



# 2026 Lenten Devotionals

Written by friends and  
members of Burke UMC



## **Burke UMC Lenten Devotionals 2026**

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## Wednesday, February 18

Rev. Evelyn Archer-Taminger

*Matthew 6:6*

We come again to the season of Lent. We begin this 40-day journey with one of the quietest, humblest, holiest days of the Christian year: Ash Wednesday. If you asked someone, "What is your favorite holiday?" Ash Wednesday would likely not top the list. It is not flashy; there are no presents or feasts or pageants to look forward to. In fact, this somber day begins a season focused on reflection, personal accountability, and discipline.

But in a world of hustle and noise, is this not what we so desperately need? Ash Wednesday, and the season of Lent which follows it, are opportunities for us to stop prioritizing our own pursuits, and instead prioritize our relationship with God. Not to satisfy our own egos, but to renew a sense of closeness to the Holy Spirit.

So, this Ash Wednesday, may we internalize these words from Christ, and practice our Lenten prayers in the spirit of humility. The crosses atop our foreheads are reminders that, though the life we know right now is temporary, we are heirs to eternal life in Jesus Christ. Therefore, let us be honest with ourselves and others; we are not perfect. We have sinned. We have made mistakes, and we will probably make more in the future. We are incomplete on our own... but God's love completes us.

*Help us, O gracious Lord, to be penitent and reflective this Lent.  
Amen.*

# Thursday, February 19

Shannon Terranova

## *Psalm 32*

Lent gently invites us to slow down and listen to what our souls have been trying to say. Psalm 32 meets us in this quiet space, naming both the weight we carry and the freedom God longs to give.

The psalmist speaks honestly about the cost of silence: “When I kept silent, my body wasted away.” Unspoken guilt, unacknowledged fear, and unresolved hurt have a way of pressing in on us, draining our joy and clouding our spirit. Lent gives us permission to stop pretending—to bring before God what we have been holding tightly or hiding carefully.

Yet Psalm 32 is ultimately a song of hope. Confession becomes a turning point, not because the psalmist earns forgiveness, but because God is already ready to forgive. “I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,’ and you forgave.” Grace meets honesty every time. God does not recoil from our truth; God receives it with mercy.

The psalmist reminds us that God is not merely the one who forgives, but the one who shelters and guides. “You are a hiding place for me.” In God’s presence, we are safe enough to be fully known and fully loved.

As we walk through Lent, may Psalm 32 lead us toward courageous reflection. May we release what weighs us down and open our hearts to the joy of forgiveness—discovering, again and again, that grace makes room for renewal.

*Merciful God, draw us into your light, where honesty leads to healing and grace restores our joy. Amen.*

# Monday, February 23

Frank Esposito

*Matthew 4:1-11*

Many of the greatest dramas in history focus on the inner conflict in one's soul. Jesus enters the wilderness after being baptized and blessed by God, the Father, who says "this is my Son, whom I love, with him I am well pleased." (Matt 3:17)

I often wonder why he spent 40 days in the wilderness. The 40 days might have been a challenge to His endurance or brute strength, but it's more likely that He needed time to sort out all that He'd heard and all the challenges that lay ahead. Food didn't seem to matter too much to him, until of course, he discovered he was extremely hungry. Satan begins with "IF you are the son of God..." challenging Jesus to question or disown the powerful blessing he's just received from God, the Father.

Fortunately, Jesus can answer Satan's questions with power and authority. Authority comes from the scriptures, which Jesus probably learned well as a young boy. He was able to tell Satan that "one does not live by bread alone," (vs. 4) and "you should not put the Lord to the test," (vs. 7) as well as "worship the Lord, thy God and him only shall they serve" (vs. 8). In some accounts, it is said that the devil leaves and waits for a future opportunity. This I believe is accurate. Satan never really gives up. Temptation is always there to be battled.

