, your Holy Spirit equips the church with a rich variety of gifts. Grant that we may use them to bear witness to Christ in lives that are built on faith and love. Make us ready to live the gospel and eager to do your will, so that we may share with all your church in the joys of eternal life; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (ELW, page 76)

Reading: Joshua 1:6

Hymn: A Mighty Fortress Is Our God – ELW # 504

Reflection Questions:

- Be not afraid, for I am with you always. Think of the joys and the sorrows in your life, your congregation and in the Church. How do you rejoice or cope? How has it changed you, your outlook, and/or your faith?

Closing Prayer: Gracious and holy God, give us diligence to seek you, wisdom to perceive you, and patience to wait for you. Grant us, O God, a mind to meditate on you; eyes to behold you; ears to listen for your word; a heart to love you; and a life to proclaim you; through the power of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (ELW, page 76)

May 3

Opening Prayer: Almighty God, your Holy Spirit equips the church with a rich variety of gifts. Grant that we may use them to bear witness to Christ in lives that are built on faith and love. Make us ready to live the gospel and eager to do your will, so that we may share with all your church in the joys of eternal life; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (ELW, page 76)

Reading: Joshua 1:7

Hymn: God's Word Is Our Great Heritage – ELW #509

Reflection Question:

- What traits have you identified as being necessary to be a candidate? Rank them – highest to lowest.
- What makes a successful Bishop?

Closing Prayer: Gracious and holy God, give us diligence to seek you, wisdom to perceive you, and patience to wait for you. Grant us, O God, a mind to meditate on you; eyes to behold you; ears to listen for your word; a heart to love you; and a life to proclaim you; through the power of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (ELW, page 76)

May 4

Opening Prayer: Almighty God, your Holy Spirit equips the church with a rich variety of gifts. Grant that we may use them to bear witness to Christ in lives that are built on faith and love. Make us ready to live the gospel and eager to do your will, so that we may share with all your church in the joys of eternal life; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (ELW, page 76)

Reading: Joshua 1:8

Hymn: Let My Prayer Rise Up – ELW #232

Reflection Question:

- What is the reference to the 'book of the law'?
- Are there some books of the Bible that speak to you more than others?
- What books or verses would you suggest to make a person prosperous and successful?

Closing Prayer: Gracious and holy God, give us diligence to seek you, wisdom to perceive you, and patience to wait for you. Grant us, O God, a mind to meditate on you; eyes to behold you; ears to listen for your word; a heart to love you; and a life to proclaim you; through the power of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (ELW, page 76)

May 5

Opening Prayer: Almighty God, your Holy Spirit equips the church with a rich variety of gifts. Grant that we may use them to bear witness to Christ in lives that are built on faith and love. Make us ready to live the gospel and eager to do your will, so that we may share with all your church in the joys of eternal life; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (ELW, page 76)

Reading: Joshua 1:9

Hymn: God of Grace and God of Glory – ELW# 705

Reflection Question:

- What you see as Strong and Courageous traits from a leader? Prayerfully consider who will seek God's direction, study God's word, and follow God's example.

Closing Prayer: Gracious and holy God, give us diligence to seek you, wisdom to perceive you, and patience to wait for you. Grant us, O God, a mind to meditate on you; eyes to behold you; ears to listen for your word; a heart to love you; and a life to proclaim you; through the power of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (ELW, page 76)

May 6

Opening Prayer: Almighty God, your Holy Spirit equips the church with a rich variety of gifts. Grant that we may use them to bear witness to Christ in lives that are built on faith and love. Make us ready to live the gospel and eager to do your will, so that we may share with all your church in the joys of eternal life; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (ELW, page 76)

Reading: Matthew 28:18

Hymn: Earth and All Stars – ELW # 731

Reflection Questions:

- Is it God's law or human's law ?
- Should a leader be powerful, authoritative, or both?
- What is the difference between authority and power?
- What are some of the examples of the authority and power that have been given?

