Hosea 11:4. *I led them with cords of human kindness, with bands of love. I was to them like those who lift infants to their cheeks. I bent down to them and fed them.*

Ps 107:33-43, 108:1-6(7-13) * 33 | Hosea 11:1-9 | Acts 22:17-29 | Luke 6:27-38

When my grandson was young, I loved watching his face light up when his mother or father lifted him up high, then swung him in tight, held him close, and nuzzled his neck and chest. They had distinct ways of embracing him and, of course, various motivations, but each time, my grandson acted so surprised—and pleased. He'd broadcast his most loving sounds along with some of his biggest smiles. His growing legs would stretch out, and his small feet would arch and reach; he was so excited and yet so comforted.

God's love for Israel is like the love my grandson receives—pure, undiminished, and freely given. I hope we react in the same way, with excitement, smiles, and a profound sense of comfort.

PRAY for the Diocese of The Murray (Australia)

MOVING FORWARD: *How do you respond to God's love?*

Habakkuk 2:4. *Look at the proud! Their spirit is not right in them, but the righteous live by their faith.*

Ps 137 *or* Lamentations 3:19-26 * 37:1-10 | Lamentations 1:1-6 *or* Habakkuk 1:1-4; 2:1-4 | 2 Timothy 1:1-14 | Luke 17:5-10

We've been blessed to have lived in several states and have always been fortunate to find an Episcopal church to call home.

Over the years, when I've talked with lay leaders and clergy about how our churches function, we routinely land on those humble, righteous members who just make things happen. These are, of course, the members of the altar guild and the ushers but also the folks who clean up after fellowship events and those who file the choir music. The righteous include the people who arrive early and shovel snow, open the doors, repair the dishwasher, take out the trash, call the missing, take the bulletins to the shut-ins, and listen while others, well, rant. Sometimes they're officially part of a ministry team, but many times, they are just humble, righteous community members extending their faith. In Luke, Jesus extols just such humble service.

PRAY for the Anglican Church of Canada

MOVING FORWARD: *Who do you witness living by their faith? Write them a note of thanksgiving today.*

Luke 6:40. *A disciple is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully qualified will be like the teacher.*

Ps 106:1-18 * 106:19-48 | Hosea 14:1-9 | Acts 22:30—23:11 | Luke 6:39-49

As Boy Scout leaders, one of our objectives was to encourage and help the scouts move from the rank of scout through tenderfoot and second class to first-class scout within a year of their joining the troop. The understanding was that what they would learn and master in that year through hiking, camping, cooking, patrol organization, service projects, troop meetings, courts of honor, and other special events would prepare them to move from students to teachers.

Seeing these young men gain confidence in their abilities and eventually take on leadership positions in the troop and in their school and other activities was always uplifting. Similarly, as a manager in business, I found my job infinitely more rewarding when I could mentor employees so that they could gain enough mastery to teach others. So, as Jesus would have us understand, the answer to whether we are fully qualified to teach is simple. Yes, I am. Yes, we are.

PRAY for the Diocese of Muyinga (Burundi)

MOVING FORWARD: *When have you been a teacher in the faith? When have you been a student?*

Acts 23:16. *Now the son of Paul's sister heard about the ambush; so he went and gained entrance to the barracks and told Paul.*

Ps [120], 121, 122, 123 * 124, 125, 126, [127] | Micah 1:1-9 | Acts 23:12-24 | Luke 7:1-17

Amid the intrigue surrounding Paul and a plot to kill him, we meet his nephew, the son of his sister. Wait, what? Paul had a sister? What about the rest of his family?

My wife often quotes her mother, "Who are his people?" This is important because who your people are can say something about who you are. And like Paul and his nephew, who your people are can provide an early alert system.

For us today, that system might be asking hard questions: Are you sure that's the right decision? Do you really want to go that far away to college? Are you going down the wrong path?

Our people often have our backs, sometimes without us even knowing it. Perhaps a relative notices you are struggling and prays daily for you. Or maybe a family member puts in a good word with a prospective employee or community member. In Paul's case, with so much on the line, his relative's intervention was a lifesaver.

PRAY for the Diocese of Myitkyina (Myanmar)

MOVING FORWARD: *Is there a family member who could use your support? How can you help?*

WEDNESDAY, October 5

Micah 2:12. *I will surely gather all of you, O Jacob, I will gather the survivors of Israel; I will set them together like sheep in a fold, like a flock in its pasture; it will resound with people.*

Ps 119:145-176 * 128, 129, 130 | Micah 2:1-13 | Acts 23:23-35 | Luke 7:18-35

Today, with so many people on the move because of wars and political turmoil, climate extremes, lack of economic opportunities, religious intolerance, persecution, injustice, and more, these lines from Micah offer some hope. The litany of societal wrongs in biblical times—evil deeds, jealousy, theft, oppression, bitterness—are familiar to us today. And our hope, like theirs, is certainly in the Lord.

