



FaithWestwood UMC

Lent 2026

Our Lenten sermon series, **The Way**, invites us on a pilgrimage. Inspired by passages of scripture which talk about journeys, roads, and pathways of life, what will Jesus teach us as we journey toward the cross with him?

This guide may be utilized by FaithGroups and/or Individuals.

This guide is following the **SOAP** Bible study method (**Scripture, Observation, Application, Prayer**) which is ideal for beginners due to its simplicity, yet deep enough for mature Christians.

If you would like to connect with a FaithGroup on-site and/or online, please check out the latest **GROW Catalog** on our website faithwestwood.com

Lenten “Win Over” Challenges / look at the **end** of each lesson
Family Activities / see **INSERT**
Mission Offerings & Activities / look for the **“GOLDEN”** banner on **back page**



© 2026, Study Guide for Lent, February 18 to April 5.
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utilizing resources inspired by The Way (Worship Design Studio).
Mission Offerings & Activities by Caring Ministries Director Vikki O’Hara
Family Activities by Next Gen & Family Engagement Director Leah Dinosa

Ash Wednesday, February 18

The Way Back – Sometimes things happen in our lives to cause us to awaken to a new perspective, and we begin to reassess the road of life we are following and the directions in which we are going. How does the prophet Joel call us to return to the LORD?

Gracious and compassionate God, on this Ash Wednesday, may I rend my heart and return to You. Pour out Your Spirit in this Lenten season, and always guide my steps along the journey. In Your Holy name I humbly pray, AMEN.

Scripture

From Joel 2:12-17, 28-29 (NIV) / ¹²“Even now,” declares the Lord, “return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.” ¹³Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity.

²⁸“And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. ²⁹Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days.

Week of February 22

The Wandering Way – After Jesus’ baptism, he went on a pilgrimage into the wilderness. Along the way, he encounters temptations. As we face temptations to wander from the path God has intended for us, how do we manage those temptations with faith?

Holy God, when I face temptations, keep me from stumbling. Always guide my steps along the journey. In Your Holy name I humbly pray, AMEN.

Scripture

Luke 4:1-13 (NIV) / ⁴ Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, ² where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry. ³ The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.” ⁴ Jesus answered, **“It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone.’”**

⁵ The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. ⁶ And he said to him, “I will give you all their authority and splendor; it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. ⁷ If you worship me, it will all be yours.” ⁸ Jesus answered, **“It is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.’”**

(Week of February 22)

⁹The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. “If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down from here. ¹⁰For it is written: “He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully; ¹¹they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.” ¹²Jesus answered, **“It is said: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”**

¹³When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.

- Which **words / phrases / verses** stand out to you?
- How do the **additional quoted verses of scripture** emphasize the purpose of the passage?

Observation

- **Weekly questions:** Who is the **audience** for these verses? What is the **context** of this passage? What are the primary **themes**? What is **God revealing** in these verses?
- How does Jesus consistently **counter** the Devil’s temptations?
- How does Gospel writer **Luke’s** telling of this story emphasize Jesus as the Messiah, the one who can **conquer evil powers**?
- What does verse 13 indicate when it says, **he left him until an opportune time**? How does Luke set-up what Jesus will face throughout his **ministry** and at his **death**?

Application

- **Weekly questions:** How do these verses **apply to your life** today? What **truths / changes / actions** do these verses invite you to embrace?
- As you **face temptations**, which do you struggle with: **needs / power / identity**?
- Discuss the **three temptations vs. spiritual opportunities**: **1) feeding with a quick fix vs. feeding the spirit. 2) success & status vs. humility & service. 3) testing God vs. trusting & having faith.**
- Reflect on how any **temptations** have led you down **different paths** in life and the lessons you learned.

Prayer

- After sharing your **prayer requests**, pray **The Lord’s Prayer** together.
- **Lenten “Win Over” Challenge:** It has been said, **“Everyone you meet is fighting a battle you know nothing about. Be kind. Always.”** Though you may not know someone else’s battles nor temptations, allow the Spirit to guide you to one person you might **welcome in your prayer life** during the Lenten season. Extra: send anonymous notes of encouragement.