Closing Prayer: Gracious and holy God, give us diligence to seek you, wisdom to perceive you, and patience to wait for you. Grant us, O God, a mind to meditate on you; eyes to behold you; ears to listen for your word; a heart to love you; and a life to proclaim you; through the power of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (ELW, page 76)

May 7

Opening Prayer: Almighty God, your Holy Spirit equips the church with a rich variety of gifts. Grant that we may use them to bear witness to Christ in lives that are built on faith and love. Make us ready to live the gospel and eager to do your will, so that we may share with all your church in the joys of eternal life; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (ELW, page 76)

Reading: Matthew 28:19

Hymn: Go, Make Disciples – ELW # 540

Reflection Questions:

- Have your congregation leaders sent people to mission trips, men's, women or youth conferences? Have you sponsored a missionary?
- Have you incorporated a program of outreach with these events?
- Who does the evangelizing in your congregation?

Closing Prayer: Gracious and holy God, give us diligence to seek you, wisdom to perceive you, and patience to wait for you. Grant us, O God, a mind to meditate on you; eyes to behold you; ears to listen for your word; a heart to love you; and a life to proclaim you; through the power of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (ELW, page 76)

May 8

Opening Prayer: Almighty God, your Holy Spirit equips the church with a rich variety of gifts. Grant that we may use them to bear witness to Christ in lives that are built on faith and love. Make us ready to live the gospel and eager to do your will, so that we may share with all your church in the joys of eternal life; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (ELW, page 76)

Reading: Matthew 28:20

Hymn: Hymn: Be Not Afraid – ELW # 388

Reflection Question:

- As candidates are thought about, consider if they would be comfortable in a 'servant' position? What other role(s) should be considered for discernment?
- Is the candidate a teacher? A leader? Authoritative? Disciple? Apostle? Or _____?

Closing Prayer: Gracious and holy God, give us diligence to seek you, wisdom to perceive you, and patience to wait for you. Grant us, O God, a mind to meditate on you; eyes to behold you; ears to listen for your word; a heart to love you; and a life to proclaim you; through the power of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (ELW, page 76)

May 9

Opening Prayer: Almighty God, your Holy Spirit equips the church with a rich variety of gifts. Grant that we may use them to bear witness to Christ in lives that are built on faith and love. Make us ready to live the gospel and eager to do your will, so that we may share with all your church in the joys of eternal life; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (ELW, page 76)

Reading: Titus 2:7

Hymn: Here I Am, Lord ELW #574

Reflection Question:

- Think of a biblical, church, or role model. What traits did that person have? Where they God given traits or were they learned characteristics? What leadership skills did they utilize?
- What does it take to be a model of good works?

Closing Prayer: Gracious and holy God, give us diligence to seek you, wisdom to perceive you, and patience to wait for you. Grant us, O God, a mind to meditate on you; eyes to behold you; ears to listen for your word; a heart to love you; and a life to proclaim you; through the power of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (ELW, page 76)

May 10

Opening Prayer: Almighty God, your Holy Spirit equips the church with a rich variety of gifts. Grant that we may use them to bear witness to Christ in lives that are built on faith and love. Make us ready to live the gospel and eager to do your will, so that we may share with all your church in the joys of eternal life; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (ELW, page 76)

Reading: Titus 2:8

Hymn: Gather Us In – ELW #532

Reflection Questions:

- It is possible to disagree and still love and respect the person?
- What tools are needed to build consensus?
- In the face of opposition or disagreement, how will the individual represent the Church publicly?

Closing Prayer: Gracious and holy God, give us diligence to seek you, wisdom to perceive you, and patience to wait for you. Grant us, O God, a mind to meditate on you; eyes to behold you; ears to listen for your word; a heart to love you; and a life to proclaim you; through the power of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (ELW, page 76)

Many Gifts. One Body of Christ.

Devotions for individuals begin on the next page.

April 27

Opening Prayer: Ever-living God, shepherd of your people, we thank you for calling forth leaders for flock throughout time. We pray for all discerning a call to leadership in the Southern Ohio Synod and those currently in leadership. Guide our hearts, thoughts, and actions to call forth our next leaders. In your holy name we pray, Amen.

Reading: Joshua 1:1

Hymn: Lord, Speak to Us, That We May Speak - ELW #676

Reflection Questions:

- What is your first memory of God speaking to you?
- When is it a struggle to hear God speaking to you? When is it easiest?
- Who are people who have assisted you in your call to this point? Have you thanked them? Consider writing a note of thanks to a few (or all!) of them.

Closing Prayer: O God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (ELW, page 317)

April 28

Opening Prayer: Ever-living God, shepherd of your people, we thank you for calling forth leaders for flock throughout time. We pray for all discerning a call to leadership in the Southern Ohio Synod and those currently in leadership. Guide our hearts, thoughts, and actions to call forth our next leaders. In your holy name we pray, Amen.

