

*From Ashes to the Cross...*



*A Call to Repentance*

*February 27—March 4, 2023*



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## ***From Ashes to the Cross: A Call to Repentance***

At the heart of the Christian faith is our relationship with Jesus Christ. We proclaim Jesus' life, ministry, suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension. Through Jesus Christ, God saves us from sin to righteousness, from death to life, from slavery to freedom, and from oppression to liberation. God in Jesus Christ brings life in deathly situations, hope in despairing situations, and opportunity in desperate situations.

Lent is a time for us to participate in the life, ministry, suffering, and death of Jesus and to prepare for the celebration of Jesus' resurrection, which is Easter.\* Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent, the forty weekdays of preparation for Easter. Ash Wednesday calls for us to return to the Lord. We recall our mortality and wait upon the Lord to renew us. This is a time for putting aside our sins and failures in light of who we are yet to become; by the grace of God through Jesus' suffering on the cross.

Traditionally, the church has observed Lent as a time of penitence, fasting and prayers. This season of forty days provided a time in which converts were prepared for baptism into the body of Christ. It was also a time when persons who had committed sins and had been separated from the community were reconciled by penitence and forgiveness and restored to the fellowship of the church. Thus, these acts—preparation of persons for baptism and restoration of persons—reminded the church of its work of forgiveness.

As a mark of our mortality and as a need for the grace of God through Jesus Christ, let us go forth, with the aid of the Holy Spirit, to observe Lent by meditating on God's word, examining ourselves, fasting, almsgiving, and praying.

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\* Sundays are not a part of the forty days of Lent. They are in Lent but not of Lent. Every Sunday of the year is considered to be a "little Easter", a celebration of Jesus' resurrection. Therefore, Easter is a day of the week, a day of the year, and a season of the church year.

## ***Notes from this Lenten Guide***

*Use this sheet to make some personal notes. Go back over them during the coming week and let God crystallize God's truths in your life.*

### **Main ideas of these reflections:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

### **Illustrations I want to remember:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

### **What should I do as a result of reading these reflections?**

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*God is real, God is good,  
God is faithful. If you serve God, God will bless you!!!!*



*Special thanks go to the following for allowing God to use them:*

*Contributors who reflected on the meaning of Lent and dared to share their reflections with their brothers and sisters.*

*Deaconesses Monica Hockaday, Gwendolyn Simms, and Deacon Nicholas Anderson, who solicited contributors and shared in editing tasks.*

*Sister Alexis Cooper who shared her gifts and skills in the final production of this guide.*

*Pastor Cooper and MAABC Family who gave resources for such a guide to be published.*

## Season of Lent



### Lectionary Readings

**Ash Wednesday**  
February 22, 2023

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17 or  
Isaiah 58:1-12  
Psalm 51:1-17  
2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10  
Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

**First Sunday in Lent**  
February 26, 2023

Genesis 2:15-17;3-17  
Psalms 32  
Romans 5:12-19  
Matthew 4:1-11

**Second Sunday in Lent**  
March 5, 2023

Genesis 12:14a  
Psalm 121  
Romans 4:1-5,13-17  
John 3:1-17 or  
Matthew 17:1-9

**Third Sunday in Lent**  
March 12, 2023

Exodus 17:1-7  
Psalm 95  
Romans 5:1-11  
John 4:5-42

**Fourth Sunday in Lent**  
March 19, 2023

1 Samuel 16:1-13  
Psalm 23  
Ephesians 5:8-14  
John 9:1-41

**Annunciation of the Lord**  
March 25, 2023

Isaiah 7:10-14  
Psalm 45 or  
Psalm 40:5-10  
Hebrews 10:4-10  
Luke 1:26-38

# Season of Lent

## Lectionary Readings



### **Fifth Sunday in Lent**

March 26, 2023

Ezekiel 37:1-14  
Psalm 130  
Romans 8:6-11  
John 11:1-45

### **Liturgy of Palms**

April 2, 2023

Psalms 118:1-2,19-29  
Matthew 21:1-11

### **Liturgy of the Passion**

Sixth Sunday of Lent  
April 2, 2023

Isaiah 50:49a  
Psalm 31:9-16  
Philippians 2:5-11  
Matthew 26:14-27:66 or  
Matthew 27:11-54



*Saturday, March 4, 2023*  
*Forgiveness*

My sisters and brothers in Christ Jesus, it is written:  
“While we were still sinners, Christ Jesus died for us.”

