

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. ~ Romans 12:2

Dear Friends,

Are you ready to move toward transformation? Are you ready to listen for good news in seemingly impossible spaces, even as a divided people and planet? Are you ready to set Lenten intentions, even with this year's challenges? Ready, even with some good reasons to wait a little longer to begin?

The story of Lent is a story of messy middles. Jesus is on the road, but he's not there yet. Jesus is telling stories, but the crowds don't understand. Jesus is leading a parade, but it's not the one they expected. Jesus is risen, but the disciples can't forget the cross. The story of Lent, the story of our faith, is a story of messy middles and nuanced surprises.

This year, we're letting the Gospel of Luke guide us through Lent. This worship series flows through several familiar stories—the Good Samaritan, Mary and Martha, the fruitless fig tree, the Lost Sheep, Zacchaeus, and more. Many of these stories are well-known and hold significance in pop culture, church history, politics, and everything in between.

As our series authors studied these scriptures, they were struck by how Jesus' ministry disrupted the established social, political, and religious divides of his time. Jesus intentionally emphasized the radical, inclusive, and surprising love of God. When we study these stories in their historical and cultural context, we see how they mirror the divisions many of us experience in our families, churches, and communities today.

Our theme, “Everything In Between,” invites us to navigate the polarities in our lives with more faith, intention, and openness to be transformed. You will see that each week explores two supposed binaries, like “faith & works” or “rest & growth,” or “grief & hope.” We often consider these ideas to be opposing. However, as we explore these concepts within the scriptures, we will begin to see a full spectrum instead of black and white. We will find that God is present in between.

And so, this season, we invite you to look beyond black and white binaries and easy answers. We encourage you to notice the contradictions that define our lives, but also imagine where God is meeting us beyond the categories we create. This Lent, we're trusting that God shows up in shades of gray, rainbow hues, and everywhere in between.

Just as despite their good intentions, the disciples didn't quite grasp the commitment and urgency of the type of discipleship Jesus expects, people today tend to use all kinds of excuses to delaying taking action toward the kingdom work that we as Christians are called to do.

Are any of your actions misaligned with your intentions?

Are there any actions toward kingdom-building that you (or we) have avoided?

This Lent we will be practicing aligning our intentions with our actions.

- Start off the month by **helping with the Lenten Pancake breakfast on Saturday, March 1st.**

Proceeds will go to the Blessing Box, making our community closer to the kingdom God envisions.

Helpers arrive at 8 am, Diners from 9 -11:00.

- **Come on Ash Wednesday, March 5th at noon or 6 pm to receive ashes.** Set your intentions at the burning bowl at 6:00.
- **Sign-up for the Zoom book study**, Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time. Meetings **Thursdays at 7:30 pm for six weeks, starting March 6th.**
- **Invite EVERYONE you know or meet to church on Sunday, March 9th to ‘Fill the House with Love’.**

We will be celebrating milestones, installing officers, listening to special music, and sharing second Sunday fellowship treats after worship. **Let's act on our intentions by showing we are truly a community that welcomes all.**

Lent is a season of transformation that ends in a resurrected life if we are open to it.

Join us as we travel with Jesus to the cross and beyond during this holy season.

Blessings,

Pastor Gaye