Week of March 1 / Holy Communion

The Higher Way – The prophet Isaiah offers a picture of abundance! We are all invited, without price, to the abundance of God’s grace. How might we embody this higher way for the sake of our corner of the world?

Abundant God, You invite me to experience Your overflowing grace and love. Always guide my steps along the journey. In Your Holy name I humbly pray, AMEN.

Scripture

Isaiah 55:1-9 (NIV) /

55 “Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters;

and you who have no money, come, buy and eat!

Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.

² Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy?

Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and you will delight in the richest of fare.

³ Give ear and come to me; listen, that you may live.

I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my faithful love promised to David.

⁴ See, I have made him a witness to the peoples, a ruler and commander of the peoples.

⁵ Surely you will summon nations you know not,

and nations you do not know will come running to you,

because of the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has endowed you with splendor.”

⁶ Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near.

⁷ Let the wicked forsake their ways and the unrighteous their thoughts. Let them turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.

⁸ “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the LORD.

⁹ “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

- Which **words / phrases / verses** stand out to you?
- The words in **bold** are from the voice of the LORD through the prophet Isaiah. What do you hear through the prophet’s own voice in **verses 6 & 7**? How does Isaiah provide a summary of the LORD’s words thus far and help to make the transition to verses 8 & 9?

Observation

- **Weekly questions:** Who is the **audience** for these verses? What is the **context** of this passage? What are the primary **themes**? What is **God revealing** in these verses?
- One of the primary **themes** of this passage is about **God’s abundant grace** – to what is this grace compared with in the opening verses?

(Week of March 1)

- According to **verse 3** (and others), what is **God's covenant** contingent upon?
- According to **verses 8 & 9**, **God's thoughts** and **ways** are **higher** than your ways and thoughts. What does the word **higher** mean in this context?

Application

- **Weekly questions:** How do these verses **apply to your life** today? What **truths / changes / actions** do these verses invite you to embrace?
- In Isaiah's day, the people were striving for things which **could not satisfy** – what things do humans **strive** for today that **cannot satisfy**?
- How can **God's abundant grace** satisfy what people are longing for in their journeys?
- Thinking about your own **spiritual journey**, how has **God's grace** guided your thoughts and your ways?

Prayer

- After sharing your **prayer requests**, pray **The Lord's Prayer** together.
- **Lenten "Win Over" Challenge:** Whether you are "fasting" or "feasting" in this season, adjust accordingly and **invite** someone to **coffee / tea / dessert / meal**. Allow the conversation to be "**rich**" with God's grace.

~ notes ~

Week of March 8 /

The Way Around – The Pharisees warn Jesus about Herod, and Jesus speaks prophetically about his identity which was not understood. There are times when we are misunderstood too. How do we take the way around what others think so that we can be our authentic selves?

Forgiving God, there are moments when I misunderstand, and there are moments when I am misunderstood. Always guide my steps along the journey to know myself through You. In Your Holy name I humbly pray, AMEN.

Scripture

Luke 13:31-34 (NIV) / ³¹At that time some Pharisees came to Jesus and said to him, “Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you.”

³²He replied, “**Go tell that fox, ‘I will keep on driving out demons and healing people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.’** ³³In any case, I must press on today and tomorrow and the next day—for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem! ³⁴Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing.”

- Which **words / phrases / verses** stand out to you?
- Do a Bible search about **prophets** who spoke out against Jerusalem and their fates.

Observation

- **Weekly questions:** Who is the **audience** for these verses? What is the **context** of this passage? What are the primary **themes**? What is **God revealing** in these verses?
- According to Luke, the tables have turned in this passage, and the Pharisees went to Jesus – what does this say about **religious and political alliances**?
- In response to the Pharisees, how does Jesus speak **bluntly** with a message that addresses both Herod and the Pharisees (who have doubted his identity)?
- How does Jerusalem’s long and sordid **history with prophets** demonstrate their hardened hearts and lack of faith?

Application

- **Weekly questions:** How do these verses **apply to your life** today? What **truths / changes / actions** do these verses invite you to embrace?
- What about Jesus’ ministry was **misunderstood** making it difficult for **religious & political forces** to believe in him as the **promised Messiah**?

