



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH

YOUR  
ANNUAL  
SPIRITUAL

LENTEN SMALL  
GROUPS 2020



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# WELCOME TO LENT

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The season of Lent is a time of prayer, fasting and self-examination in preparation for the celebration of the resurrection of the Lord at Easter. It is a period of 40 days – like the flood of Genesis, Moses’ sojourn at Mount Sinai, Elijah’s journey to Mount Horeb, Jonah’s call to Ninevah to repent and Jesus’ time of testing in the wilderness. (The Sundays in Lent are not counted in this reckoning of the time between Ash Wednesday and Easter, as every Lord’s Day is a celebration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.)

Therefore, at the beginning of Lent, we are reminded that our possessions, our rulers, our empires, our projects, our families and even our lives do not last forever. “You are dust, and to dust you shall return” (Genesis 3:19). In Lent we try to pry loose our fingers, one by one, from presumed securities and plunge us into unknown baptismal waters, waters that turn out to be not only our death tomb but surprisingly our womb of life. Rather than falling back into nothingness, we fall back on everlasting arms. Death? How can we fear what we have already undergone in baptism? It is the power of the resurrection on the horizon ahead that draws us into repentance toward the cross and tomb

This Lenten study hopes to help you take a deeper look at your life so that you may be drawn back to the light of God's grace and presence.

# BIBLE STUDY

Each small group will begin with a bible study.

We will use the

## **Lambeth Bible Study Method.**

Begin each session using this bible study method with the week's scripture. Here is how it works:

### **Opening Prayer:**

O Blessed Lord, who caused all Holy Scripture to be written for our learning. Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that we may embrace and hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our savior Jesus Christ.

Amen

1. One person reads passage slowly.
2. Each person identifies the word or phrase that catches their attention
3. Each shares the word or phrase around the group
4. Another person reads the passage slowly (from a different translation if possible).
5. Each person identifies where this passage touches their life today
6. Passage is read a third time (another reader and translation if possible).
7. Each person names or writes "From what I've heard and shared, what do I believe God wants me to do or be? Is God inviting me to change in any way?"
8. Each person shares their answer.
9. Each prays for the person on their right.

**Close with the Lord's Prayer.**

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# FIRST SUNDAY: HEART

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## PSALM 51

Have mercy on me, O God,  
according to your steadfast love;  
according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.  
Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.  
For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.  
Against you, you alone, have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight, so that you  
are justified in your sentence and blameless when you pass judgment.  
Indeed, I was born guilty, a sinner when my mother conceived me.  
You desire truth in the inward being;  
therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.  
Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;  
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.  
Let me hear joy and gladness;  
let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.  
Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.  
Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
and put a new and right spirit within me.  
Do not cast me away from your presence,  
and do not take your holy spirit from me.  
Restore to me the joy of your salvation,  
and sustain in me a willing spirit.  
Then I will teach transgressors your ways,  
and sinners will return to you.  
Deliver me from bloodshed, O God, O God of my salvation,  
and my tongue will sing aloud of your deliverance.  
O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.  
For you have no delight in sacrifice;  
if I were to give a burnt offering, you would not be pleased.  
The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit;  
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.  
Do good to Zion in your good pleasure;  
rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, then you will delight in right sacrifices,  
in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings;  
then bulls will be offered on your altar.

## HEART DISCUSSION

- In scripture, our hearts are compared to the heart of God. What does it mean then to have a clean heart?
- Are there things we can do that will contribute to having a clean heart?
- What in your life pulls you away from the light of Christ?
- What can you say no to or yes to that will lead to a closer relationship with Christ?
- Is there a Lenten discipline you would like to take up or let go of with the help of this group?
- Offer a prayer for the Lenten disciplines of all in the group.

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# SECOND SUNDAY: EARS

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## EXODUS 19:7-9A, 16-19

So Moses came, summoned the elders of the people, and set before them all these words that the Lord had commanded him. The people all answered as one: "Everything that the Lord has spoken we will do." Moses reported the words of the people to the Lord. Then the Lord said to Moses, "I am going to come to you in a dense cloud, in order that the people may hear when I speak with you and so trust you ever after."