Setting today's refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants "like sheep in a fold" calls on us to enact God's saving hope for his people, to be the light in the darkness. Like the survivors of Israel, these flocks need pastures where they can flourish and resound. What might this look like? Temporary shelter in unused safe spaces? Community meals after Sunday services? Regular clothing drives? Invitations to join us at a community, club, or social meetings? We can start with small acts, but the key is that we start.

PRAY for the Diocese of Nagpur (India)

MOVING FORWARD: *Do you know about the work of Episcopal Migration Ministries? Research and explore how you might help.*

THURSDAY, October 6

William Tyndale

Psalm 131:1-2. *O Lord, I am not proud; I have no haughty looks. I do not occupy myself with great matters or with things that are too hard for me.*

Ps 131, 132, [133] * 134, 135 | Micah 3:1-8 | Acts 24:1-23 | Luke 7:36-50

For the past several years I've researched my and my wife's family histories, discovering and documenting lives, relationships, high points of success, and very low points of slavery, poverty, and medical distress. Common threads weaving through these African American experiences are humility, hard work, interdependence of family and neighbors, and the search for a safer, more rewarding life for children and grandchildren.

There doesn't seem to have been the space, most times, to occupy themselves with "great matters" though things that were hard seemed to have been the regular pattern of many lives. What becomes clearer and clearer to me as I research these lives is that the Lord walks with us through very difficult times with seemingly no end to the troubles we're facing.

Jesus makes the point of eating with sinners because we're all sinners. No need for pride or haughty looks; just faith in our loving Lord.

PRAY for the Diocese of Nairobi (Kenya)

MOVING FORWARD: *What are the patterns of faith and life in your family history? Do some research or talk to your elders to learn more.*

FRIDAY, October 7 *[Birgitta of Sweden]*

Luke 8:14. *As for what fell among the thorns, these are the ones who hear; but as they go on their way, they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature.*

Ps 140, 142 * 141, 143:1-11(12) | Micah 3:9—4:5 | Acts 24:24—25:12 | Luke 8:1-15

I believe Jesus would appreciate the signs I've seen at some church exits, such as, "You are about to enter the mission field," or one I saw recently, "The church is outside these walls." Jesus shares the parable of the sower with his disciples, and he adamantly tells them, "Let anyone with ears to hear listen!" He seems to be saying, folks, this is important. But you know how it is; getting to the root of parables can be tricky. So, Jesus gives examples: "The seed is the word of God," and in Matthew, "go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you."

Now imagine that after his disciples asked again what the parable of the sower meant, Jesus had been able to give another example by holding up the sign: "You are now entering the mission field, bless you!"

PRAY for the Diocese of Nakuru (Kenya)

MOVING FORWARD: *When you leave the church this month, practice saying to yourself, "I am now entering the mission field." How do those words change your perspective about what you should be doing in the world?*

SATURDAY, October 8

Luke 8:18. *Then pay attention to how you listen; for to those who have, more will be given; and from those who do not have, even what they seem to have will be taken away.*

Ps 137:1-6(7-9), 144 * 104 | Micah 5:1-4, 10-15 | Acts 25:13-27 | Luke 8:16-25

When I've heard this reading from the Gospel of Luke in the past, I focused on the injustice that I perceived. How can it be fair that those who have little will lose what little they have? But as I prepared for this meditation, I began to spend time with the first part of verse 18: "Then pay attention to how you listen; for to those who have, more will be given."

Perhaps a key instruction here is about our growth and our potential for growth in Christ if we are invested in expanding our understanding. Maybe, just maybe, with better listening, we're equipping ourselves to carry forth what we're hearing and learning, better positioning ourselves to live the evangelism that we're being called to do. And it may be that we, who have listened a bit better, will walk alongside Christ as he shares with those who may not have listened as well at first.

PRAY for the Diocese of Nambale (Kenya)

MOVING FORWARD: *Are you listening? Or do you get stuck on other parts of scripture that seem confounding?*

Jeremiah 29:7. *But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.*

Ps. 66:1-11 * 111 | Jeremiah 29:1,4-7 *or* 2 Kings 5:1-3,7-15c
2 Timothy 2:8-15 | Luke 17:11-19

Early in my career, my wife and I moved four times in ten years: Georgia to Louisiana, Louisiana to Texas, Texas to New York, New York to Minnesota. While we certainly were not in exile, we must have intuited Jeremiah's good advice because we became citizens of wherever we moved, and we worked for the welfare of the places we lived. Along with finding work, my wife became familiar with our new locations; together, we located and joined Episcopal churches, and we volunteered and registered to vote. Because museums and cultural centers have always drawn us, we joined when we could or simply frequented programs and exhibits that interested us. We believed that our happiness in each new location came because we cared about where we were—not looking for the next move but making the most of where we were.