(Week of March 8)

- What do you think are some of the **things about Jesus** which continue to be **misunderstood** today?
- Along your **spiritual journey**, have any of your **words and/or intentions** been **misunderstood**?
- Share something about your **authentic self** you wish others knew about you.

Prayer

- After sharing your **prayer requests**, pray **The Lord's Prayer** together.
- **Lenten "Win Over" Challenge:** Henry Winkler said, "**Assumptions are the termites of relationships.**" Assumptions also lead to many **misunderstandings!** To heal a relationship in your life, consider what you might do to **nurture** that relationship back to health. Pray and then reach out!

Week of March 15 / Blanketed with Prayer Blessing

The Way Home — As Jesus shares the story of the prodigal son, he demonstrates the father's great love for his children. No matter what we call "home" in this physical world, we yearn for a spiritual home offering serenity, acceptance, and belonging.
How might you and I find our way home in this season?

Ever Loving God, when I go my own way, Your heart and arms are open and ready for me. Always guide my steps along the journey back home. In Your Holy name I humbly pray, AMEN.

Scripture

Luke 15:11-32(NIV) / ¹¹ Jesus continued: **"There was a man who had two sons. ¹² The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them. ¹³ "Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. ¹⁴ After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵ So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶ He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.**

¹⁷ **"When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! ¹⁸ I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.' ²⁰ So he got up and went to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.**

(Week of March 15)

²¹ “The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ ²² But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³ Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. ²⁴ For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.

²⁵ “Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. ²⁷ ‘Your brother has come,’ he replied, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.’

²⁸ “The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. ²⁹ But he answered his father, ‘Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. ³⁰ But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!’

³¹ “‘My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. ³² But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’”

- Which **words / phrases / verses** stand out to you?
- This passage represents the third of the “**lost**” **parables** beginning in Luke 15. Read the **parables of the lost sheep and coin** to gain the whole perspective!

Observation

- **Weekly questions:** Who is the **audience** for these verses? What is the **context** of this passage? What are the primary **themes**? What is **God revealing** in these verses?
- Explore the following **cultural dynamics** affecting the storyline: **asking for inheritance / squandering said inheritance / repentance & forgiveness / returning home / family dynamics / other...**
- The focus of Jesus’ parable is the **Father’s love**, representing **God’s unconditional love**. How does this **Father** demonstrate **extravagant love**?
- The prodigal son’s **brother** demonstrates many **human emotions** in response to the treatment of his lost brother. How does Jesus use this parable to communicate **important truths** about this **character** too?

Application

- **Weekly questions:** How do these verses **apply to your life** today? What **truths / changes / actions** do these verses invite you to embrace?
- Which **cultural dynamics** would affect this same storyline **today** in Midwest USA?

(Week of March 15)

- On your **spiritual journey**, which of the **characters' sandals** have you been in?
- When have you experienced the **extravagant love of God**?
- Search the internet for **pictures representing the scenes** in this passage (please print only if you can give credit to the artists). Which **pictures** speak most to you?

Prayer

- After sharing your **prayer requests**, pray **The Lord's Prayer** together.
- **Lenten "Win Over" Challenge**: The late former Nebraska Bishop Rhymes Moncure, Jr. once preached on the father wearing "mismatched sandals" running to his son to embrace him. Is there someone in your life who may need a **welcome** back into the life of the church? Add this person to your daily prayers.

Week of March 22 / Confirmation Sunday

The Free Way – The Apostle Paul urges the Christians in Philippi to press on toward the goal for the prize in Jesus Christ! On this Confirmation Sunday, how do we celebrate the paths that lead us to new life and freedom in Christ?

Affirming God, on this journey, I press on toward the goal for the prize in the name of Jesus Christ. Always guide my steps along the paths that lead to new life and freedom in his name. In Your Holy name I humbly pray, AMEN.

Scripture

Philippians 3:12-14 (NIV) / ¹² Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. ¹³ Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

- Which **words / phrases / verses** stand out to you?

Observation

- **Weekly questions**: Who is the **audience** for these verses? What is the **context** of this passage? What are the primary **themes**? What is **God revealing** in these verses?
- Paul also uses **imagery** of a marathon **runner** – how is this a great metaphor for the **Christian faith**?

