So much occurs in our daily lives that we sometimes sidestep the truths of being Christian. Unconditional love. Faith. Hope. Helping hands. All of this is the currency that makes our lives better, but occasionally we need a boost that redirects us from self-absorption to personal reflection.

We asked FPC members to share their favorite devotional, or loved Bible scripture, poem or song verse for this special issue. The response was amazing: Enough to compile 31 days of inspiration. Some offer insight and motivation. Others will help you shape your life. Read one a day for the next 31 days. It’ll become habit forming and may help you escape the pandemic rut.

Thank you to all who contributed. Thank you to all in the congregation, who in your own way practice your devotion and dedicate your time, talent and resources.
Allen Gulledge

Worth Redeeming

Many of us spend all of our lives trying to convince God that we are worth redeeming. By lifestyle, ethics and unfortunately our political views, we try and show God that we are on the “right side.” It’s a great waste of our lives, which should be spent basking in God’s Love and passing it on. The Gospel has been twisted and distorted so that it has become an achievement contest to prove to God that we are worthy. The true Gospel story is that we have always been worthy since we were made in God’s image. The Franciscans have straightened out the Christmas Story to reveal that we didn’t have to wait for Jesus’ crucifixion to attain whatever we mean by salvation but that it had already happened when God decided to become human, fully identifying with us and giving shape to an eternal “YES.” Franciscans have always believed that ‘the Incarnation’ was all ready the redemption, because in Jesus’ birth God was all ready saying that it was good to be human, and that God was on our side.

Bill Humphreys

Suffering, Endurance, Character, Hope. (S.E.C.H.)

“S.E.C.H.” “S.E.C.H.” I finally committed these four initials to memory and repeat these verses often:

“…we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.”

− Romans 5:3-5, New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

Dan Crane

Anxiety

“Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you.”

− I Peter 5:7
Elise Packard

Emerging Dawn

The Christmas story begins with a surprise announcement of new birth.

But not right now. You wait in the darkness of uncertainty. There is nothing to do but to wait and trust that new birth is on the horizon; you trust that the darkness will end. But sometimes doubt creeps in. Trust fades. Darkness envelops. Hope seems absurd. You must wait.

And so you do.


And so you do.

Be embraced by moments of grace. Take in the light of a door cracked open. Follow the light into unlikely places. Accept compassion. In exhaustion, surrender to forces that are molding what is to be. Be open to New Birth.

And so you are.


And so you might.

Be honed by the experience of Christmas

As you can be: waiting, moving with resolve, standing up to tests, accepting Grace, nurturing emerging life, finding the dawn, spreading light.

Anne Maglisceau

Anthology of Sentiments

This year, with lots of time to spend alone I have had plenty of time to collect an anthology of sentiments spoken by others. May these thoughts be meaningful to you as they are to me.

“Only when it is dark enough can you see the stars.” – A Persian proverb

“With malice toward none; with charity toward all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation’s wounds; to care for those who have borne the battle; to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace, among ourselves and with all nations.” – Abraham Lincoln, March 4, 1865

“Touch the Earth lightly, use the Earth gently, nourish the life of the world in our care. God of all living, God of all loving, God of the seedling, the snow and the sun, teach us, deflect us, reconnect us, using us gently and making us one.” – A church hymn, Hope Publishing Co.

And, this I have learned: Recovery is beautiful no matter how tragic the cause. Despite fire and drought, new life springs again. Order in nature never fails – the grass becomes green again; the sun rises and sets as always; new babes approach life; all tasks are faced with Hope. When brotherhood and justice are expressed then miracles happen. It just takes time.
God’s World

O world, I cannot hold thee close enough!
Thy winds, thy wide grey skies!
Thy mists, that roll and rise!
Thy woods, this autumn day, that ache and sag
And all but cry with colour! That gaunt crag
To crush! To lift the lean of that black bluff!
World, World, I cannot get thee close enough!

Long have I known a glory in it all,
But never knew I this;
Here such a passion is
As stretcheth me apart,—Lord, I do fear
Thou’st made the world too beautiful this year;
My soul is all but out of me,—let fall
No burning leaf; prithee, let no bird call.

