

*From Ashes to the Cross...*



*A Call to Repentance*

*March 20—March 25, 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.

# 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

Psalms 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

Psalms 31:9-16

Philippians 2:5-11

Matthew 26:14-27:66 or

Matthew 27:11-54



## 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!!!!*



## *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 2 1/4 chapters from the gospels each day of Lent. For the week after the Fourth Sunday in Lent (Monday, March 20) to the Saturday (March 25, 2023), we will complete the reading of the Gospel of Matthew and then we will move to read the Gospel of Mark.

*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, LaFran Wooten 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.*

*Pastor Barbara E. Ingram  
Lenten Project Coordinator*

<i>Day</i>	<i>Chapters</i>
Monday, March 20, 2023	Luke 11:1 to 13:17
Tuesday, March 21, 2023	Luke 13:18 to 15:32
Wednesday, March 22, 2023	Luke 16:1 to 18:17
Thursday, March 23, 2023	Luke 18:18 to 20:47
Friday, March 24, 2023	Luke 21:1 to 23:25
Saturday, March 24, 2023	Luke 23:26 to John 1:51

*Monday, March 20, 2023*  
*A Lenten Prayer*

Our Father, my Father, you give me everything I need and some of what I want. Thank you, Lord, for the peace you give me when I need to be still during my good and bad, happy and sad times in my life. By just knowing that you are with me through it all as I enter in and come out of the darkest and brightest moments. I fear not because your Spirit comforts and strengthens me. I thank you for guiding my steps before me in serving the MAABC family, my family, friends, enemies and others that are less or more than me as I journey through life. Lord, I thank you for all your grace and mercy that you have favored me with all the days of my life. My feet are grounded with the help of your Spirit, I pray, for the rest of my life for all your glory. Hallelujah!!!

Our Father, my Father, I thank you for keeping me thus far as your daughter. Father, I pray that as I continue to walk, model, mentor, testify and share your good news with others who don't know you will want to get to know you. Father God, I thank you for guiding me to MAABC that Sunday morning to be guided by your anointed Shepherds.

*Saturday, March 25, 2023*  
*Call and Response*

In each of the lections someone was called to respond to a situation or to do something, and their responses changed lives and situations – from the anointing of David right down to the miracle restoration of the blind man's sight – for us, we have Jesus as our shepherd and the Holy Spirit to help us along the way.

How will I/we respond to God's call to service?

Wow!

*Prayer:*

Dear Lord, please help me/us to hear Your call to work and service, believe Your promise to be with me/us in all that You call me/us to do, and allow Your Holy Spirit to help me/us to respond with prayer, praise, worship, and a resounding yes! In Your precious and righteous name, *Amen.*



*Rev. Vickie Copeland*

Vickie is a founding member of MAABC and has served in many ministries: Discipleship Ministry; Vivian Bagby Health Ministry; Afghan Missionary Ministry; Finance Ministry; Leadership Training Ministry; Writing Ministry. She is the mother of one daughter, Tatiana and one son, George, II.

*Saturday, March 25, 2023*  
*Call and Response*

This week's readings remind us that God chooses whomever God pleases to do God's will, and that God goes with them as they go forth in God's name.

Should one God chooses, not know God well, God assures us that God will be with us, take care of us, provide for us, protect us, open our eyes to who God is as God leads us to accept Jesus, as our Lord and to follow Jesus.

I also know that I/we can only do these assignments God calls us to do if I/we are willing to love, trust, and obey God – to do God's will, not our own.

When things/situations get rough, tough, and seemingly, impossible I/we must stay on the journey –to follow Jesus' example!

As we are reading through the Gospels during this Lenten season, I have paid attention to how often Jesus prayed.

Even as God's Son, Jesus prayed to His Father for assurance, strength, faith, and obedience to do God's will. As we have been reading through the Gospels, I have noticed just how often Jesus prayed. I asked myself "Do I seek to pray as Jesus did when Jesus was here on earth, focusing truly on "God's will be done"?