(Week of March 22)

- The Apostle Paul reveals how he has **not** obtained everything nor arrived at his **goal**, yet he presses on to **“take hold”** of Christ. Name the specific **things of Christ** worth taking hold of in the journey [think about his preaching, teaching, healing, etc].
- According to Paul, God calls us **heavenward** to win the prize in Christ Jesus. How is the **gift of salvation / promise of eternal life** the most worthy of goals for the Christian?

Application

- **Weekly questions:** How do these verses **apply to your life** today? What **truths / changes / actions** do these verses invite you to embrace?
- Reflect on those specific images of the runner in **verses 13 & 14 – straining forward / leaving past failures behind / focusing on the goal**. Compare these things to the life of a Christian: when have you needed to **strain forward? / leave past failures behind? / focus on the goal?**
- As the church celebrates **Confirmation Class 2026**, reflect on when you were able to **“take hold”** of Christ by professing your faith in him.
- What are some **spiritual goals** you have for this Lenten season?

Prayer

- After sharing your **prayer requests**, pray **The Lord’s Prayer** together.
- **Lenten “Win Over” Challenge:** The greatest story of our Lord & Savior and his **sacrifice on the cross** transforms lives. Who might you **invite** to attend a Holy Week service with you?

Holy Week / Palm Sunday, March 29

The Other Way – As Jesus makes his entry in Jerusalem, this moment on the road feels both like the end and the beginning. While a pilgrimage may reach its destination, the hope, wisdom, and life lessons learned along the way have offered a new starting point for us. What “other” way are we called to in the name of right relationship with Christ?

Holy God, this journey toward the cross leads me to beginnings and endings and then new beginnings. Always guide my steps along the paths that lead to the right relationship with Christ. In Your Holy name I humbly pray, AMEN.

Scripture

Luke 19:28-40 (NIV) / ²⁸ After Jesus had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. ²⁹ As he approached Bethphage and Bethany at the hill called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, ³⁰ **“Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here.”** ³¹ **“If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you untying it?’ say, ‘The Lord needs it.’”**

³² Those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them. ³³ As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, “Why are you untying the colt?” ³⁴ They replied, “The Lord needs it.” ³⁵ They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it. ³⁶ As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road. ³⁷ When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen:

³⁸ **“Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!”**
“Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”

³⁹ Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples!”
⁴⁰ **“I tell you,”** he replied, **“if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.”**

- Which **words / phrases / verses** stand out to you?
- Gospel writer Luke does not include the crowd shouting **“Hosanna,”** yet the first part of **verse 38** comes from Psalm 118:26. Do you miss the **Hosanna**?

Observation

- **Weekly questions:** Who is the **audience** for these verses? What is the **context** of this passage? What are the primary **themes**? What is **God revealing** in these verses?
- Thinking about March 8 lesson with the **culture & criticism of Jerusalem**, how does this shape Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem? How did Jesus’ **humble** entry differ from that of a **traditional king**?
- Look at the words of praise in **verse 38**. How does Luke emphasize how **Jesus is the Messiah** through these words? While they differ from Matthew’s use of **Hosanna**, reflect on how Luke’s choice ties his Gospel together.
- The Pharisees return with their criticism and tell Jesus to **rebuke** his disciples. What is Jesus’ response in **verse 40**? [Recall two of the temptations speaking of stones in Luke 4, and the ways the prophets were stoned in Luke 13]. What does Jesus mean that the **stones** would cry out?

Application

- **Weekly questions:** How do these verses **apply to your life** today? What **truths / changes / actions** do these verses invite you to embrace?

(Week of March 29)

- When was the last time you attended a **parade**? How were the **guests of honor** celebrated?
- Luke describes “**the whole crowd of his disciples**” and specifically why they were praising God joyfully – because of the **miracles** they had seen. Do a search of some of those **miracles** found in the Gospel of Luke [Pastor Cindi likes Luke 17:11-19].
- As we remember **Jesus’ triumphal entry**, what about Jesus are you **most thankful**?

Prayer

- After sharing your **prayer requests**, pray **The Lord’s Prayer** together.
- **Lenten “Win Over” Challenge**: This Holy Week, focus on the **nurture** of your own soul. From Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem to his sacrifice on the cross, Jesus became the sacrificial lamb as an atonement for the sins of the world. Reflect on your relationship with Jesus this week.