PRAY for the Province of Central Africa

MOVING FORWARD: *There's a saying: "Bloom where you are planted." How do the words of Jeremiah fit within that context? How might you seek the welfare of the place where you live?*

Luke 8:38-39a. *The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him; but Jesus sent him away, saying, "Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you."*

Ps 1, 2, 3 * 4, 7 | Micah 7:1-7 | Acts 26:1-23 | Luke 8:26-39

I greet my friend at church or Brotherhood of St. Andrew meetings or at our bimonthly coffee, and when I ask how he's doing, he often replies simply, "Better than I deserve." It's not trite, and he's not being a smart aleck. His response is sincere and appreciative. Among his other characteristics is his humble willingness to be present with those in and around the church, quietly setting an example, building a ramp, reinforcing steps, asking after another's health. Though he might argue with me, I think he's naming his sense of peace in Christ and in the world, declaring, as the man freed from the demons was told to do, to "return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you."

Underlying the gospels and other New Testament writings, the loving—and sometimes challenging—message from Jesus is to go, to go out and to declare.

PRAY for the Diocese of Namibia (Southern Africa)

MOVING FORWARD: *When was the last time you declared how much God has done for you? If it's been a while, commit to a new attitude of thankfulness for God's good work.*

TUESDAY, October 11

Philip

Jonah 1:3a. *But Jonah set out to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.*

Ps 5, 6 * 10, 11 | Jonah 1:1-17a | Acts 26:24—27:8 | Luke 8:40-56

The story of Jonah in the belly of the whale receives quite a lot of attention, but I find the beginning of this story fascinating. Jonah's initial reaction to God's instruction is to flee. It's a compelling narrative—and such a human response! What happens to us when we're confronted with a call for help? There's a process I'm not proud to say that I go through. I review the situation, look at the time I have to respond, and weigh how involved I want to be.

Maybe Jonah had the same mental conversation and decided that this was not a mission for him. He went so far as to try to remove himself from the situation physically. Yet, God was in control of all aspects of the situation. God was clearly determined that the people of Nineveh repent and that Jonah would be the messenger for such a transformation. I wonder how God continues to work in my life, especially when I've come to a conclusion contrary to God's wishes. Thankfully, I haven't needed a whale to help me change my ways. At least, not yet!

PRAY for the Diocese of Namirembe (Uganda)

MOVING FORWARD: *What's your first instinct when you hear God's call? To flee like Jonah or stay and proclaim the good news?*

WEDNESDAY, October 12

[Edith Cavell]

Luke 9:16-17. *And taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke them, and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd. And all ate and were filled. What was leftover was gathered up, twelve baskets of broken pieces.*

Ps 119:1-24 * 12, 13, 14 | Jonah 1:17—2:10 | Acts 27:9-26 | Luke 9:1-17

This miracle of Jesus reminds me of the story I used to read to my son when he was young. In the old folktale of Stone Soup, the community comes together to add ingredients to the soup. What starts simply as a stone boiling in water becomes a rich feast for all to share. This tale echoes our Christian duty to share what we can with our community.

Just as with the tale of Stone Soup, our gifts are not all the same. Some have carrots; others can give seasonings or chicken or beans. Some bring the gift of teaching; others, listening. Some are gifted in hospitality; others have financial resources to support the ministry.

Jesus calls us to reach out and engage, sharing not only our food but also hospitality, prayers, and other talents and treasures with those we meet.

PRAY for the Missionary Diocese of Nampula (Mozambique)

MOVING FORWARD: *How does the tale of Stone Soup fit within your understanding of the Christian response? What other folktales resonate with Jesus's teachings?*

THURSDAY, October 13

Psalm 18:1. *I love you, O Lord my strength.*

Ps 18:1-20 * 18:21-50 | Jonah 3:1—4:11 | Acts 27:27-44 | Luke 9:18-27

This is a mighty psalm of distress, dangers, threats, tribulations, and ultimate salvation. David addresses this psalm to the Lord after being delivered from the hands of his enemies, especially King Saul. In the second verse, the psalmist sings, "My God, my rock in whom I put my trust, my shield, the horn of my salvation, and my refuge." My mother often said that the Lord was a rock for her, a sure and steady hope for her (and our) troubles.