Reading: Joshua 1:2

Hymn: Wade in the Water - ELW #459

Reflection Questions:

- Who are the saints in your life who have mentored you in your current call, who have died? Take a few moments and give thanks for them!
- Think about your current flock in your call. How have they responded to your name being put forth on a Discernment Form? If they don't know yet, how do you think they will respond?
- Where is God calling you to lead your flock?

Closing Prayer: O God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (ELW, page 317)

April 29

Opening Prayer: Ever-living God, shepherd of your people, we thank you for calling forth leaders for flock throughout time. We pray for all discerning a call to leadership in the Southern Ohio Synod and those currently in leadership. Guide our hearts, thoughts, and actions to call forth our next leaders. In your holy name we pray, Amen.

Reading: Joshua 1:3

Hymn: Lord, Be Glorified - ELW #744

Reflection Questions:

- What places have you felt God's presence most closely when you have visited?
- What places have you visited made you anxious before you were there?
- How might God be calling you to step out in faith to a new place? What fears or worries do you have?

Closing Prayer: O God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (ELW, page 317)

April 30

Opening Prayer: Ever-living God, shepherd of your people, we thank you for calling forth leaders for flock throughout time. We pray for all discerning a call to leadership in the Southern Ohio Synod and those currently in leadership. Guide our hearts, thoughts, and actions to call forth our next leaders. In your holy name we pray, Amen.

Reading: Joshua 1:4

Hymn: God, Who Stretched the Spangled Heavens - ELW #771

Reflection Questions:

- Is God calling you to a change of call? What is life-giving from that thought? What is life-draining from that thought?
- What has been a wilderness in your life? How was God present through it?

Closing Prayer: O God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (ELW, page 317)

May 1

Opening Prayer: Ever-living God, shepherd of your people, we thank you for calling forth leaders for flock throughout time. We pray for all discerning a call to leadership in the Southern Ohio Synod and those currently in leadership. Guide our hearts, thoughts, and actions to call forth our next leaders. In your holy name we pray, Amen.

Reading: Joshua 1:5

Hymn: How Firm a Foundation - ELW #796

Reflection Questions:

- How do you approach conflict? Do you run toward it? Run away from it? Ignore it? Embrace it?
- The call to the Office of Bishop can feel lonely and that you are doing this on your own. What is a practice you can adopt now, that you can turn to later, to help you feel connected to God and to others when things are isolation?

Closing Prayer: O God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (ELW, page 317)

May 2

Opening Prayer: Ever-living God, shepherd of your people, we thank you for calling forth leaders for flock throughout time. We pray for all discerning a call to leadership in the Southern Ohio Synod and those currently in leadership. Guide our hearts, thoughts, and actions to call forth our next leaders. In your holy name we pray, Amen.

Reading: Joshua 1:6

Hymn: Wait for the Lord - ELW #262

Reflection Questions:

- Think of a time when you found courage on your own. Now, think of a time when you found courage from God. What made the difference?
- What are the possessions that you feel the congregations and members of the Southern Ohio Synod need to receive from God? How do you feel called to help distribute those?

Closing Prayer: O God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (ELW, page 317)

May 3

Opening Prayer: Ever-living God, shepherd of your people, we thank you for calling forth leaders for flock throughout time. We pray for all discerning a call to leadership in the Southern Ohio Synod and those currently in leadership. Guide our hearts, thoughts, and actions to call forth our next leaders. In your holy name we pray, Amen.

Reading: Joshua 1:7

Hymn: Thy Strong Word - ELW #511

Reflection Questions:

- While the governing documents of the Southern Ohio Synod are not the same as Torah, they are important for guiding our lives together as congregations and members of the Synod. How familiar are you with them? Have you taken a chance to read through the Chapter 8 on the Office of the Bishop?
- What Bible verses are important to you and your current ministry? What verses will help shape your next steps in ministry?

Closing Prayer: O God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (ELW, page 317)

May 4

Opening Prayer: Ever-living God, shepherd of your people, we thank you for calling forth leaders for flock throughout time. We pray for all discerning a call to leadership in the Southern Ohio Synod and those currently in leadership. Guide our hearts, thoughts, and actions to call forth our next leaders. In your holy name we pray, Amen.