Holy Week / Maundy Thursday, April 2

The Loving Way – As Jesus shares in special moments with his disciples, he continues to teach them and to invite them to follow his loving way. Jesus gives to them a new commandment and new actions they would understand much later in their own journeys. How do we embrace the commandment to “love one another” especially this Holy Week?

Loving God, on this Maundy Thursday, I gather at the Table with Jesus and his disciples. Always guide my steps along the paths that lead to loving God, neighbor, and one another. In Your Holy name I humbly pray, AMEN.

Scripture

From John 13:1-17, 18-30, 31-38 (NIV) / 13 It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

¹²When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. **“Do you understand what I have done for you?”** he asked them. ¹³**“You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. ¹⁴Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. ¹⁵I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. ¹⁶Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. ¹⁷Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.”**

Holy Week / Good Friday, April 3

The Suffering Way – This is the moment Jesus travels the most difficult part of the human path: suffering; yet Jesus invites the disciples to a surprising turn in the face of violence and death. Whatever suffering we have experienced on our own life paths, Jesus knows the pain. As we are navigating our lives and paths, how can we also make the most important choice to love?

**Suffering God, on this Good Friday, the journey to the cross is complete.
Always guide my steps in the face of pain, suffering, violence, and death.
In Your Holy name I humbly pray, AMEN.**

Scripture

From John 19:1-11, 12-16a, 16b-22, 23-27, 28-37, 38-42 (NIV) / ¹⁶ Finally Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified. So the soldiers took charge of Jesus. ¹⁷ Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha). ¹⁸ There they crucified him, and with him two others—one on each side and Jesus in the middle. ¹⁹ Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross. It read: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. ²⁰ Many of the Jews read this sign, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the sign was written in Aramaic, Latin and Greek. ²¹ The chief priests of the Jews protested to Pilate, “Do not write ‘The King of the Jews,’ but that this man claimed to be king of the Jews.” ²² Pilate answered, “What I have written, I have written.”

Week of April 5 / Easter Sunday & Holy Communion

Make Your Way – Early on that first day of the week, grief turns to fear and then to astonishment and joy. The message is clear: Jesus is alive, and the disciples must make their way to see the Risen Christ for themselves! How will you make your way to meet the Risen Christ?

**Holy God, on this Easter Sunday, as I make my way to the empty tomb,
continue to guide my steps with a spirit of resurrection and hope!
In Your Holy name I humbly pray, AMEN.**

Scripture

John 20:1-18 (NIV) / ²⁰ Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. ² So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don’t know where they have put him!”

³ So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. ⁴ Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵ He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. ⁶ Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, ⁷ as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus’ head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen.

(Week of April 5)

⁸ Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. ⁹ (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) ¹⁰ Then the disciples went back to where they were staying.

¹¹ Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb ¹² and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

¹³ They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?"

"They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." ¹⁴ At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus. ¹⁵ He asked her, "**Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?**" Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him."

¹⁶ Jesus said to her, "**Mary.**" She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means "Teacher"). ¹⁷ Jesus said, "**Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'**" ¹⁸ Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her.

- Which **words / phrases / verses** stand out to you?
- While this is a **familiar Easter passage**, are there **details** which still surprise you?

Observation

- **Weekly questions:** Who is the **audience** for these verses? What is the **context** of this passage? What are the primary **themes**? What is **God revealing** in these verses?
- Talk about the **responses** to the **empty tomb**: 1) **Mary Magdalene**, 2) **Simon Peter and John**, 3) **Jesus**. [Other Gospels add other perspectives too]
- While there are many **legends** about the strips of linen in the tomb, what did those strips of linen indicate to the **disciples** who first witnessed them?
- When Mary finally **hears** and **sees** Jesus, she is instructed to go to the disciples with the news, "**I have seen the Lord!**" What does it mean that **Mary Magdalene** is the first evangelist / apostle?

Application

- **Weekly questions:** How do these verses **apply to your life** today? What **truths / changes / actions** do these verses invite you to embrace?
- Imagine this passage **in scenes / movements** as in a play. Which **scene / movement** do you see **yourself** in?
- **Grief** moves people in different ways – how do we see **Simon Peter, John, and Mary Magdalene** respond to **grief** of Jesus' death and now the empty tomb?