- Edna St. Vincent Millay
Christine Vogel

Love...The Most Powerful Force

Steadfast God, in the midst of the turmoil of life, in this world that seems full of threat, you are here, and ever present. We know that you are with us in our sorrows and supplications.

We thank you, dear God, for life and breath, for friends who come by our side in times of need and sorrow, and for giving us the gift of being able to worship freely and to agree or disagree, knowing all the while that you have bound us together, in our particularities and differences, as your family of faith.

Caring God, we pray that you give us the desire and time to relish whatever in life is joyful. Tensions have increased within our own country and between nations. We pray that those tensions would be eased, that you would give the leaders of our nations wise counsel and restraint. O God, we yearn for a world in which everyone knows that love is the most powerful force.

“What we have loved, others will love, and we will teach them how.”

- Wm. Wordsworth

Diane Buchanan

A Sense of Wonder

Being a child of the manse, I might be expected to be more traditionally religious or to practice my faith in more traditional ways; and I find joy in many of our precious Presbyterian traditions. But, I find that I feel closest to the sense of wonder in the Holy when in nature or when listening to a beautiful piece of music or reading the works of Anne Lamott or the poetry of Edna St. Vincent Millay.

Hiking through the landscape in silence, listening to the birds call to each other and the wind in the trees, the stream bubbling over rocks as it travels down the mountain, marveling at the colors in the rock formations we walk by, strolling in the sand along the shore and witnessing the waves curve and crash and recede; all these delights ignite a sense of gratitude and reflection in me. They make me step away from the troubles of the world, and give thanks for this beautiful world and the gift of the one life I’ve been given.

*Haydn’s Cello Concerto in C major* is a miraculous piece of music that I have returned to over and over in my life, and it never ceases to amaze and touch me in deep ways. The main theme is one of the loveliest I’ve ever heard, and I never tire of hearing it. I feel like I’m in the presence of the Holy with each and every listening, and I find myself feeling profoundly grateful for the opportunity to experience it and for Joseph Haydn and his brilliance.

My grandmother, Blanche Buchanan, shared her love for Edna St. Vincent Millay with me when I was in high school, and the poem in the butterfly photo which meant so much to her, also inspires and moves me.
Nina and Jim Brown

Healing Balm

During this time of quarantine and political discombobulation, we are sharing thoughts that came to us in an Epiphany letter from a dear friend, Rev. Elizabeth Nordquist. We have found in it the healing balm we need on a daily basis.

“Epiphany Greetings! We are keeping connected with our up-to-the minute impressions of what happened inside us, rather than what we did....

Hearts: We can hold joy and grief at the same time. For the entire world we have lamented the suffering of so many, in such varied ways, while we have rejoiced at the countless faithful ones who have stepped up, stood in the gap, and gave comfort and joy to that pain through hands-on caregiving, largesse, even in political structuring of justice for all.

Spiritually, we have moved more deeply into the Mystery. We are trusting that Grace precedes Gratitude, which opens the way for Joy. Love is the coin of the realm. Light and Darkness can coexist; and the Holy is present in each of them. And ultimately, with Lady Julian of Norwich, we trust that ‘All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well!’ ”

For wisdom, we return to J. R. Tolkien who says in Lord of the Rings, “The world is indeed full of peril, and in it are many dark places, but still there is much that is fair, and though in all lands love is now mingled with grief, it grows perhaps the greater.”

Harry Eberts

A Healing Service

The Iona Abbey Worship Book, the resource for Wednesday’s Celtic Evensong service, is filled with liturgy, prayers and psalms that center on the themes of Justice and Peace, Healing, Creation, Welcome and Commitment.

A healing service of prayers, found on pages 109-113 in the worship book, takes place every Tuesday evening, and reflects our belief that God’s purpose for us all is a life of wholeness, as expressed in the life of Jesus. The ministry of healing is an integral part of our Christian witness.

We each stand in the need of healing, but in this ministry we recognize also the social dimension. The healing of divided communities and nations, and the healing of the earth itself, have their place alongside the healing of broken bodies, hurt minds and wounded hearts, and of the hurts and divisions within ourselves.