We all look for a port in a storm. When we're tossed to and fro by demands at work and home, by world events, injustices, and personal pain, we look for quieter waters. We feel adrift and seek a safe place to anchor. David was thankful to have survived his strong enemies, and in this glorious psalm, he praises God for being his stronghold and haven. We all face dangers and snares in our lives, but David's words remind us that God will provide people and places to welcome us and provide safe spaces. And we should go forth and share that good news with others.

PRAY for the Diocese of Nandyal (India)

MOVING FORWARD: *Read all of Psalm 18. How does it speak to you today?*

FRIDAY, October 14

Samuel Schereschewsky

Psalm 22:21. *I will declare your Name to my brethren; in the midst of the congregation I will praise you.*

Ps 16, 17 * 22 | Ecclesiasticus 1:1-10, 18-27 | Acts 28:1-16 | Luke 9:28-36

Perhaps it's not surprising that as I've gotten older, I find myself thinking I have some wisdom to share with younger people. Of course, this starts with my son, but I realize that sometimes our children hear the same message we've struggled to communicate more clearly when it comes from some other elder.

My hope—for my son, his wife, friends, and other young people—is that they're hearing collected wisdom from sacred texts, historical observations and writings, music, art, social science, and other dependable resources. It's easy to believe that technology changes all things, yet deeper reflections on the Old and New Testaments unveil situations, challenges, and victories already experienced. For this generation and the next ones, these sources of wisdom hold responses to problems that seem so new.

And all the while, I will declare and praise God's name, praying that the wisdom I've found in my years may take hold in the hearts of others.

PRAY for the Diocese of Nasik (India)

MOVING FORWARD: *From whom do you seek wisdom? Who do you see declaring God's name in your midst?*

Luke 9:48. *Whoever welcomes this child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me; for the least among all of you is the greatest.*

Ps 20, 21:1-7(8-14) * 110:1-5(6-7), 116, 117 | Ecclesiasticus 3:17-31
Acts 28:17-31 | Luke 9:37-50

So, it's time for Jesus to settle the "who's the greatest argument" among his disciples, and what he does is refocus them on the mission.

Isn't this one of the traps we set for ourselves, pushing to the front of the line, whether for attention or material gain? Puffing out our chests to be seen and to receive praise? But with this simple statement, Jesus deflates any of those attempts to make ourselves great and instead issues a simple but profound statement that greatness comes in the welcome of "this child." I like to think of this child as the neighbor, refugee, newcomer to our pews, and all the people considered "other" for whatever reason.

If we allow our disciple-selves to learn from the great teacher, we too may be more aware of welcoming the child in Jesus's name in all generations.

PRAY for the Diocese of Nasir (South Sudan)

MOVING FORWARD: *Did you know that Forward Movement has an active ministry in providing free resources to prisons, hospitals, and nursing homes? Learn more and support this work at forwardmovement.org/donate.*

2 Timothy 3:16. *All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.*

Ps. 119:97-104 * 121 | Jeremiah 31:27-34 *or* Genesis 32:22-31
2 Timothy 3:14—4:5 | Luke 18:1-8

I took a class on the Old Testament last year, and among my many learnings was appreciating that God inspires all scripture. Some passages and stories may be easier to read than others; some words may instantly connect with us, bathing us in comfort. Other words jar and even offend. Yet, as this passage from 2 Timothy reminds us, scripture is "useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness."

Our Old Testament professor often suggested that a particular story might not be intended to glorify some action but to warn readers, then and now, of behaviors and situations to avoid. We might imagine ourselves as the victim and wonder what help might rescue and sustain us. And perhaps, along with visualizing ourselves in the story, we might draw inspiration for helping others.

PRAY for Iglesia Anglicana de la Region Central de America

MOVING FORWARD: *What stories in the Old Testament bring you comfort? Which ones are hard to hear? What lessons can you draw from both?*

Luke 9:62. *Jesus said to him, "No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."*

Ps 25 * 9, 15 | Ecclesiasticus 4:20—5:7 | Revelation 7:1-8 | Luke 9:51-62

My wife and I grew up in Georgia and New York City, respectively, separated by more than 900 miles. Yet, our parents were of one mind about the absolute value of keeping the commitments one makes, not just to God, but to anyone or anything. They took to heart the words from Ecclesiastes 5:4: "When you make a vow to God, do not delay fulfilling it; for he has no pleasure in fools. Fulfill what you vow."

We often reminded our son that he was to see things through, especially when the going got tough: orchestra, scouts, swim team. It is certainly easy to let something slide down and then off one's to-do list, to drag one's feet and look back wistfully.