Wow! This caused me to look at my own prayer life, asking God to make my prayer life be what God wants it to be, to pray not for what, or how, I think things ought to be but to pray for insight, discernment, and the strength and courage to recognize, acknowledge and do God's will, so I can be a better "follower of the Lamb".

*Monday, March 20, 2023*  
*A Lenten Prayer*

Father God, I thank you for all I have endured during my years as a part of the MAABC family. Father God, I thank you for strengthening my mind and heart to join together with my sisters and brothers in Christ to read the gospels during this Lenten Season. It has helped us to remember just what you went through for us. I pray that I will continue to serve as I can with a great deal of health and strength. Please Lord God, forgive me of my sins I have committed against others and for others that have sinned against me. In Jesus' name I pray for all these things. Amen.



*Deaconess Iris Galloway*

Iris demonstrates a great zeal for the Lord Jesus Christ. This is evident as she serves as a member of the Diaconate Team for J Tribe, a lector, a member of the 4th Sunday Hospitality Team, a member of the Grace Dance Ministry, a part of Let's Talk Ministry. She is the mother of one son, Carlos.

*Tuesday, March 21, 2023*  
*The Kingdom of God vs. World's Criteria*

As I reflect on 1 Samuel 16:1-13, there are several passages that particularly stand out to me.

1 Samuel 16:1 The Lord said to Samuel, "How long will you grieve over Saul? I have rejected him from being King over Israel. Fill your horn with oil and set out: I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons."

While disappointment and grief will surely enter our lives through many different situations, we must not let it define us forever. God always has more for us to do and expects us not to dwell in the disappointment and grief. God will also give you what you need and provide direction to move on and claim the future beyond the current situation. Praise the Lord!

1 Samuel 16:7 But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not look on his appearance or the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance; but the Lord looks on the heart."

How often do we have to be reminded that we must look beyond outward appearance and what is demonstrated from the heart through behavior. We often miss our blessing applying the criteria of the world rather than the tenants of the Kingdom of God. Praise the Lord!

*Friday, March 24, 2023*  
*"Living as People of Light"*

*Prayer*

Lord, help me to be the light to the world that those who come in my presence will see something different in these dark times. I pray my conduct, my words, my actions, Lord, will reflect that I am a true believer of Jesus Christ. Help me to live a life pleasing and that honors you. In Jesus name I pray and ask everything. *Amen.*



*Trustee/Sister Clemis Macklin*

Clemis is the lovely wife of Herbert Macklin Jr., a devoted mother to Marcel, Janea and Jhamil and a devoted grandmother of nine grandchildren. She is a member of the Trustee, Hospitality, Lectors and Prison Ministries. Clemis is a proud member of "J" Tribe.



*Friday, March 24, 2023*  
*"Living as People of Light"*

You used to be like people living in the dark, but now you are people of the light because you belong to the Lord. So act like people of the light and make your light shine. Be good and honest and truthful, as you try to please the Lord. Don't take part in doing those worthless things that are done in the dark. Instead, show how wrong they are. It is disgusting even to talk about what is done in the dark. But the light will show what these things are really like. Light shows up everything, just as the Scriptures say, "Wake up from your sleep and rise from death. Then Christ will shine on you."

*Ephesians 5:8-14 (CEV)*

### **My thoughts:**

I heard the Lord saying stop wasting your time on worthless things that mean absolutely nothing to me and the Kingdom! Do things that are good and pleasing in the sight of the Lord.

We must put away childish things at some point and let our spiritual maturity shine. "You can talk the talk but can you walk the walk?". Our conduct as Christians is noticed by others. We must speak and behave in a positive manner in order to lead others to the Lord.

*Tuesday, March 21, 2023*  
*The Kingdom of God vs. World's Criteria*

1 Samuel 16:11-13 Samuel said to Jesse, "Are all your sons here?" And he said, "There remains the youngest, but he is keeping the sheep." And Samuel said to Jesse, "Send and bring him; for we will not sit down until he comes here." He sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy and had beautiful eyes and was handsome. The Lord said, "Rise and anoint him; for this is the one."