The second Wednesday of each month First Presbyterian, Santa Fe, holds a healing service. We use anointing oil to place the sign of the cross on the palm of our hands with these words:

“Spirit of the Living God present with us now, heal you in body, mind, and spirit and free you from all that harms you, in Jesus’ name. Amen.”

− Iona Abbey Worship Book
  The Iona Community, 2017
  Wild Goose Publications
Elise Packard

All is Well

Each day dawns shedding light on the high desert,
In summer awaking the Morning Dove who shares her song that
All is Well

Morning News alert,
War breaks out,
Innocent children and families caught in the crossfire
Leaders announce decrees fueled with greed and meanness,
And the Morning Dove coos,
All is Well

Justice erodes daily,
Innocent souls behind bars,
Profits for prisons,

Holding those who have fled violence to meet violence,
Children with hopes and dreams clutch parents with hopes and dreams,
And the Morning Dove coos,
All is well

Digits and tweets, drones and bots
Memes and gifs distract and tease us away from
Moments of silence to find the Divine
In all things.

How do we live each day in times when old forms don’t work?
Much is going berserk,
World in transition; creativity and chaos?

Feed the mind, nurture the heart, and resist cynicism and anger
Insisting that we invent the needed
Now

Crisis is Opportunity,
And don’t forget laughter and joy,
Oil for the soul.
All is Well.

What does the Dove know that we do not?
What does she see as she flies above
rainbows and stormy skies?
Broad horizons, the Milky Way and galaxies that make our now
So small.

Three sixty degrees of grandeur, and
All is Well
Jeannie Bowman

Listening to the Spirit’s Movements

Developing an ability to listen to the Spirit’s movements requires practice. We may never find it easy to do. Some people are fearful of silence and seek to fill the space with music, television, conversation, words, anything but utter stillness.

Others think they cannot pray unless they do away with the smallest sound around them. When choosing a time and place of prayer, it is helpful to have a quiet area, but this may not always be possible in our noisy world. So, instead, we learn to become silent inside our self and pray amid the external noise we can neither quell nor control.

− Joyce Rupp, Prayer

Linda Loving

Open Unto Me

Lord, Lord open unto me light for my darkness courage for my fear hope for my despair peace for my turmoil joy for my sorrow strength for my weakness wisdom for my confusion forgiveness for my sins love for my hates thy self for my self. Lord, Lord open unto me.

− Howard Thurman, Prayer

Today:
I choose to become more at ease with silence.
Gale Wright

Blessings of the Moment

During this past year with all the problems we have had, I have had to try to remember to live in the moment and in the blessings of the moment instead of the fear in the future.

Life Prayers from Around the World

Our true home is in the present moment. To live in the present moment is a miracle. The miracle is not to walk on water. The miracle is to walk on the green Earth in the present moment, to appreciate the peace and beauty that are available now. Peace is all around us—in the world and in nature—

and within us—in our bodies and our spirits. Once we learn to touch this peace, we will be healed and transformed. It is not a matter of faith; it is a matter of practice.

− Thich Nhat Hanh

Jane Stringfellow

The Family of God

I am sharing the words of a song that is especially meaningful to me. The title is *The Family of God* written by Gloria and William Gaither and prefaced by the following scripture: “And God said, I will dwell in them... and they shall be My people; and ye shall be My sons and daughters,” II Corinthians 6:16.

“I’m so glad I’m a part of the family of God—
I’ve been washed in the fountain, cleansed by His blood!
Joint heirs with Jesus as we travel this sod,
For I’m part of the family, the family of God.”

Every year on the first Sunday in October, folks who grew up in the farming community near Forest Home, Alabama, gather at the no longer active Pine Flat Methodist Church for Homecoming and Dinner on the Grounds. The worship service always concludes with the singing of *The Family of God*. Charlie and I usually made an effort to attend, especially if we were in Auburn for a football game! Charlie’s parents, grandparents and other family members are buried in the Pine Flat Cemetery. Charlie and his family were Southern Baptists but the Methodists are very forgiving people!