Most happy are they whose transgression is forgiven;

whose sins are covered by God.

Be glad and celebrate, all you recipients of grace,  
shout for joy all you whose hearts are fully open!

Dear God, please help us not to give in to temptation.

Whenever we are tempted

to be greedy,  
or hurt others,  
or to lie or cheat,  
or to be big-headed,  
or to be lazy,  
or any other bad stuff,

please come to our assistance.

Put your Spirit

in charge of our thoughts and feelings,  
and train our good ideas and habits  
be like archers guarding a castle  
from attacks from evil

In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen!



*Friday, March 3, 2023*  
*Blessed by God through People*

Thankfully, we read in Psalm 32 that we must believe that God is faithful to forgive us of our sins if we confess them to God. God will then help me to continue learning of God, communicating with God, hearing from God, and fellowshiping with God through Jesus and my brothers and sisters in Christ. In this way, just as Jesus did in Matthew 4:1-11, I am able to resist the temptation of the devil with the Word of God! This meditation is my confession to God and to God's people. It is my testimony that I have been blessed by being around the people of God. This holds me accountable that going forward, if I neglect my obligations to God and God's people, my brothers and sisters will remind me of my testimony.

*Prayer*

Dear God our Father, thank you for the example you gave us in dealing with the devil and temptation through the actions of Jesus Christ. Thank you, Father, for your grace to forgive us when we confess that we have sinned. Help us, O Lord, to be learners, hearers and doers of your Word that we might trust you to always lead us in the way we should go. For it is in the name of Jesus the Christ, we pray. Amen.

*Deaconess LaFran Wooten*

*LaFran Wooten is the wife of Maurice Wooten, Sr. and the mother of 3 adult children, Laurica, Maurice Jr., and LaMar (LaTarshia). She is the proud NaNa to Amaria. Here at MAABC, LaFran serves as a member of the Diaconate Ministry (CDG-E), Church Clerk, Pastoral Leader of the Lectors Ministry, Pastoral Leader of the Discipleship Ministry, Office Assistant, and Minister of Communications.*



*Reading of the Gospels*

During the 40 weekdays of Lent, we will read the gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. There are 89 chapters in the four gospels. We can complete our reading of the gospels by reading 21/4 chapters from the gospels each day of Lent. From Ash Wednesday (February 22) to the Saturday (February 25) before the First Sunday in Lent, we should complete Matthew, chapters 1-9.

For the week after the First Sunday in Lent (Monday, February 27 to Saturday, March 4, 2023), we will continue to read Matthew.

<i>Day</i>	<i>Chapters</i>
Monday, February 27, 2023	Matthew 10:1 to 12:14
Tuesday, February 28, 2023	Matthew 12:15 to 14:35
Wednesday, March 1, 2023	Matthew 15:1 to 17:13
Thursday, March 2, 2023	Matthew 17:14 to 19:30
Friday, March 3, 2023	Matthew 20:1 to 22:14
Saturday, March 4, 2023	Matthew 22:15 to 24:51

*Monday, February 27, 2023*  
*Mercy*

I read the lectionary and what I gathered was that we confess our sins because we need God's mercy and forgiveness.

Psalm 32 is very clear in cause, effect, remedy, and result. Verses 3 and 4 are very clear about the toll of carrying our transgression and iniquity. That weight is more than the body and spirit can bear. The weight of sin can age you from the inside and it will make itself visible. Verse 5 is release and redemption. When we confess our sins and turn from our iniquity, we open ourselves to God's forgiveness in that God has mercy on us.

In verses 6 and 7, we as the Body rejoice in God's forgiveness, mercy, and protection. When we rest in God, we, together, through the Holy Spirit, have the strength to fend off the trouble that will come our way. There is joy and gladness in our hearts and minds when we can sing and shout and praise God's Holy Name for we are delivered as one body, as one people.

Verses 8-10 teach us that without proper instruction we can be led astray. That is where Matthew 4:1-11 comes in. At any given time and in any given place, we can change direction. Doubt, fear, hurt and hunger can fall on us. As Christians, though, we follow Jesus Christ. Jesus, when hungry, weak, and tempted, was obedient to the Word of God.