Among the reasons I always enjoy parish workdays is not merely seeing folks turn out to help refresh our campus but because we are showing each other and modeling for our children the meaning of commitment. Who wouldn't rather watch "the game" than sweep the walkways? But we're reminded to fulfill what we vow.

PRAY for the Diocese of Natal (Southern Africa)

MOVING FORWARD: *How are you doing with fulfilling your commitments?*

Luke 4:17. *And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written.*

Ps 147 *or* 147:1-7 | Ecclesiasticus 38:1-4,6-10,12-14 | 2 Timothy 4:5-13 | Luke 4:14-21

While I don't mistake my turns as lector for that day in the synagogue when Jesus read from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah, I do feel called on those Sundays to share God's Word as clearly and as earnestly as I can. On those occasions, I imagine that I'm teaching as Jesus was, reading from passages and words generations older. I envision the listeners as attentive to the words today as they were to Jesus and his readings centuries ago.

Somehow, the years collapse, and the relevancy, whether to the world's events or individual lives, shines through with truth and purpose. Today's reading ends as Jesus finishes Isaiah's words: "and he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him." It's my prayer once I or anyone else finishes reading that those in attendance will quietly breathe in what's been said.

PRAY for the Area Mission in Navajoland (The Episcopal Church)

MOVING FORWARD: *Have you considered the ministry of lay reader? Talk to your priest about this possible calling.*

WEDNESDAY, October 19

Henry Martyn

Psalm 119:41. *Let your loving-kindness come to me, O Lord, and your salvation according to your promise.*

Ps 38 * 119:25-48 | Ecclesiasticus 7:4-14 | Revelation 8:1-13 | Luke 10:17-24

We often read in the scriptures words of love and assurance. So much of Psalm 119 is about the law of God, yet in verse 41, the psalmist recalls the loving-kindness of the Lord. In the next verse, the psalm proclaims, "I trust in your words."

I find that confidence in Jesus mirrors that sentiment. Jesus walks with us at all times, when we are filled with joy and wrung out with grief. He's the light in our darkness, the friend when we're friendless, the hand we reach out to, and the hand that reaches out to us. He's the model of all that the law encompasses, and he's the stretch beyond the law. Confidence, comfort, assurance, and salvation are woven into the psalm and into our relationship with Jesus.

PRAY for the Diocese of Ndokwa (Nigeria)

MOVING FORWARD: *Psalm 119, the longest psalm in the psalter, is often regarded as a song of praise for God's law. How does reading the psalm through the lens that God's law is love impact your understanding of the psalm?*

THURSDAY, October 20

Luke 10:35. *The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, "Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend."*

Ps 37:1-18 * 37:19-42 | Ecclesiasticus 10:1-18 | Revelation 9:1-12 | Luke 10:25-37

The parable of the Good Samaritan is well-known and seems a favorite of faith formation leaders, parents, and clergy in many places. I enjoyed a sermon by Presiding Bishop Michael Curry a couple of years ago at a verger conference where he inserted the names of prominent politicians as examples of those who might pass by if the wounded man was from a different political party. In this day of such uncivil discourse, it was quite eye-opening.

Yet I also find excellent teaching in the part of the verse that doesn't always receive much attention: the Samaritan *took* the wounded man to an innkeeper, *paid* the innkeeper to take care of the man, and then *promised* to make up any shortfall. Did the Samaritan's actions show mercy? They certainly did, but he went further, with commitment, action, and a promise of follow-up. He took it on himself to be the salve that the wounded man needed—not just a good guy who bandaged him up, but a friend. He loved him as he loved himself.

PRAY for the Diocese of Nebbi (Uganda)

MOVING FORWARD: *When has someone gone the extra mile to help you?*

FRIDAY, October 21

Ecclesiasticus 11:3. *The bee is small among flying creatures, but what it produces is the best of sweet things.*

Ps 31 * 35 | Ecclesiasticus 11:2-20 | Revelation 9:13-21 | Luke 10:38-42

When I was in the workforce, my days started well before dawn, and after reviewing my to-do list, I set about my business. I was, I suppose you might say, busy as a bee. It was generally my intent to be done with the grunt work I had to do by the time my colleagues and supervisor arrived at work and to have completed my list of tasks by the time I ate lunch. The afternoon allowed time for reflection, polishing my work, and planning and ordering resources for future work. I don't think I thought consciously about it at the time, but in looking back, I see inspiration in this passage from Ecclesiasticus. Sometimes the smallest of acts, the seemingly insignificant patterns of behavior, can yield the sweetest of rewards. I did not know which part of my work would succeed, but I focused on fulfilling my responsibilities. I suppose I can thank my mother for instilling this ethic in me early. "Idle hands are the devil's workshop" was a favorite and oft-shared commandment of hers.