Sharing this has brought back happy memories of this yearly occasion that takes place just down the road from where Charlie grew up.

Blessed to be part of the family of God.
Judi Haines

Amazing Grace

My daily devotional is music. I find a continuous loop in my head of old hymns that have become my prayer.

“When we’ve been there ten thousand years, bright shining as the sun, we’ve no less days to sing God’s praise than when we first begun.”

− Last verse of Amazing Grace, John Newton

It is Well With My Soul

“When peace like a river attendeth my way, When sorrows like sea billows roll. Whatever my lot, Thou has taught me to say, It is well, It is well with my soul. And, Lord hast the day when the faith shall be sight, The clouds be rolled back as a scroll, the trump shall resound, and the Lord shall descent, Even so, it is well with my soul. It is well, it is well with my Soul.”

− Horatio Spafford, hymnist; Philip Bliss, composer

Jenny Harland

The Corrymeela Community

God with us in our individual struggles, God with us in our common ordeals: there is a freedom that comes in knowing that life is simply hard; not because we’ve done something wrong, or because we fail to see something obvious to others, but simply because life itself is hard.

− Facebook page [https://www.facebook.com/Corrymeela]

Celtic Benediction: Morning and Night Prayer

Release in me the freedom of your Spirit that I may be bridled by nothing but love that I may be bridled only by love.

− J. Philip Newell, 2000
Day 14

Jeannie Bowman

“You shall call, and the Lord will answer; You shall cry for help, and He will say, ‘Here I am.’ ”

- Isaiah 58:9

Will You Meet Us?
(For Ash Wednesday)

Will you meet us
in the ashes,
Will you meet us
In the ache
and show your face
within our sorrow
and offer us
your word of grace:
that you are life
within the dying,

- Jan Richardson, Circle of Grace

Today:
I will meet you
just as I am.

Day 15

Leslie Miller

Slow Me Down, Lord

Slow me down, Lord.
Ease the pounding of my heart
by the quieting of my mind.
Steady my hurried pace
with the eternal reach of time.
Give me, amid the confusion of the day,
the calmness of the snow covered mountains.
Break the tension of my nerves and muscles
with the soothing music of the streams.

Help me to know the magical power of sleep.
Teach me the habit of turning off my mental chatter—
by slowing down to read the psalms,
to call a friend, to pat a dog,
to read a few lines from a good book.

Slow me down, Lord,
and turn me toward your glory.
For thine is kingdom and power, forever.

- Adapted from Wilfred Arlan Peterson
Pray and Work

Psalm 116 holds a very special place in my heart. The words going through my mind getting up, living another day and being grateful at the closing of that day are most frequently “Ora et Labora (Pray and Work).”

I love the LORD, for he heard my voice; he heard my cry for mercy. Because he turned his ear to me, I will call on him as long as I live. The cords of death entangled me, the anguish of the grave came over me; I was overcome by distress and sorrow. Then I called on the name of the LORD: “LORD, save me!” The LORD is gracious and righteous; our God is full of compassion. The LORD protects the unwary; when I was brought low, he saved me. Return to your rest, my soul, for the LORD has been good to you. For you, LORD, have delivered me from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling, that I may walk before the LORD in the land of the living. I trusted in the LORD when I said, “I am greatly afflicted;” in my alarm I said, “Everyone is a liar.” What shall I return to the LORD for all his goodness to me? I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the LORD. I will fulfill my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people. Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his faithful servants. Truly I am your servant, LORD; I serve you just as my mother did; you have freed me from my chains. I will sacrifice a thank offering to you and call on the name of the LORD. I will fulfill my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people, in the courts of the house of the LORD – in your midst, Jerusalem. Praise the LORD

- Psalm 116
Nancy Peterson

Many songs and hymns have been important to me through the years, but I have selected one that has been a favorite of mine and of my students at McCurdy Mission School in Española. I think it speaks to today as well.

What Color is God’s Skin?

“What Color is God’s Skin?” I said to my little son,
So tired out when the day was done.
Then he said, as I tucked him in,
“Tell me, Daddy, what color’s God’s skin?

