

Dear friends in Christ,

As I write this, it almost feels like spring. Birds are singing, green sprouts are poking up alongside winter's moss, reminders that Lent is often called the "springtime of the soul." This is the season for spiritual spring cleaning and for *expecting growth* as we enter into the deep work of opening to renewal, making our spirits ready to receive Christ's resurrection at Easter.

In Lent we create greater space to pray and reflect, spending time with our Creator just as we would with any treasured loved one. We cultivate humility and pay attention to Jesus—both our Lord's example and the Spirit's presence today. Moving through each day, we intentionally take notice of God's blessings and nudges, the stepping stones of discipleship. We intentionally choose to set aside old, destructive behaviors and practice new, constructive ones. We seek concrete ways to do good and put our convictions into action, asking God's help to grow in faith and hope, courage and trust.

If you are craving peace, I urge you to join us on **Thursday evenings during Lent**. Starting March 5, we'll gather in Fellowship Hall for a deli dinner at 5:45, then celebrate the beautiful *Holden Evening Prayer* in the sanctuary from 6:30 to 7 p.m. Surrounded by candles, in the company of loving hearts, we draw hope from God who centers us in spirit, mind and body.

Sunday mornings will be special too, featuring **five "conversations with Jesus" from John's gospel** brought to life by congregational readers. We'll see parts of ourselves reflected in each seeker—the tentative Nicodemus; the receptive woman of Samaria; an insightful blind man; and Mary and Martha, two sisters suspended between grief and hope. We'll hear how Jesus graciously meets each person where they are, then draws them deeper into a relationship that is more satisfying than they could have hoped for. Just as Christ does for each of us.

Wishing you an open spirit this Lent,

Pastor Melinda
Pastor Melinda



Deli Dinners and Evening Prayer for Lent

***Thursdays beginning March 5
Dinner at 5:45, Worship at 6:30***

Back by popular demand! On Thursdays in Lent we'll share a light **Deli Dinner at 5:45** in Fellowship Hall, followed by the beautiful **Holden Evening Prayer** service by candlelight in the sanctuary at 6:30. The pastors will share brief meditations inspired by the wonderful book ***Grounded: Finding God in the World*** by Diana Butler Bass. Our spiritual life is grounded in the simple but profound insight that God is not "away off in heaven" but is truly present in the natural world and our everyday

experience. We'll reflect on these earthy themes:

March 5: Dirt

March 12: Water

March 19: Air

March 26: Roots

April 2: Neighborhood