*Friday, March 3, 2023*  
*Blessed by God through People*

I often avoid opportunities to testify in church because I feel like it's an open invitation for the devil to put the words that I speak to the test. Truth be told, I guess I'm afraid I might fail the test. All too often I've watched people declare things, either during a testimony period or just in regular conversation, only to see them "eat their words." I think about how embarrassed they must feel. Obviously, at some point, they were tempted and, in the end, convinced to do the opposite of what they intended. For example, I may testify about God delivering me from a sinful habit only to be tempted and eventually fall into that sin once again. There is something about putting our thoughts and desires into the atmosphere for God to hear along with everyone else. My tests don't seem to come in the form of the sins we think bother God. My sin takes form in my neglect of reading and studying God's Word, missing worship for no good reason, spending less or no time at all in prayer. I believe these things not only sadden God but draw me further away from God making it harder to resist the temptations of the devil. It becomes a vicious cycle.


Many times in the Scriptures, God shows us that God can be found in the presence of people. Pastor Cooper has also taught us that God blesses us through people. Why then would I want to remove myself from God by removing myself from studying, reading, praying, worshiping and fellowshiping with God's people? That, for me, is the struggle. I want to be in God's presence but not always be with God's people. That is sin... thinking that I can reap the benefits of God without being obligated.

**Thursday, March 2, 2023**  
**Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine...** 

Jesus. We, the church, are also tasked with teaching (and learning) the Word of God, as Jesus taught.

I believe that every challenge, setback, obstacle this world throws at us is weakened when we respond with a Word from the Lord. That word of faith and conviction activates the resources of Heaven God's angels coming to wait on us.

Just like they did for Jesus when he was in the Wilderness...

*Perfect submission, all is at rest,*   
*I in my Savior am happy and blest,*  
*Watching and waiting, looking above,*  
*Filled with His goodness, lost in His love.*  
*This is my story, this is my song,*  
*Praising my Savior all the day long.*

***Sister Gladys D. Wilder***

*Gladys is a founding member of Metropolitan African American Baptist Church. A retired educator, she works with the Discipleship Ministry, Drama Ministry and is a Lifetime Member of Girl Scouts USA. She is the widow of Trustee Henry Wilder, she is the mother of 2 adult children Christopher (Devin) and Steven and the grandmother of Kai, Brianna and Christopher, Jr.*

**Monday, February 27, 2023**  
**Mercy**

***Prayer***

O Heavenly Father, have mercy on us. We know that we are sinners. We know that we can be led astray. We know that we can expose ourselves to the world around us and we know that it hurts your heart when we carry the weight. Lord, forgive us and help us to release ourselves into your protection. Guide us to and through your Word that we may follow you as our Savior did and that we may live in your glory and salvation through this life and the next. Amen.

**Brother Paul H. Anderson, Jr.**

*God has blessed Paul with the gift of sharing the gospel through writing, drama, and testimony. As a member of Metropolitan African American Baptist Church, Paul serves in the Drama Ministry. He is a proud father and grandfather.*



*Tuesday, February 28, 2023*  
*An Appreciation for Covenant*

As I meditated on the scriptures for the First Sunday in Lent, there's the age-old problem of temptation by the deceiver, the enemy of God. Through the disobedience of one man (and one woman), sin entered into the human situation and experience resulting in condemnation and death. Then by God's grace and love for humankind and His creation, through the obedience of one man, God's Son Jesus, the gift of righteousness and eternal life is available.

Through the power of the Holy Spirit we are able to have an immediate rush of appreciation for and to realize a greater significance of our covenant relationship with God and the people of God through the church. It begins with the acknowledgement and confession of our sins and realization of our need for a savior. Thus begins our covenant statement, "Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior and on the profession of our faith ..." The Psalm passage confirms this statement and process. Jesus Christ through the Body of Christ, the Church, is the vehicle God provides for us to come together to work out our soul salvation as we come to know, love, trust and serve God and each other.


*Thursday, March 2, 2023*  
*Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine...* 

I believe that even during a time of Jesus' greatest human weakness, Jesus showed us that the way to overcome temptation is through the word of God embedded in our very soul which arises as a rebuke to that which seeks to take the place of our God.

Of the many advantages Jesus has over us is that Jesus probably helped God to organize and put the scriptures together.

So, yes, the Word of God is embedded in the very being of Christ. (Heard somewhere that Jesus is the Living Word of God.) I believe that God's will for us is shared through this example of Jesus.

And if I am honest with myself, it is God's Word that has saved me from trouble many, many times. And the times when I *chose* not to follow the word of God, it was good to know that even through the consequences of my misdeeds, God was still with me. Just like God was still with Adam and Eve. They did not die immediately, but the blessing of time provided opportunities to reflect on their time in the Garden.....

*Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!*   
*Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine!*  
*Heir of salvation, purchase of God,*  
*Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood*

Paul tells us in Romans, that just as sin and ultimately death came into the world through the *disobedience* of one man, Adam, life, salvation, and the opportunity for a right relationship with God was made possible through the *obedience* of one man, Jesus.

In closing, I believe our lives, our salvation, God's forgiveness begins with the Word of God. Jesus asked his disciples and the church (*The people of God*) to go forth, making disciples, people who would know, love and serve God as revealed by

*Thursday, March 2, 2023*  
*Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine...* 

Jesus is my Savior! Yay!  
*And...just why do I need a Savior?*

Wow!...where do I begin the answer to that question!  
Well, I have surely done quite a few things not pleasing to God...

BUT, IT'S NOT MY FAULT THAT I SIN!  
IT'S THE FAULT OF THAT DARN SERPENT, EVE AND ADAM!

Yet I know...that I know better. Period.  
*Really* easy to blame someone else for our shortcomings.  
Especially Good Old Adam and Eve and a slithering creature...

Our reality is that we live in this world where through Adam's and Eve's disobedience, all sorts of sin, evil, mischief and discontent was set loose in this world.

Passage of time and the magnetism of these forces (which are *sooo* attractive to us) has enabled these forces to morph into all sorts of misfortunes, missed opportunities, calamities, disasters and tragedies.

We *are* human and we are constantly exposed to the allure/temptation of that which we know we should not even think about, let alone touch.

But we do think about and interact where no child of God should....

Then there's the good news of Jesus, who, like every other human born of a woman, was also exposed to alluring opportunities for physical gratification, power and prestige.

Jesus said, "No".

*Tuesday, February 28, 2023*  
*An Appreciation for Covenant*

### *Prayer*

Most loving God, our Creator, provider, sustainer, we come before your throne of grace with thankful hearts for your gift of justification, and righteousness made available by your forgiveness of the burden of our sins and an opportunity to be reconciled with you, each other and your creation. Bless our work as your agents of salvation, reclamation, sanctification, liberation and transformation as we reach out in loving ways, to our family, friends and community. Give them receptive hearts and give us prayerful hearts in the face of rejection. Thank you for your Holy Spirit and may the Holy Spirit continue to guide us and fill our hearts with your love. In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.

### *Deaconess Wayland H. Clark*

*Deaconess Clark is a founding member of the Metropolitan African American Baptist Church family. She serves as Pastoral Leader of the Diaconate Ministry, a facilitator for Faith Talks, a volunteer for Kindom Village Amazing Grace Before and After School Ministry and member of the Benevolence Ministry. She is the widow of Trustee Walter Clark, the mother of Deborah, Mildred (deceased), Genean, and Walter, Jr., and the grandmother of Emmanuel and Kennedi.*



*Wednesday, March 1, 2023*  
*Thanking God for Salvation*

I am now a 59 year old African American Christian Woman with a vision to follow God's path wherever it may lead me. I don't know where it may take me, but I trust that God knows the plans for my life and my destination.

I became a member of the Metropolitan African American Baptist Church family nine (9) years ago. I was lost in this world for many years but God watched over me and protected me. Family members and strangers prayed for me. Now I have a vision from God that brought me here.

But now I'm found here as a member of the Metropolitan African American Baptist Church family. I was blind but now I see more clearly now than I once did. I have come to know that I don't do things on my own. It is through God's grace and mercy with the aid of the Holy Spirit.

Ever since God has picked me up, turned me around, and placed me here on solid ground. This is my home. I'm not perfect but my good outweighs my bad. I get another chance each day to get it right or better than yesterday. It will come together for the glory of God in time. Life is a persistent struggle but trouble doesn't last forever.

*Wednesday, March 1, 2023*  
*Thanking God for Salvation*

I thank God for everything I have endured, that makes me who I am today. I love my husband, children, grandchildren, family, pastors, church family, and neighbors.

### *Prayer*

All praise, glory, and honor belong to God for all God has done and is doing for me and us. I pray for the love of God Almighty, the grace of Jesus Christ, and the peace that only God, through the Holy Spirit, gives to be with me and us all as the Metropolitan African American Baptist Church family. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen

*Sister Theresa Randall*

*Theresa is a member of CDG AB, the Hospitality Ministry, and the Prison Ministry. She is the wife of Kenneth Randall, mother of Morico and Kenya and the grandmother of Zion and Kennedy.*