What color is God’s skin?
What color is God’s skin?
I said, “It’s black, brown, it’s yellow,
It is red, it is white,
Ev’ry one’s the same in the
good Lord’s sight.

He looked at me with
his shining eyes,
I knew I could tell no lies,
When he said, “Daddy, why do the diff’rent races fight,
If we’re the same in the good Lord’s sight?”

What color...

Son, that's part of our suffering past,
That the whole human fam'ly is learning at last
That the thing we missed on the road we trod,
Is to walk as the daughters and the sons of God.

What color...

− Thomas Wilkes and David Stevenson from
Up With People

Jeannie Bowman

“Blessed are those who have learned to acclaim you, Who walk in the light of your presence, O Lord.” 

− Psalm 89:15

The Path Through Silence

The path through silence is called the apophatic path. It is the path of meditation or contemplation which leads us to the center of our being. We plant the seed of silence within ourselves by quieting the mind. We allow our minds to empty of thought so we can enter our own resounding silence, a state from which we gain deep refreshment. Gregory the Great called this state “resting in God.” Experiencing the silence within is like opening a hidden door to the soul. It takes enormous patience. Thomas Keating, a Trappist monk who teaches (taught) this method of contemplation, called it centering prayer.

The labyrinth can be a tremendous help in quieting the mind, because the body is moving. Movement takes away the excess charge of psychic energy that disturbs our efforts to quiet our thought processes.

− Lauren Artress,
Walking a Sacred Path: Rediscovering the Labyrinth as a Sacred Path

Today:

Practice walking a labyrinth, or a path that leads to no particular destination. The walk in silence, while quieting the mind, can take away that which usually occupies our thoughts. In this path through silence, find the peace in “resting in God.”
Keith Kirby

“The parts that can be shown don’t need special care. But God has put together all the parts of the body. And he has given more honor to the parts that didn’t have any. In that way, the parts of the body will not take sides. All of them will take care of one another. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it. If one part is honored, every part shares in its joy.

You are the body of Christ. Each one of you is part of it.”

– 1 Corinthians 12:24-27 (NIV)

The Energy of Many Unique Parts

The bar b que from my backyard filled the air with that comforting aroma of smoky charcoal and burning spices. It was Saturday – a day devoted to chores and day-end relaxation.

Tammy walked over. A lanky 12-year old with the slow, coordinated moves of an athlete. She wasn’t sparky this time.

“What’s happening,” I asked.

“The basketball team is loosing. It’s my fault.”

“Oh?”

“I’m doing everything I can. I make all the shots. I take all the passes. Try for the blocks. I run interference so someone can give me an assist. It’s not working.”

I motioned her closer, and removed the burgers from the grill.

“Tammy, look at how well these charcoals burn. Notice how they’re together, flames feeding off each other.

“Now, look what happens when I remove one. See it slowly fade. Without the others, it struggles. It’s alone. Without all the charcoal working together, each adding its own strength, the fire cools.

“Maybe your team needs less of you and more of them.”

Tammy nodded and wandered off. A notch of a spark in her step this time.

A few days later I saw Tammy practicing. I yelled across the fence, “How’s the team doing?”

“We’re winning!” The ball swooshed the net.

Are you feeling disconnected? Lost? Alone? Though different in so many ways, we’re all one in the body of Christ. When you suffer, we suffer. When you rejoice, we rejoice. If you have isolated yourself from God’s love, embrace others in God and witness the warmth that comes from so many different parts working as one. Re-engage God’s team and miracles will happen.
Harry Eberts

Remembering the Words of Jesus

Use these words from page 144 of the Iona Abbey Worship Book as a meditation or individual phrases as a mantra.

Jesus says:

"I call you my friend.  
Do not be afraid.
You are the salt of the earth.  
I am the vine, you are the branch.  
What you do to the least of people, you do to me.  
Give to others and God will give to you.  
Let your light shine before other people.  
The hairs of your head have been counted.  
Seek and you shall find.  
Love each other as I have loved you.
The truth will make you free.
You will shine like the sun in the kingdom of heaven.  
I am the good shepherd. My sheep know my voice. 
Turn around and believe the good news.