Reading: Joshua 1:8

Hymn: Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Your Word - ELW #517

Reflection Questions:

- What images of God, scripture passages, hymn verses, etc. flow through your mind while you are doing mindless tasks? How do these shape your life?

Closing Prayer: O God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (ELW, page 317)

May 5

Opening Prayer: Ever-living God, shepherd of your people, we thank you for calling forth leaders for flock throughout time. We pray for all discerning a call to leadership in the Southern Ohio Synod and those currently in leadership. Guide our hearts, thoughts, and actions to call forth our next leaders. In your holy name we pray, Amen.

Reading: Joshua 1:9

Hymn: Will You Come and Follow Me - ELW #798

Reflection Questions:

- Have you ever disobeyed or not listened to a command from God? Is that part of your call story? How did God continue to call you in the midst of running away?
- Have you tried to hide from God or ignore God? What brought you back to relationship with God? How has this experience informed your pastoral ministry?

Closing Prayer: O God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (ELW, page 317)

May 6

Opening Prayer: Ever-living God, shepherd of your people, we thank you for calling forth leaders for flock throughout time. We pray for all discerning a call to leadership in the Southern Ohio Synod and those currently in leadership. Guide our hearts, thoughts, and actions to call forth our next leaders. In your holy name we pray, Amen.

Reading: Matthew 28:18

Hymn: Oh, Praise the Gracious Power - ELW #651

Reflection Questions:

- What makes Jesus' authority different from human authority? How does Jesus' leadership and human leadership differ? What are examples from Jesus' ministry that are also found in your leadership style?
- What are places you have been sent in ministry, because of Jesus' calling? How has the Spirit accompanied and guided you along the way?

Closing Prayer: O God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (ELW, page 317)

May 7

Opening Prayer: Ever-living God, shepherd of your people, we thank you for calling forth leaders for flock throughout time. We pray for all discerning a call to leadership in the Southern Ohio Synod and those currently in leadership. Guide our hearts, thoughts, and actions to call forth our next leaders. In your holy name we pray, Amen.

Reading: Matthew 28:19

Hymn: In Christ Called to Baptize - ELW #575

Reflection Questions:

- What is your favorite part of the baptismal liturgy?
- What is your preferred image for understanding baptism? How does that shape your ministry?

Closing Prayer: O God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (ELW, page 317)

May 8

Opening Prayer: Ever-living God, shepherd of your people, we thank you for calling forth leaders for flock throughout time. We pray for all discerning a call to leadership in the Southern Ohio Synod and those currently in leadership. Guide our hearts, thoughts, and actions to call forth our next leaders. In your holy name we pray, Amen.

Reading: Matthew 28:20

Hymn: You Are Mine - ELW #581

Reflection Questions:

- When you are teaching new members about the basics of the Lutheran faith, what points do you highlight? What is your elevator speech for why you are a Lutheran pastor in the ELCA?

Closing Prayer: O God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (ELW, page 317)

May 9

Opening Prayer: Ever-living God, shepherd of your people, we thank you for calling forth leaders for flock throughout time. We pray for all discerning a call to leadership in the Southern Ohio Synod and those currently in leadership. Guide our hearts, thoughts, and actions to call forth our next leaders. In your holy name we pray, Amen.

Reading: Titus 2:7

Hymn: Lord Jesus, You Shall Be My Song - ELW #808

Reflection Questions:

- For you, what are the top 5 characteristics for a bishop to embody in their leadership?
- Who would be your sounding board and safe space if you are elected as the next bishop of the Southern Ohio Synod? Who are the people you can hear critique from to improve?
- How do you respond to criticism? Of your leadership? Of your theology? Of yourself?

Closing Prayer: O God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (ELW, page 317)

May 10

Opening Prayer: Ever-living God, shepherd of your people, we thank you for calling forth leaders for flock throughout time. We pray for all discerning a call to leadership in the Southern Ohio Synod and those currently in leadership. Guide our hearts, thoughts, and actions to call forth our next leaders. In your holy name we pray, Amen.

Reading: Titus 2:8

Hymn: Baptized and Set Free - ELW #453

Reflection Questions:

- What is your view on how the larger church responds to national events and disagreements?
- How do you live alongside individuals or congregations you disagree with?

Closing Prayer: O God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (ELW, page 317)