

life
renewed

DEVOTIONS FOR LENT
2025



AUGSBURG FORTRESS

Minneapolis

Welcome

Life Renewed provides daily devotions for each day from Ash Wednesday to the Resurrection of Our Lord/Vigil of Easter. The devotions begin with evocative images and brief scripture texts. The writers then bring their diverse voices and pastoral wisdom to the texts with quotations to ponder, reflections, and prayers.

For 2025 the devotions focus on portions of the Easter Vigil scripture readings, plus selections from John 13 for Wednesday and Maundy Thursday in Holy Week. Some of these texts might be new to you, while others might be very familiar. The readings tell of God bringing new life in unexpected ways, in the most unlikely situations.

May God's surprising grace inspire our faith, strengthen the church, and bring new life to all creation!



March 23 / Lent 3

Isaiah 55:6-7

Seek the LORD while he may be found,
call upon him while he is near;
let the wicked forsake their way,
and the unrighteous their thoughts;
let them return to the LORD,
that he may have mercy on them,
and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

To ponder

I feel safe in God's arms . . . and no matter whether I am sitting at this beloved old desk now, or . . . in a labor camp under SS guards . . . I shall always feel safe in God's arms.
—Etty Hillesum, *An Interrupted Life*

An open door

The door at the top of the stairs was open; so was ours at the bottom. We lived downstairs, the Cosiers upstairs, and the feet of our four- and five-year-olds beat a regular rhythm up and down the wooden steps, seeking whatever struck their fancy at the moment.

After we moved, our children soon discovered another open door at Meta's house. She was another grandma when their own grandmothers were six hundred miles away.

Each welcome they received was a sacrament of the Love who eagerly receives us into the circle of divine kindness that we may know we are wanted beyond all expectations. How many in this lonely world know there is a heart, a great love, who longs for them despite whatever failures, broken promises, or troubles burden their hearts?

The people of Israel had failed to live God's mercy and justice, falling into faithlessness. But neither their failures nor ours exhaust God's mercy. *Seek me*, the Lord says, *for I am near and my arms are open to welcome and forgive*. God's mercy echoes through the ages, resounding in Jesus who welcomes us still, "Come to me, all you that are weary, . . . and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

Prayer

Keep calling to us, Lord Jesus, for you have set before us an open door. Amen.



April 3

Zephaniah 3:17-18

The LORD, your God, is in your midst, . . .
he will rejoice over you with gladness,
he will renew you in his love;
he will exult over you with loud singing
as on a day of festival.

To ponder

When a congregation sings together, its song is an acted parable of community. . . . We know that the community sings for us, even when we cannot join in, and that the song joins us with other singers, local and distant, past and present.—Brian Wren, *Praying Twice*

Singing

Elaine lived with multiple physical and mental disabilities; she was mostly unable to speak. During our monthly visits, I made awkward attempts at conversation and gave her communion. I wasn't sure if she knew who I was. Yet when I would sing a beloved hymn such as "Amazing Grace," she would join me for every word. Singing was our place of connection.

Singing binds people together and invites us into an experience that is beyond ourselves. God's people have long used song for storytelling, worship, and praise. Miriam sang and danced after God's people passed safely through the Red Sea; the psalms are all songs and cover the range of human emotions. In Zephaniah 3, God's people sing God's praises for taking away judgment and promising to be with them, a typical scripture song. What's different here is that God sings back—loudly! (Imagine that! What does it sound like? Does God prefer hip-hop or classical, folk songs or jazz?)

Yet the point of music is to move us beyond it. Singing creates a holy space of connection, and a place for God to connect with us. On days when we don't know what we're doing, or can't remember who we are, God's presence breaks into our lives—sometimes in words, sometimes in song.

Prayer

Eternal Song, thank you for the music that touches our lives. Keep us connected to you and to each other. Amen.