PRAY for the Diocese of Nebraska (The Episcopal Church)

MOVING FORWARD: *Read through this passage from Ecclesiasticus (Sirach in some Bible versions). It offers some good, straightforward advice on how to be a faithful follower.*

SATURDAY, October 22

Luke 11:9. *So I say to you, Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you.*

Ps 30, 32 * 42, 43 | Ecclesiasticus 15:9-20 | Revelation 10:1-11 | Luke 11:1-13

"Seek Ye First" was a favorite hymn in our parish, and though the choir provided leadership, this was one that parishioners, ushers, acolytes, and priests were not shy in raising their voices. The words are so instructive and comforting for us: "knock, and the door will be opened" provides the hope that we seek.

Today's reading from Luke also includes Jesus's response to a disciple's request that he teach them to pray. Jesus's answer to his disciple provides us with the basis for prayer used in Episcopal, Anglican, and most Christian denominations.

In Luke, Jesus is speaking to us, using practical words and examples we can trust. In both the Lord's Prayer and this verse, we learn to ask, communicate, seek, and talk with our God. Whether said or sung, these verses add a song to our hearts.

PRAY for the Diocese of Nelson (Aotearoa, New Zealand, and Polynesia)

MOVING FORWARD: *Sing "Seek Ye First" during your prayer time today. If possible, sing it loudly and with gusto!*

2 Timothy 4:17a. *But the Lord stood by me and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it.*

Ps. 65 * 84:1-6 | Joel 2:23-32 *or* Ecclesiasticus 35:12-17 *or* Jeremiah 14:7-10, 19-22 | 2 Timothy 4:6-8,16-18 | Luke 18:9-14

I am always inspired by the stories of everyday people who live lives committed to creating something better than what was there when they were born. Finding one's way in the world of relationships, work, housing, safety, and now, the constant threat of climate change is a huge challenge for us all. Faith certainly undergirds the journey for many, and we're assured of the Lord standing with us and giving us strength to continue leading lives which, while not perfect, may be an example to others. What of those without that faith? Who stands by them?

Again, reading about the lives of neighbors near and far, I'm convinced that our Lord is in all places at all times, and this love and presence make running the race just a bit easier for all.

PRAY for the Province de L'Eglise Anglicane Du Congo

MOVING FORWARD: *Pick one of the saints this month (listed at the top of some daily meditations) and research their lives. While their deeds may seem extraordinary, they were also ordinary people, living and breathing and navigating the challenges of life, just like each of us.*

1 Corinthians 15:11. *Whether then it was I or they, so we proclaim and so you have come to believe.*

Ps 1 | Acts 15:12-22a | 1 Corinthians 15:1-11 | Matthew 13:54-58

Paul teaches about Christ's resurrection, assuring those in Corinth of the number of people who have witnessed the risen Christ, first the apostles, then others, and lastly himself. He's become a witness and is going forth to carry that good news to others. As he gathers others to the faith, he urges them to continue to proclaim that good news to even more people.

Reading this reminds me of the outward ripples in still water when a stone is dropped into a pond. Have you ever watched to see how far the ripples travel in the pond? Or whether the ensuing circles travel in the same way? Now consider the ripples Paul created among those who would listen and those who came to believe. Follow those ripples all the way to our day. Can you imagine the ripples 2,000 years from now? We are called to help those ripples continue, to proclaim and share our belief in the risen Lord.

PRAY for the Diocese of Nevada (The Episcopal Church)

MOVING FORWARD: *If you are near a body of water, take a walk and drop a stone into the water. As you watch the ripples, say a prayer of thanksgiving for the reverberating message of Christ's love.*

TUESDAY, October 25 *[Tabitha]*

Luke 11:36. *If then your whole body is full of light, with no part of it in darkness, it will be as full of light as when a lamp gives you light with its rays.*

Ps 45 * 47,48| Ecclesiasticus 24:1-12 | Revelation 11:14-19 | Luke 11:27-36

Jesus's teaching here reminds me of various friends that my wife and I have known in churches we've belonged to over the years. These friends, different in so many ways, have this thing in common: they bear the light. Sometimes it's in their faces through their smiles or in the way their eyes always seem to light up. Sometimes it's the quiet confidence as they complete a church task at the altar or in a classroom or the kitchen. Other times, it's the embrace during the passing of the peace in the sanctuary, or, just as likely, the hug when you run into them in a Target store. Their bodies are full of light, seemingly with no part in darkness; they don't have fewer problems than the rest of us; they just seem to feel and share God's goodness, God's light, in all that they do.

