

gathered
into one

DEVOTIONS FOR LENT
2024

 AUGSBURG FORTRESS

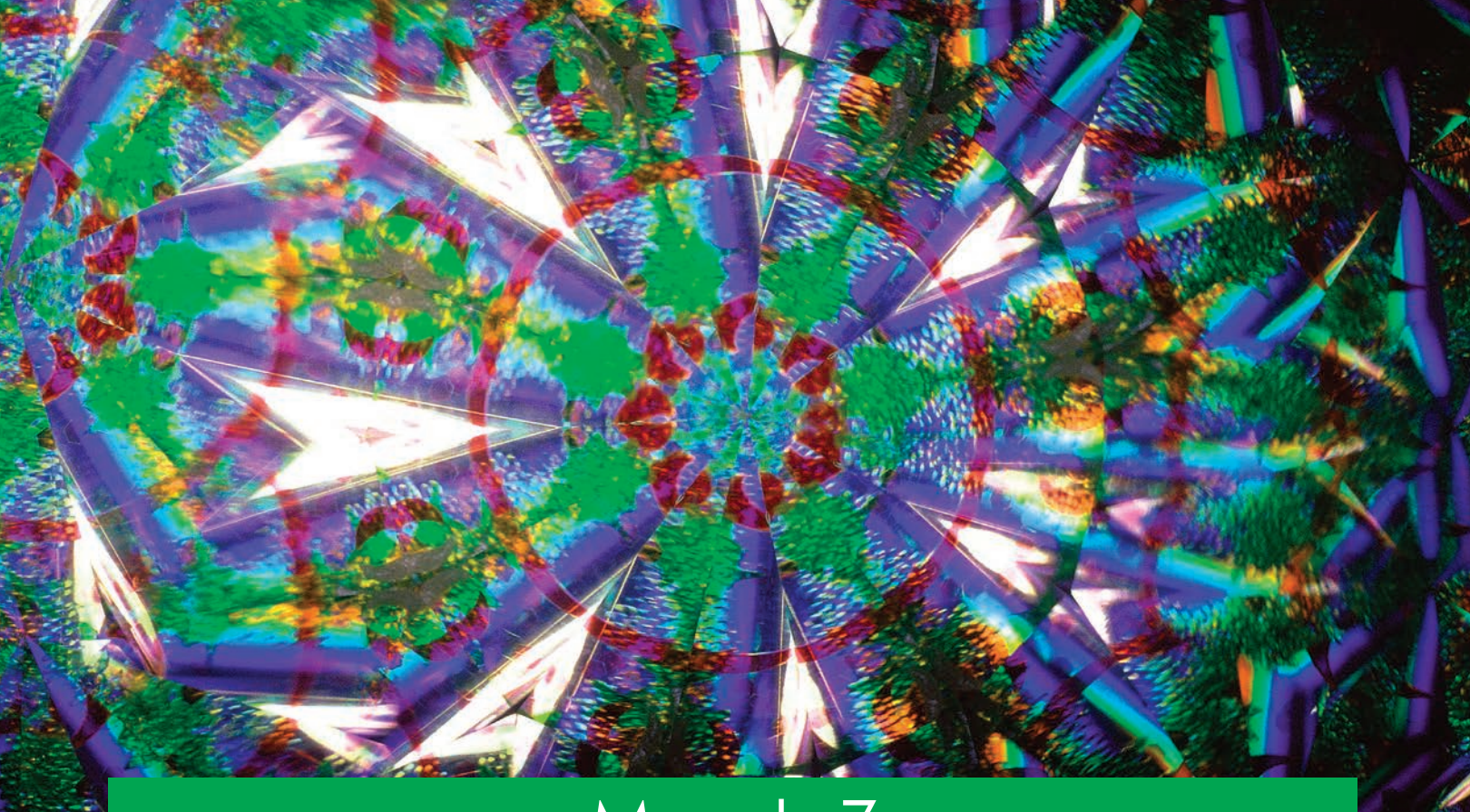
Minneapolis

Welcome

Gathered into One provides daily devotions for each day from Ash Wednesday to the Resurrection of Our Lord/Vigil of Easter (traditionally known as Holy Saturday). Devotions begin with an evocative image and a brief passage from 1 Corinthians. The writers then bring their diverse voices and pastoral wisdom to the texts with quotations to ponder, reflections, and prayers.

Portions of 1 Corinthians appear in the Revised Common Lectionary during each lectionary year. The apostle Paul writes this letter to the church in Corinth after hearing of quarreling and divisions among the people. He teaches the Corinthians that each person has a unique set of gifts from the Holy Spirit, given for the common good, and reminds them that the church is the body of Christ, joined together with one bread, one cup, one baptism, one God, and one Spirit. This theme of unity amid diversity is as timely now as it was when Paul wrote to the Corinthians.

During this journey through Lent to the Easter feast, may we celebrate the diversity among us as well our unity in Christ.



March 7

1 Corinthians 12:14-15, 18

The body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot would say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. . . . But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose.

To ponder

This is Christ’s body, broken and blest.

Feed us with mercy and love.

We are Christ’s body, broken and blest.

Heal us and make us one.

–ACS 967

Unity in diversity

Our bodies are incredible. Your heart beats and your lungs breathe your entire life, without you consciously thinking about it. Eyes are masterful instruments that refract light. Many people blink every three to five seconds. The tongue has 8,000 tastebuds. You have 100,000 miles of blood vessels. Everything works together to make possible all the things you do.

Paul pictures the church as a body, the body of Christ. When the church functions as it is meant to do, the many parts do not try to one-up or criticize each other. The foot doesn't see itself as less important than the hand. The church needs all the parts to contribute their gifts and work together as one.

What would happen if all the hands went to one church and all the feet went to another? Ditto eyes and ears. In a polarized society, we are at risk of that today. The problem Paul sees in Corinth is still with us.

God creates a kaleidoscope of people and gifts. Our differences are a strength, not a weakness, when we listen to one another and learn how to work together.

Prayer

We give you thanks, O God, for the great diversity in the world. Help us to love all the people you place in our path, and teach us to work together, as the body of Christ. Amen.



March 15

1 Corinthians 15:3-5

I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.

To ponder

To be grown, fed, delivered—God put faith in a body.
—Cole Arthur Riley, *This Here Flesh*

The cross way

Jesus didn't come to be a great king of history. He wasn't born to be prince over an earthly realm. He wasn't born to be great: he was born to be good. He was born, he lived, and he died to show that the goodness of God is for all people—not just the rich, not just the righteous, not just the powerful. Jesus chose what was good for the entire world, even though it led to his death.

With Jesus, the symbol of an instrument of torture and humiliation and death is transformed. The cross becomes a symbol of life and is repurposed as the way God wants to be known in the world. It is transformed into a sign of divine love that holds nothing back. Jesus received the worst that we had to offer: our selfishness, our fear, the broken mess we've made of our lives. Jesus transforms that too into something beautiful and precious for us to hand off to future generations—we are chosen, beloved children of God.

Prayer

Jesus, help us to see where you are transforming evil into good, and to hand off that good news to others. Amen.