Come to me, you who are weary; I will give you rest.  
I am the good shepherd. No one can take my sheep away from me.
Don't store up riches for yourself on earth.
Whoever welcomes a child in my name welcomes me.
You did not choose me. I chose you.
Love your enemies and do good to them.
Do not worry about tomorrow; each day has enough troubles of its own.
Love God with your heart, mind and strength and love your neighbor as yourself.
Those who work for peace are called children of God.
I love you as God loves me.
I will send the Holy Spirit to help you.
I have come that you might have life in its fullness.
Let my joy be in you so that your joy will be complete.
You are the light of the world.
Never mind what others do; I want you to follow me."

— Iona Abbey Worship Book  
The Iona Community, 2017  
Wild Goose Publications
“He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.”

− Micah 6:8
Judy Crawford

How We Judge Ourselves

“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’ ”

− Matthew 25:34-36 (NIV)

We judge ourselves as a community of faith by the way we treat the most vulnerable among us.

Bill Humphreys

Expect Nothing in Return

I am frequently inspired by these rhetorical, challenging questions of Luke 6:31-36a, (NRSV) beginning with… you know this… the Golden Rule. Hear what’s attributed to Jesus:

“Do to others as you would have them do to you. If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. If you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much again. But love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High; for [God] is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful, just as [God] is merciful.”

− Luke 6:31-36a, (NRSV)

Karin Lerew

Trust Me, and Don’t Be Afraid

Isaiah 12:2; Psalm 61:2-4; 2 Corinthians 3:18 (NKJV)

Many things feel out of control. Your routines are not running smoothly. You tend to feel more secure when your life is predictable. Let Me lead you to the rock that is higher than you and your circumstances. Take refuge in the shelter of My wings, where you are absolutely secure.

When you are shaken out of your comfortable routines, grip My hand tightly and look for growth opportunities. Instead of bemoaning the loss of your comfort, accept the challenge of something new. I lead you on from glory to glory, making you fit for My kingdom. Say yes to the ways I work in your life. Trust Me, and don’t be afraid.

− Sarah Young, Jesus Calling
NORMAL NEVER WAS

“We will not go back to normal. Normal never was. Our pre-corona existence was not normal other than we normalized greed, inequity, exhaustion, depletion, extraction, disconnection, confusion, rage, hoarding, hate and lack. We should not long to return my friends. We are being given the opportunity to stitch a new garment. One that fits all of humanity and nature.”

− Sonya Renee Taylor

AS LOVE WOULD MAKE IT

Give us, O God, a vision of your world as love would make it;
a world where the weak are protected and none go hungry;
a world whose benefits are shared, so that everyone can enjoy them;
a world whose different people and cultures live with tolerance and mutual respect;
a world where peace is built with justice,
and justice is fired with love;
Lord Jesus Christ, give us the courage to build.

− Women’s World Day of Prayer, 1993

A SINGLE GARMENT OF DESTINY

“The currently prevailing story—the old story that we live in a material, random universe, so that we, too, are primarily physical objects that need material things to be fulfilled—has led us to a permanent state of competition, not excluding violence. Whether you look at the story itself or its practical consequences, many—myself included—feel it’s radically wrong. We are body, mind, and spirit, and we’re embraced in what Martin Luther King famously called a single garment of destiny. Life is not random, and we are not helpless to change it.”

− Michael N. Nagler

GRATEFUL FOR YOUR LOVE

“God, I believe at this moment I am in your presence and you are loving me. I am grateful for your love.”

− The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius
Sharon Kirby

If You Want to Walk on Water

A 2001 book by John Ortberg speaks to a challenge that has confronted me since I became a Christian. *If You Want to Walk on Water, You’ve Got to Get Out of the Boat* refers to Matthew 14:25-32, “And early in the morning He came walking toward them on the sea, they were terrified, saying, ‘It is a ghost!’ And they cried out in fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, ‘Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.’” Jesus invites Peter to join Him, so Peter gets out of the boat, and begins walking toward Jesus.