*Heavenly Father, as we face temptation and struggle to do your will, always guide us as you did your Son with scripture and love that we may, in our hour of need, reach back and gain strength enough to fight the challenges of the devil.*

# Thursday, February 26

Roz Hoagland

*Genesis 13:5-15*

An Early Christian mosaic\* high on the wall in Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome clearly illustrates Abraham and Lot, his nephew, parting ways. It is roughly symmetrical with Lot and his family and followers on the right, opposite Abraham, Sarah, the still-yet-to-be born Isaac, and their followers. They had all come together from Egypt, but there was strife between the followers. Abraham proposed that they separate. Significant gazes and gestures with enlarged hands clearly indicate the split between the two men. Lot chose to go east to Sodom and Gomorrah (which was really not a good decision since God would eventually destroy those evil cities.)

I wonder what would have happened if they had all tried harder to get along with each other? Could they have lived together harmoniously? This question makes me think of Rodney King, who was severely beaten by LA police in 1991. The jury acquitted the officers, leading to riots, burning and looting. In a televised plea King famously said, "Can we all get along?"

There is a lesson here for working to solve arguments within families and even in our divided nation. Let us follow the Golden Rule and always strive for kindness and compassion.

\* [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Parting\\_of\\_Lot\\_and\\_Abraham](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Parting_of_Lot_and_Abraham)



# Monday, March 2

Jane Wilson

*Psalm 121*

As the Jewish families made their arduous journey to Jerusalem three times each year for special religious festivals, they would use “songs of ascents,” like Psalm 121, as encouragement. Families coming from Nazareth traveled about 90 miles across arid land. Google maps says it takes about an hour and 45 minutes to drive today, but in biblical times, I’m sure it took a week or more! I imagine the people’s feelings as the Holy City came into sight after this long trip.

Hearing the words of this psalm throughout the journey must have been reassuring:

- “My help comes from the Lord” (vs 2)
- “He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep” (vs 3)
- “The Lord is your keeper” (vs 5)
- “The Lord will protect you from all evil” (vs 7)
- “The Lord shall preserve your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore. (vs 8)

The psalm reminds me that God is always with me, whether I acknowledge it or not. And not only me. God has been with His people – all His people – since the beginning. It comforts me to know that whatever my circumstances (which have not yet included trekking across the desert with my family!), God is helping me, keeping me, protecting me, just like the Psalm says – forevermore.

# Thursday, March 5

Linda Lavery

*John 3:1-17*

This scripture is so familiar, even featured on bumper stickers. God's promise of eternal life in his kingdom provides Christians hope for the future. Other religions also believe in an afterlife, although in Judaism and Islam, the afterlife depends on having lived a righteous life of good deeds, as well as belief in God or Allah. We believe God sent his son Jesus to die for our sins, and it is our faith that ensures entry to the kingdom of God.

But who knows what awaits us as Christians? When my children were little, they asked me whether our beloved housekeeper and nanny would go to heaven when she died. The Sunday school response had been: no, as a Thai Buddhist, she would go to hell. I dried their tears and explained that after we die, we go to Heaven, the kingdom of God, the most wonderful place to be. If Vinit was so important to their lives on earth, then she would be with them in Heaven as well.

What awaits us after death is a mystery, but God's promise and the sacrifice of his Son Jesus for our redemption gives us as Christians hope and comfort for the future.



# Monday, March 9

Lucy Gallimore

*Psalm 95:1-7*

Verses 1, 2, and 6 of Psalm 95 exhort us to praise and worship God joyfully, thankfully, exuberantly. Verses 3, 4, 5, and 7 give us reasons—for Who God is, what He has done, and what He provides.

Making a habit of practicing gratitude is an avenue to praise and worship. It shifts our focus from what we lack to what we have and reinforces what is good in our world. It also deepens our relationship with God, Who creates and provides.

Studies have extolled the physical and emotional benefits of spending time in nature or pausing to look out a window, even just for five minutes. There are profound spiritual benefits, as well. Spending time observing and appreciating the beauty and intricacy of creation can give us many opportunities to foster gratitude for the “works of His hands.”