(Week of April 5)

- The **presence of angels** indicates: **opening the tomb** and **speaking of Jesus** – how do these “**heavenly**” **messengers** add to the holiness of these moments?
- How have you experienced **heavenly messengers** in your journey thru dreams, possessions, family & friends? Share your stories with one another.
- How will you “**make your way**” to experience the Risen Christ this year?

Prayer

- After sharing your **prayer requests**, pray **The Lord’s Prayer** together.
- **Lenten “Win Over” Challenge**: As you have been through the **Win (welcome, invite, nurture) Over** process twice during the Lenten season, think about the ways you might **welcome, invite, and/or nurture** others in the post-Easter / 50 Days of Prayer season before Pentecost.

~ notes ~

Mission Offerings & Activities

2/18, Ash Wednesday - Greater Love Fund. Funds collected during special seasons in the church year are utilized by the missions committee for the greatest needs that may emerge. **Mission Activity:** Pick up a *Blessing Bag* (or two) from the yellow grocery cart in the foyer. Keep in your vehicle until an opportunity arises to share with an unhoused member of our community. *(While supplies last.)*

2/22 - Student Ministry Mission Trips. Today's mission offering supports our summer Student Ministry local mission opportunities, as well as starting to fund the expenses for our students to attend the *2027 United Methodist Youth Conference* in July 11-14, 2027 in Dallas, TX. Held every 4 years, the conference is an amazing opportunity to gather, learn and serve with other United Methodist Youth from across the country. **Mission Activity:** Ms. Leah's birthday challenge is collecting *new* bed pillows for The Furniture Project. *(Ends April 5.)*

3/1 - Helping Hands. Today's mission offering supports our Helping Hands Fund which offers short-term financial assistance to people in our own church family facing an unexpected financial need. **Mission Activity:** Project E.B. (Easter Basket.) Fill a basket (provided) for the children of our pantry patrons to be distributed on March 28th. Suggested list included with basket. *(Baskets collected through March 22.)*

3/8 - FaithWorks Pantry. Today's mission offering will help us purchase items in bulk to keep our pantry shelves stocked during this time of increased food insecurity. **Mission Activity:** The Confirmation Class Mission Project is "Supply the School" with tissues and other school supplies for the rest of the year. Suggested list will be provided. *(Through March 31.)*

3/15 - Blanketed with Prayer. Today's mission offering will be used to purchase new yarn and fleece for prayer shawls, baby afghans and fleece prayer blankets. **Mission Activity:** Help the Blanketed with Prayer team create more handmade items to share. Permanent collection bins for new and scrap yarn are in the west vestibule. *(Ongoing "Never-ending Yarn Drive.")*

3/22 - Confirmation Class Project. Today's mission offering will be used to purchase additional tissues and school supplies for the rest of the year as part of the mission project for the confirmation class, *Supply the School*. **Mission Activity:** Purchase wrapped candy and plastic eggs for this year's *Eggstravaganza*. *(Fill-Off on Palm Sunday. Eggstravaganza on Saturday, April 4.)*

3/29 - Iglesia Comunitaria. Today's mission offering is for our sister church in South Omaha. This offering will support their leadership team's vision to shape their congregational identity as a *Small Groups Church* (not just a church with small groups) and help them purchase Spanish-language small group study materials. **Mission Activity:** Remember to bring at least four (or more) items from the green "Four or More" list each month to help meet the increasing needs of those facing food insecurity. Items may be placed in the canvas carts in the foyer near the elevator and outside the church office. *(Ongoing)*

4/2, Maundy Thursday and 4/3, Good Friday - Greater Love Fund. Collected during special seasons in the church year, funds are utilized by the missions committee for the *greatest needs* that may emerge.

4/5 - Student Ministry Mission Trips. Today's mission offering supports our summer Student Ministry local mission opportunities, as well as starting to fund the expenses for our students to attend the *2026 United Methodist Youth Conference*, July 11-14, 2027 in Dallas, TX. This conference is held once every 4 years and is an amazing opportunity to gather, learn and serve with other United Methodist Youth from across the country. **Mission Activity:** Continue adding new and gently used household items for *The Furniture Project* to the collection tubs in the foyer and inside the west entrance, under the coat rack.