

Through Stained Glass Lent – the Season of Our Becoming

The mantra for our congregation is ***everything belongs***. Advent is about the coming of the Christ to dwell among us. The incarnation is a story reiterating what God spoke in the beginning – that this life and word are good. The Christmas story reveals the depth of God's love, choosing solidarity with Creation as an act of love rather than condemning it. Epiphany is about the revelation of the Christ's presence to all the world, and the story of the Magi reminds us that all traditions belong to the Divine.

Advent and Christmas were full of stories drawing us to the presence of God in and among God's people. The story of the baptism of Christ reminds us that we belong to God in life and death – our identity belongs to God. The stories of Jesus calling the disciples invite us to consider joining God in re-creating the world. We all have a part in the *missio Dei*.¹ We belong to the life and activity of the Triune God, and our call is to join the Christ in embodying the reign of God! The first three seasons of the church calendar center us in the story of our belonging – to God, God's mission, and one another.

We are quick to forget our belongings. We find ways to separate ourselves from God, Creation, one another, and ourselves. We forget that we belong to love – our identity and destiny. When this separation (which means sin) occurs, the goodness to which we belong blurs our union with God. We forget who and whose we are and begin creating identities that do not reflect our true selves. During this disordering experience, the temptation is to pursue the self-destructive illusion that says we are alone and separate, choosing to be a rugged individual to a true community. Evil, the ideologies that pit us against the community and actions that lead to an 'us versus them' mentality, seduces us deeper into separation's despair. These wages rob us of our true selves by insisting the gap is too large to bridge and the presence of pain and suffering means healing is not possible. No longer do we believe we belong, but we are 'predestined' to be autonomous from God and one another.

The good news is that this illusion is not our identity or destination. The story of God tells of God's activity and movement toward us to undo whatever it is that separates us. In the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus, we see how we return to our belonging by becoming who God calls us to be. Lent is the season of our becoming –we examine our separations by witnessing our sufferings, tending to our pains, and emptying the small self so we may encounter the Risen Christ. Not with quick fixes or bypassing with spiritual language. Sister Joan Chittister says it best, ***“Lent is about becoming, doing, and changing whatever it is that is blocking the fullness of life in us right now.”*** For forty days, we travel into the wilderness of our lives and ask, “Who is God inviting us to become?”

Lent is a season of disorder. The good news is that we do not traverse the ashy landscape alone – but God in the Risen Christ, with the companionship of the Spirit – goes with us. Lent invites us into the paradox of this life – failure is a part of success,

¹ *missio Dei* is the movement and activity of God, by which the Trinity sends the church into the world to join in on the re-creation of the world with God.

death is a part of life, and imperfection is included in perfection – or, to use the definition in Scripture – becoming whole!

If love is our belonging, faith is the slow process of getting there. Lent is the season of our becoming – when we journey together with the faith of Jesus toward our true belonging – the Beloved Community.

See you at the Kirk House and in town,
Adam

Ministry of the Heart (*worship, spiritual formation, fellowship*)

Chairpersons: Beth Green, Brittney Cosby, and Maggie Embery

After a slow, cold start to 2024, we are excited about what lies ahead for us as the days grow longer and warmer. The Heart Team has been hard at work creating opportunities for our congregation to engage our theme of **becoming**. We invite you to join us in these offerings!

On Sunday, February 11, Becca and Andy Brant are hosting an open house beginning at 5:00 p.m. The Brants will provide food and beverages to enjoy while the Super Bowl plays in the background. All are welcome to attend this event that's for all ages and will most certainly be a touchdown of a good time! The Brants' address is : **LINDY – PLEASE INCLUDE THEIR ADDRESS HERE.**

Kirk Night returns to its normal schedule on Wednesday, February 7. Supper begins at 6:15 p.m., with the discussion starting at 7 p.m. in the parlor. The meal is bring your own supper! *Kirk Night is for all ages. Please let the Heart Team chairs know if you would like a ride.*

Lent begins on **Wednesday, February 14**. Our Lenten journey begins with morning prayer and the imposition of ashes at 7:30 a.m. in Union Chapel at 1PC. Then, at 6:00 p.m., an Ash Wednesday service will be held in the parlor at 1PC. This meditative worship experience will include the imposition of ashes, Scripture and poetry, and hymns, as well as a ritual of emptying to begin the season of becoming.

Adam leads a book study during Lent on Wednesdays (2/14, 2/21, 2/28, 3/6, 3/13, 3/20). The first offering will be at 10:00 a.m. in either the CE Building or the Parlor. Adam will have coffee available. The second offering will be during Kirk Night. You do not need to read the book for the Kirk Night discussions. The books can be purchased in the office for \$15. A signup sheet is in the parlor. If you have questions, please ask Adam. *Adam will make the Wednesday morning book study available on Zoom if the timing doesn't work.*

LINDY – PLEASE INCLUDE THE ANNOUNCEMENT FOR THE BOOK FROM THE BULLETIN HERE.

A theme throughout Lent will be the spiritual practice of *kenosis* – which means emptying. Adam will lead a 30-minute centering prayer that aids us in *kenosis* on Sunday afternoons during Lent at 3:00 p.m. in the parlor. Nothing is required except your presence. Centering prayer is a form of meditation in silence. Let Adam know if you have any questions.

Finally, the Ministry of the Heart Team will meet on **Sunday, February 11**, immediately after worship. If you serve on the Heart Team or want more information about this team, join us at 11 a.m. on Sunday, February 11.

If you haven't already, please get your star word to the Heart Team as soon as possible!

February Worship Notes

Ruling Elder in Charge:

Deacon in Charge:

Sunday, February 4, 2024: The Fifth Sunday after Lent

Sermon Text: Isaiah 40.21-31 & Mark 1.29.-39

Sermon Title: The Basics of Belonging

Preacher: The Rev. Dr. Adam R. Quine

Worship Assistant:

Today, communion is by intinction.

Sunday, February 11, 2024: The Transfiguration of Christ

Sermon Text: 2 Kings 2.1-12 & Mark 9.2-9

Sermon Title: Good to Be Here

Preacher: The Rev. Dr. Adam R. Quine

Worship Assistant:

Wednesday, February 14, 2024: Ash Wednesday

Sermon Text: Joel 2.1-2, 12-17 & Matthew 6.1-6, 16-21

Sermon Title: The Emptiness of Becoming

Preacher: The Rev. Dr. Adam R. Quine

Worship Assistant:

Sunday, February 18, 2024: The First Sunday of Lent

Sermon Text: Genesis 9.8-17 & Mark 1.9-15

Sermon Title: Becoming Mindful

Preacher: The Rev. Dr. Adam R. Quine

Worship Assistant:

Today, communion is by intinction.

Sunday, February 25, 2024: The Second Sunday of Lent

Sermon Text: Genesis 17.1-7, 15, 16 & Mark 8.31-38

Sermon Title: Becoming Risk-Takers

Preacher: The Rev. Dr. Adam R. Quine

Worship Assistant:

Today, communion is by intinction.