PRAY for the Diocese of New Busa (Nigeria)

MOVING FORWARD: *Who do you know that is full of light? Lift them up in your prayers.*

WEDNESDAY, October 26 *Alfred*

Psalm 119:62. *At midnight I will rise to give you thanks, because of your righteous judgments.*

Ps 119:49-72 * 49, [53] | Ecclesiasticus 28:14-26 | Revelation 12:1-6 | Luke 11:37-52

For many years, I participated in "The Watch" at our church. This "watch" time recalls the night Jesus spent in the Garden of Gethsemane after the Last Supper and before his arrest.

When the church held "The Watch" observance, I would wake up hours before my normal rising, go to church, nod to whoever was in charge of the building, and then take my place silently in the sanctuary or chapel. For the next hour or so, my prayers and thoughts were the most focused that I experienced all year. I would lose track of time and not even consider how long I'd been in prayer or whether my knees were tired or my eyes were open or shut. I allowed my mind to wander among the saints in my life and the saints of old. I silently sang beloved lyrics in church hymns and psalms, and I remembered favorite passages and prayers from the Bible and the Book of Common Prayer. This long somber period before Good Friday encourages watchfulness and vigilance for our Lord and for ourselves.

PRAY for the Diocese of New Guinea Island (Papua New Guinea)

MOVING FORWARD: *What practices in your church bring you closer to God? You might consider trying something new as well.*

THURSDAY, October 27

Luke 12:6-7a. *Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten in God's sight. But even the hairs of your head are all counted.*

Ps 50 * [59, 60] *or* 103 | Ecclesiasticus 31:12-18, 25—32:2
Revelation 12:7-17 | Luke 11:53—12:12

One of my mother's favorite hymns was "His Eye Is on the Sparrow," and every now and then, she'd offer a quote from the song to make a point around the house with my sisters and me.

In adulthood, I began to tie this verse from Luke to that beautiful hymn. My faith journey has been richly blessed by recognizing how big God is and how majestic and timeless his works are. The concept that even the hairs on my head are counted inspires awe! Jesus teaches his disciples (and us) about how caring and loving God is, that no one is forgotten in God's sight. It was a welcome comfort to the disciples as they faced the Pharisees—and to us today.

PRAY for the Diocese of New Hampshire (The Episcopal Church)

MOVING FORWARD: *Listen to a recording of "His Eye Is on the Sparrow." How do the words inspire you?*

FRIDAY, October 28 — *Saint Simon and Saint Jude*

John 15:18. *If the world hates you, be aware that it hated me before it hated you.*

Ps 119:89-96 | Deuteronomy 32:1-4 | Ephesians 2:13-22 | John 15:17-27

I imagine that people held in slavery against their will, those who have been driven from their homes or lands for no reason other than greed, those who have been the victims of others' wars or crimes, and those who were and are constantly denied access to their needs to survive, must have felt or feel hated. Ancestors of mine surely must have wondered what they had done to deserve being enslaved or made to feel like second-class citizens after American slavery ended. Those whose countries of origin marked them as less valuable must have wondered where that hatred originated, where concepts of ethnic and racialized hatred sprang from and took root.

After Jesus says, "I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another," he says, "If the world hates you, be aware that it hated me before it hated you." This is our rallying cry to put the love our faith is built on—our love of Jesus—into practice next door, across the border, and into the world.

PRAY for the Diocese of New Jersey (The Episcopal Church)

MOVING FORWARD: *What concrete steps can you take to drive out hate and injustice?*

SATURDAY, October 29

James Hannington

Psalm 139:22. *Search me out, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my restless thoughts.*

Ps 55 * 138, 139:1-17(18-23) | Ecclesiasticus 35:1-17
Revelation 13:11-18 | Luke 12:32-48

It is humbling to know that one's heart and mind can be searched, and our real intent can be known. Even in the age of social media, with everyone knowing everything, we like to imagine we can still have our own secrets. But this psalm tells us that even our innermost thoughts and feelings are known to God. What do we do with that? Clean them up? Change them before we act on them? Pray about why we're having such thoughts? Or just let them ride?

I've been very conscious in praying the Daily Office to focus and shut down the wandering thoughts, good or bad. But I have so far not had the discipline to shut down wicked thoughts, even while I am generally able to prevent them from being actualized through my mouth. I have the feeling that stopping myself from verbalizing everything that runs through my head and heart is only possible with God's assistance. But I'm trying to flush those thoughts, so God doesn't have to help me so much.