Be totally present, “in the moment.” Use all your senses (with the exception of taste, unless you know what you’re tasting is OK). Pay attention to small details. Let gratitude for what you are experiencing lead you into joyful praise. In addition, you could write down one or two specific observations in a gratitude journal.

Reading some of the Psalms can also give us touchstones to help us release gratitude and praise in our hearts, Psalms 104 and 136 are good examples. As a plaque prominently displayed at our daughter’s wedding reception proclaimed, “There is always, always, always something to be thankful for.”

# Thursday, March 12

Sally Ann Jaeger

*Romans 5:1-19*

In Romans 5:1-19 we are reminded that we are justified by our faith, allowing us to stand surrounded by God's amazing grace. Despite our many human screw-ups, we are made right with God & can be reconciled to others by mirroring that same grace. The passage proclaims God's love, peace, and hope, which all sounds good, but there is more: suffering, trials, and afflictions are also mentioned. Ugh.

Similar to Paul's time, we are living with extraordinary divisions within our communities and all kinds of suffering. It is popular to pick a side while tuning out others, to fabricate a reality that appeals to our personal agendas, and to use unjust actions and horrible acts of violence against our brothers and sisters. It can be mentally exhausting and a struggle to see God's plan in the daily news updates.

Still, we are called to be faithful. Now more than ever we must draw closer to Jesus and seek out ways to reflect God's love. Paul says these times of suffering will provide endurance, character, and ultimately unwavering hope because "God's love has been poured into our hearts."

I see this endurance and character in individual acts of courage, in compassionate stories from Minnesota, in neighbors coming together to shovel snow. I also see it over and over again at BUMC.

In this passage Paul repeatedly uses the inclusive word "we." We are all in this together and I am so grateful for the powerful community of faith at BUMC.

# Monday, March 16

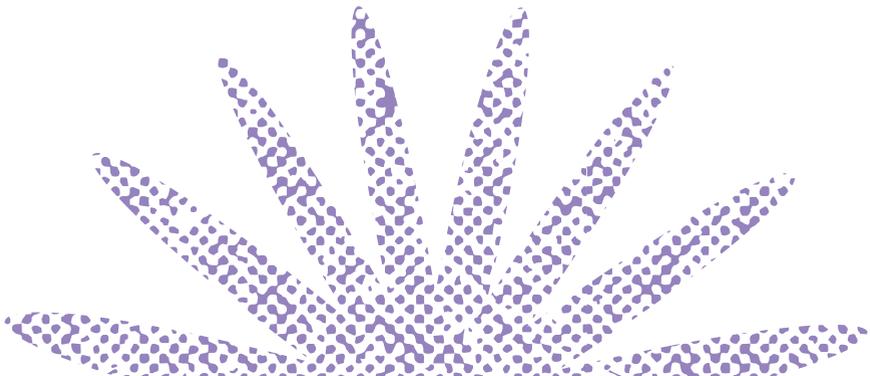
Frank Esposito

*Ephesians 5:8-14*

In this passage Paul is explaining to the Ephesians that they have been part of the dark evil world in which they lived. Now they are the light. They are not a reflection of the light, nor an enlightened person. They are the giver of light.

I am reminded of the old song quote "You can't be a beacon if your light doesn't shine." Paul is telling us that we shine and to do so in a way that is acceptable unto the Lord. Paul is probably reaching back to the concept of offering sacrifices that are "acceptable to God." The New Testament Christians pushed past the concept of physical sacrifice, but the notion that what we offer God must be "acceptable," lives on. We must give God only our best, hoping that it will shine a light on others.

*God, guide me as I seek to let out the light of your love and may it shine through all time and for all your children.*



## Thursday, March 19

Cindy Spain

*Ezekiel 37:1-14*

Well-written horror stories appeal to me, so a story about bones coming up from the ground, assembling, with sinews, skin and then the breath of life reanimating a field of unburied soldiers has all the makings of a great apocalyptic story. However, biblical apocalyptic literature isn't about macabre end-times horror. It is about educated symbolism used as a writing style to reveal previously hidden truths.