On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, as well as a thick cloud on the mountain, and a blast of a trumpet so loud that all the people who were in the camp trembled. Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God. They took their stand at the foot of the mountain. Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke, because the Lord had descended upon it in fire; the smoke went up like the smoke of a kiln, while the whole mountain shook violently. As the blast of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses would speak and God would answer him in thunder.

## EARS DISCUSSION

- In the Exodus text, what are all the ways that God speaks to Moses?
- When have you felt farthest from God? When have you felt that it was difficult to hear God speak? Has there been a time in your life where you felt God was silent?
- Are there times in your life when you have heard God speak or felt close to God? What were those experiences like?
- Are there ways you could be a better listener for God speaking into your life? What are they?
- Is it easier for us to hear God in the tough times of life--the cloud, the wind, and the storm? Or is it easier to hear God in the quiet times when we seek God out--prayer, worship, or Sabbath time?
- Offer a prayer for the person to your right; being sure to ask for ears that can hear the Lord speak.

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# THIRD SUNDAY: EYES

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## 2 CORINTHIANS 6:1-12

As we work together with him, we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain. For he says, "At an acceptable time I have listened to you, and on a day of salvation I have helped you." See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation!

We are putting no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, but as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; in honor and dishonor, in ill repute and good repute.

We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; as unknown, and yet are well known; as dying, and see—we are alive; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything. We have spoken frankly to you Corinthians; our heart is wide open to you. There is no restriction in our affections, but only in yours.

## EYES DISCUSSION

- In the passage from 2 Corinthians, Paul describes maintaining a Christ-like attitude and ethic of care, even while experiencing incredible difficulties? Are you able to practice your best faith when you are in the midst of difficulty? Why or why not?
- How often do we experience people from difficult circumstances or people who are markedly different than us? How do we respond? Do we see them as a child of God or as other?
- Our faith tells us that God is the source of all creation. How can we start to see other people as God's beloved creation? What practical tools or ideas might help?
- Offer a prayer for the person to your left; being sure to ask for eyes that see as the Lord sees.

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# FOURTH SUNDAY: TONGUE

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## JAMES 3:2-12

For all of us make many mistakes. Anyone who makes no mistakes in speaking is perfect, able to keep the whole body in check with a bridle.

If we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we guide their whole bodies. Or look at ships: though they are so large that it takes strong winds to drive them, yet they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great exploits. How great a forest is set ablaze by a small fire!

And the tongue is a fire. The tongue is placed among our members as a world of iniquity; it stains the whole body, sets on fire the cycle of nature, and is itself set on fire by hell. For every species of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by the human species, but no one can tame the tongue—a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse those who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing.

My brothers and sisters, this ought not to be so. Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and brackish water? Can a fig tree, my brothers and sisters, yield olives, or a grapevine figs? No more can salt water yield fresh.

## TONGUE DISCUSSION

- Describe a time when you have been encouraged by someone's words.
- Describe a time when you have been hurt by another person's words.
- When does your tongue get the best of you? What are the circumstances in which you find it difficult to speak a good word?
- If you were to take a close look at all the things you say in a day, would you say you offer words more as a blessing or as a curse?
- Offer a prayer for the whole of our church and community. Pray for the right use of the tongue in each of our lives and in our society as a whole.

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# FIFTH SUNDAY: LUNGS

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## ROMANS 8:1-11

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and to deal with sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, so that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law—indeed it cannot, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you.

## LUNGS DISCUSSION

- Paul considers anything not aligned with God to be of the "flesh." In modern terms, what would you name as "things of the flesh?" What does our society value that God most likely does not value?
- What does it look like to be led by the Spirit, for you? How would your orientation to your day change if it were Spirit-led?
- Offer a prayer for each person in the group. Ask that each person is able to live lives filled with the Spirit.

# RESOURCES USED FOR THIS STUDY

Some material used in this study is adapted from  
the PCUSA denominational resources found at  
[pcusa.org](http://pcusa.org)



## FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH HUNTSVILLE, ALABAMA

*Rooted in Scripture, United in Christ,  
Reaching Our in Faith*