PRAY for the Diocese of New Westminster (Canada)

MOVING FORWARD: *What is in your mind and heart that you'd like to shield from God? How can you ask God to cleanse you of those feelings?*

SUNDAY, October 30

21 Pentecost

Habakkuk 2:4. *Look at the proud! Their spirit is not right in them, but the righteous live by their faith.*

Ps. 119:137-144 * 32:1-8 | Habakkuk 1:1-4; 2:1-4 *or* Isaiah 1:10-18
2 Thessalonians 1:1-4,11-12 | Luke 19:1-10

The prophet complains that the people's cries and the prophet's cry aren't being heard; wrongdoing continues and stands uncorrected. Violence and destruction abound, and the law is not being followed. And, as if those things aren't bad enough, the wicked are not being punished.

The Lord listens, answers, and instructs. The Lord's reply ends in a straightforward, compassionate way: "Look at the proud! Their spirit is not right in them, but the righteous live by their faith." Over and over again, we're reminded of God's love and care for the humble, the meek, and those who are righteous and faithful. These people are not forgotten; in fact, they are held in the highest honor.

PRAY for Iglesia Anglicana de Chile

MOVING FORWARD: *Do the words of the prophet resonate with you? Do you feel unheard and abandoned? Look first to your own heart.*

MONDAY, October 31

Psalm 56:10. *In God the Lord, whose word I praise, in God I trust and will not be afraid, for what can mortals do to me?*

Ps 56, 57, [58] * 64, 65 | Ecclesiasticus 38:24-34 | Revelation 14:1-13 | Luke 12:49-59

In my third year of a program called Education for Ministry, I began praying the Daily Office. This practice grew out of discussions about the importance of talking with God and developing a spiritual discipline of regular prayer.

I've long been an early riser. Before I retired, I cherished avoiding Atlanta's morning rush hour as well as getting to work before anyone else. Now retired, I continue to wake up early, but these days, before I drink my coffee or take a short walk around the neighborhood, before anything else, I still my mind and sit with the Daily Office. I read the prayers aloud. I find praise within the words of scripture and the Book of Common Prayer collects. I truly pray for the "whole state of Christ's church," slowly naming people and situations, asking for help, and offering thanks. The words repeated in today's psalm, "whose word I praise" speak to me. My morning discipline surrounds me in words of praise.

PRAY for the Diocese of New York (The Episcopal Church)

MOVING FORWARD: *Commit to praying the Daily Office for the next week. You can find the text in the Book of Common Prayer, starting on page 35, or download the Forward Movement app.*

Prayers

O MERCIFUL CREATOR, your hand is open wide to satisfy the needs of every living creature: Make us always thankful for your loving providence; and grant that we, remembering the account that we must one day give, may be faithful stewards of your good gifts; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

—THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER

KEEP US, O LORD, from the vain strife of words, and grant us a constant profession of our faith. Preserve us in the way of truth, so that we may ever hold fast that which we professed when we were baptized into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and may give glory to thee, our Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, now and for evermore. *Amen.*

—SAINT AUGUSTINE'S PRAYER BOOK

KINDLE THE FIRE of thy love in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, that we may serve thee with an innocent body and please thee with a clean heart. *Amen.*

—SAINT AUGUSTINE'S PRAYER BOOK

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

August

Patricia Marks was ordained an Episcopal deacon in the Diocese of Georgia after she retired from teaching English at Valdosta State University. She loves writing and knitting and traveling with her astrophysicist husband. Read more of her writing at sisters-in-faith.org, a website commemorating deaconesses.

September

Lynne Jordal Martin works for a major news organization. A passionate Education for Ministry mentor, she serves on the vestry of Trinity Church Wall Street and the Forward Movement board. She lives with her family in Westchester County, New York, and worships at Christ Church in Greenwich, Connecticut.

October

Mallard W. Benton is a husband, father, grandfather, and friend who's retired and writes and volunteers in the Atlanta area. He and Althea have been married 42 years.

FOR TODAY

O God: Give me strength to live another day; Let me not turn coward before its difficulties or prove recreant to its duties; Let me not lose faith in other people; Keep me sweet and sound of heart, in spite of ingratitude, treachery, or meanness; Preserve me from minding little stings or giving them; Help me to keep my heart clean, and to live so honestly and fearlessly that no outward failure can dishearten me or take away the joy of conscious integrity; Open wide the eyes of my soul that I may see good in all things; Grant me this day some new vision of thy truth; Inspire me with the spirit of joy and gladness; and make me the cup of strength to suffering souls; in the name of the strong Deliverer, our only Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. *Amen.*— Phillips Brooks

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