The word apocalypse means to reveal, uncover, or unveil. The bizarre images in Ezekiel aren't intended to frighten, they are symbols connecting to an audience who deeply understood those symbols the way we Americans would understand a red, white and blue eagle. When we see that eagle, we feel pride. When the Israelites heard this story, they too felt pride in their nation, their heritage, their chance once again to be faithful to the Lord who had always been faithful to them. An upheaval, deadly consequences, or punishment aren't signs of an unloving God, but a reminder that we are children who must remember whose we are. Israel has a new chance when returning from Babylonian exile to walk faithfully with God and each other again. These bones signify that.

The true story in Ezekiel is about hope. The hope of returning to God, returning to the right path, returning to the home of their ancestors and the importance of remembering the "bones" of the faithful.

# Monday, March 23

Roseanna Van Horn

## *Psalm 130*

Psalm 130 reminds me that it is not only possible, but important to feel complex things in complex ways. For the post-exilic community (from Babylonian exile), there was tension in the fact that their God was loving and forgiving, yet they had been separated from their homeland (Jerusalem). Psalm 130 is one instance of their attempts to reconcile these complexities. It represents their desire to remain identified as a community faithful to one another and to YHWH.

God forgives us as he forgave those in the community above. Jesus' forgiveness reminds me that forgiveness isn't just a spiritual ideal; it's a transformational practice. Sometimes forgiving may be confused with forgetting—as if forgiving means pretending the wrong never happened. Forgiveness isn't denial. It is releasing the offense: the resentment, judgment, or condemnation one may be holding. Jesus' call to forgive helps us heal.

Colossians 2:13 is a verse that parallels Ps. 130. "Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive."

# Thursday, March 26

Karen Anthony

*Romans 8:5-11*

"To set the mind on the flesh is death, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit." (vs 5)

Much of this passage from Romans helps bring focus to the choice we have: either live a life with material gains or live a life devoted to the Spirit. We have a choice, unlike those who lived before Jesus walked the earth. (Try envisioning what the world would be like without Jesus.) With Jesus we learned to live and love in ways that benefit each other, ourselves and the world.

Recently I attended a nice textile art show with a long-time friend at the Smithsonian. With so many beautiful items, it was hard to land on just one perfect thing. There was a beautiful handwoven jacket for \$400 that was absolutely perfect for her. She thought about it and decided to not to purchase it. I gently chided her and reminded her to treat herself. She said, "I thought about the various charities I support and what they could do with that amount of money. I think they need that money more than I need a jacket!" She would have looked smashing in that jacket, but my friend has "set her mind on the Spirit." As should we all.

# Monday, March 30

Kimberly Helms

*John 12:1-11*

For a moment, I want to ignore the beauty of Mary's act in this passage, the fragrance of the perfume, the intimacy in anointing Jesus's feet and wiping them with her hair. Instead, I want to focus on Judas's response: the cost of the perfume could have been used to feed the poor. It's a protest framed as a concern.

But John tells us what lies beneath the argument. Judas isn't upset about the poor. He's upset about what he won't be able to skim from the proceeds. His words mask a different motive. Caring for the poor is not the problem, but using that concern as a shield to deflect and avoid what's happening in front of him is.

It is uncomfortable to recognize this tendency in ourselves. Most of us are not acting out of malice or deceit, but we know how easily a sound argument saves us from examining what else might be shaping our choices. A question I once heard has stayed with me: would you rather be right or would you rather be in relationship? That question surfaces in moments far less dramatic, when it's easy to point out how we are correct. Being right feels solid and defensible. Relationship, by contrast, often asks something more vulnerable of us.

Mary does not argue her case. She simply responds to Jesus in the moment. In this season, notice where we cling to being right when we are called to be in relationship instead.

# Thursday, April 2

Rev. Dr. Jason Snow

*Maundy Thursday – John 13:30b–35*

Today is Maundy Thursday and many services in churches on this day center themselves on Holy Communion or Foot Washing because these are the two acts that Jesus did during the Last Supper. But as the meal is finishing and Jesus washes the disciples' feet, there is a transition. After Judas has left and in the scripture above, I included the phrase right before the 31<sup>st</sup> verse. "And it was night" Night signaled a transition and Jesus begins going into more depth, teaching and telling the disciples what they should be doing and what we are called to in this life. He lays out the new commandment, which is really the focus of Maundy Thursday.