When considering the dilemma of what God really wants of me I often turn to *Jesus Calling* by Sarah Young. From January 5:

“True dependence is not simply asking Me to bless what you have decided to do. It is coming to Me with an open mind and heart, inviting Me to plant My desires within you. I may infuse within you a dream that seems far beyond your reach. You know that in yourself you cannot achieve such a goal. Thus begins your journey of profound reliance on Me. It is a faith walk, taken one step at a time, leaning on Me as much as you need. This is not a path of continual success, but of multiple failures. However, each failure is followed by a growth spurt, nourished by increased reliance on Me. Enjoy the blessedness of a victorious life, through deepening your dependence on Me.”

Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, became frightened, and began to sink. He cried out for Jesus to save him and Jesus immediately reached out his hand saying “You of little faith, why did you doubt?” Don’t doubt. Have faith and take a chance with Jesus. Get out of the boat.
Mary Kuhns

Hoping Against Hope, He Believed

Hope nonetheless.
Hope despite.
Hope regardless.
Hope still.

Hope where we had ceased to hope.
Hope amid what threatens hope.
Hope with those who feed our hope.
Hope beyond what we had hoped.

Hope that draws us past our limits.
Hope that defies expectations.
Hope that questions what we have known.
Hope that makes a way where there is none.

Hope that takes us past our fear.
Hope that calls us into life.
Hope that holds us beyond death.
Hope that blesses those to come.

− Rough translation of Romans 4:18
  Jan Richardson, writer, artist, United Methodist minister

Mary Neff

The Lord’s Prayer

“Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy Name.
Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen”

− Matthew 6: 9-13

Mary Kuhns

The Mood of Christmas

When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flock,
  The work of Christmas begins:
To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among people,
To make music in the heart.

− Howard Thurman
Gale Wright

The God of Hope

"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."

— Romans 15:13

Abounding in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit really speaks to me as the country moves into a new year with so much to do and so many wounds to heal. And also, First Presbyterian Church’s Dismantling Racism group is moving into its Action Circles, with great hope that we can truly make a difference.
Sabbath—Restoring the Sacred Rhythm of Rest

“The story is told of a South American tribe that went on a long march, day after day, when all of a sudden they would stop walking, sit down to rest for a while, and then make camp for a couple of days before going any farther. They explained that they needed the time of rest so that their souls could catch up with them.”

− Wayne Muller

Mary Kuhns

Two Short Poems

You have traveled
	oo fast over false ground;
Now your soul

has come to take you back.
Take refuge in your senses.
Open up

to all the small miracles you rushed through.

− John O’Donohue

Elise Packard

Just to be born

into this goodness

right now

with eyes open

is enough.

− Anonymous

DAY 29

Jenny Harland

Sounds of the Eternal: A Celtic Psalter

Morning and Night Prayer

“Teach us to search for you in our own depths that we may find you in every living soul.”

− John Philip Newell, 2012

Daily Prayer With the Corrymeela Community

“Teach us to search for you in our own depths that we may find you in every living soul.”

− John Philip Newell, 2012

A Year of Days with the Book of Common Prayer

“The resurrection faith to which we cling gently bathes our hearts and our hearts are healed.”

− Bishop Edmond Lee Browning, 1997

DAY 30

Mary Kuhns

Sabbath—Restoring the Sacred Rhythm of Rest

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	oo fast over false ground;
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Two Short Poems

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with eyes open

is enough.

− Anonymous
Jeannie Bowman

Psalm for a Winter Day

Creator of all seasons and ages,
I praise you for all that is beautiful
in this winter day of February coldness:
the strong, black patterns of trees standing tall,
utter whiteness of snow as it layers the lawn,
stillness broken only by the sound of the furnace
and maybe a brave cheep of the snowbird,
blue sky with morning pink still on its cheek,
the bush under the rainspout drenched in ice.

All the winter world, whose beauty we so often miss,
whose weather we so often condemn,
praise the Creator,
for our world has wonders and tiny miracles
if only our hearts and eyes are open to see.

− Joyce Rupp, Fresh Bread

Today:
My heart rejoices in the beauty of creation.
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