Maundy comes from "mandatum", which means commandment. Mandatum novum – New Commandment. Christ is giving us this new commandment to love one another. I don't know about you, but I don't love being commanded to do anything. Why did Jesus feel he needed to command, rather than just tell the apostles? What does the idea of commanding instill in us? Importance. Necessity. When I hear these words, I understand that it is imperative for Jesus that humanity moving forward will be its healthiest and live into God's vision to the greatest degree if we love one another. Jesus is demanding it of us! So as we think about the gravity of this meal that Jesus shared in, let us be reminded of the gravity of this simple, yet critical commandment – love one another. May you reflect today where you are living out this commandment and where you are falling short!



**Friday, April 3**

Rev. Dr. Jason Snow

*Good Friday – John 19:25b–30*

I can remember growing up, we used to watch the series of shows on Friday that had the tagline, TGIF – Thank God It's Friday! This phrase had been popular and traces back at least to the 1940s, but probably even earlier than that. Some believe it began when they started implementing 5-day work weeks. And TGIF became an exclamation of joy because what was before the person was a weekend... a break from the work that had been done all week. It recognized that you are tired and worn out. You have done the work that could be done that week and you are ready for freedom to do the things you want to do. It's the same reason Mondays get such a bad rap because you enter back into the work that is before you at your job or vocation.

As we come to Good Friday, it makes me wonder what Jesus was feeling emotionally as he came to the end of his time. Was there a sense of relief as he had done the work he came to do? Was there a sadness over the response that had led him to the cross? Was there a sense of anticipation knowing that Sunday was around the corner and a new understanding would come to the apostles and ultimately everyone? Was there a sense of joy knowing the freedom that would come for all people? Good Friday comes with all those emotions mixed together for us. We read the passion story and feel sadness, loss, and sorrow. And yet, we also come recognizing the sacrifice that Christ made and what that means for us and we give thanks. On this Good Friday, make space to connect with whatever emotion settles with you as you read the scripture and consider the cross once again.



**Sunday, April 5**

Rev. Evelyn Archer-Taminger  
*Easter Sunday – Psalm 30:5*



“Weeping may linger for the night, but joy comes with the morning” (Psalm 30:5)

When was the last time you watched the sun rise? Are you a morning person; eager to get the day started at first light? Or do you prefer to sleep as late as possible, until the sun is halfway across the sky? Whether you saw the sun come up this morning, or you cannot remember the last daybreak you witnessed, we all have to admit there is something incredible about that time of day.

The dew on the grass. The hazy mist that lingers in the air. The sound of birds and crickets chirping... as the black sky gives way to blue, then pink, then golden light. It is as if the world is coming back to life; a little victory that happens each day.

What better time of day than dawn to find out that Christ is alive? When Mary Magdalene approached Jesus’ tomb that morning, her life was in a dark place. Her savior, her teacher, and her friend had been publicly killed and cast into a tomb... where could her hope come from now?

But as the sun rose slowly over the horizon, her weeping turned to shock and praise! God knows no boundaries; even death itself could not defeat our Lord. On this Easter Sunday, may we boldly walk into new chapters, and embrace the joys of transformation.

Easter is not merely the end of a season (Lent), but the ultimate beginning of a new era.

*Give us faith, O God, to be renewed in Your Spirit, and may we spread our hope with all we meet. Amen.*



There are many ways to connect with Burke UMC this Lenten season. Visit our website to explore upcoming events, worship opportunities, and ways to engage more deeply during this sacred time.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to this year's Lenten Devotional. We are grateful for your witness and for your willingness to share how God has been at work in your life. Our prayers are with each of you as you carve out space and center yourselves around God this Lenten season.

[burkeumc.org](https://burkeumc.org)