God is always out of the box---doing the unexpected, the non-traditional, and breaking norms of the culture and the criteria of the world. David was the youngest of the brothers and would not have been in consideration according to cultural norms. Oh, how we miss our blessings and the direction of our lives relying solely on what has always been, the criteria of the world rather than the tenants of the Kingdom of God.

As I read the gospel during this Lenten season, I am constantly reminded that Jesus' message about the Kingdom of God was often contrary to the traditions, expectations of his day---especially those about blessings on the Sermon on the Mount. It just does not make sense according to traditions or the criteria of the world---then or now!

We are oftentimes called on to exercise faith in the midst of what appears to be senseless to the world. Samuel was obedient to the Lord and followed directions for anointing a king to succeed Saul even in the midst of potential

*Tuesday, March 21, 2023*  
*The Kingdom of God vs. World's Criteria*

danger. (1 Samuel 16:2b “If Saul hears of it, he will kill me.”) The Lord provided Samuel a plan to carry out his responsibility and avoid the potential danger in doing so.

As we walk this faith journey, we are constantly called to seek and follow the tenant of the Kingdom of God when tradition, culture and the criteria of the world suggest a different direction. Praise the Lord!

*Prayer*

Most gracious and eternal heavenly Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who is from everlasting to everlasting and who is our Guide, Protector and Provider, help us to constantly listen for direction from you Lord and through your Holy Spirit give us the desire to exercise faith and do your will even as it conflicts with the traditions and culture of the world. It is in the matchless and wonderful name of Jesus that we pray. Amen.



*Trustee Pearl G. Anderson*

Pearl is a founding member of the MAABC family and serves as Trustee, Pastoral Leader of the Finance Committee, and Faith Talks facilitator. She is the mother of Deacon Nicholas (Nicole) and the grandmother of Peyton.

*Thursday, March 23, 2023*  
*Out of Darkness*

*Prayer*

Father God, you could have allowed your power and might to be the only basis of how you related with us and instructed us on what you require from us but you didn't. Thank you, Father, for your mercy and for loving us so much that you came in Jesus Christ to show us your way.

*Amen.*



*Brother Kevin Hunter*

Kevin is a founding member of MAABC and has served in several capacities: Hospitality Ministry; Choir, Men's Ministry. He is married to Jackie Short Hunter and together they are the parents of Romiah.

*Thursday, March 23, 2023*  
*Out of Darkness*

I was in. The darkness for me was the lack of knowledge I had about God, and not knowing the gift of God in Jesus Christ and how God really loved me and truly wanted and still wants to bless my life and make me a blessing. Therefore, darkness became for me the instruction of the world; that is why Paul instructed the church to have no fellowship with this darkness; but to try hard to truly know what pleases God.

As a result of the darkness, I made some very bad choices that had some painful effects on me as well as other people; these choices made me feel unworthy to follow God. I dwelt in that darkness for a while. There were so many times, others tried to get me to give my life to God. When I think about it, I was just like the man that lived by the tombs. I felt like I knew Jesus and what he was all about; therefore, based on what I knew about him and who I was (at the time), he wouldn't want anything to do with me. That's why I thank God and I'm grateful today for the church, especially MAABC! In the church, God is not just showing me God is high and lifted, or God's ways are not my ways. In the church where I meet Christ, Jesus shares God with me, shows forgiveness, patience, and love. Jesus Christ literally walks with me and talks with me and Jesus Christ claims me as his own. Hallelujah! I've learned today that it is a process to change and that it doesn't happen overnight. But like Paul said if you try hard to find what pleases God, what we will find will heal us. What we will find will deliver us. What we will find will restore us and make us God's lights for a dark world.

*Wednesday, March 22, 2023*  
*"The Lord is My Light and My Salvation"*

As I read and reflected on the lectionary readings for this fourth Sunday in Lent, I saw a repeating theme. The Lord is my shepherd (Psalm 23). The Lord is my light in darkness (Ephesians 5:8). Jesus is the light (John 9:5), and the Lord judges us by what is in our hearts (Samuel 16:7).

My life has been a "cycle of faith"; and has often depended on my age, my circumstances, my needs, my troubles and my joys. When things were going well in my life I marveled at how good "I" was handling things and taking care of business. When things were rough, I worried and pondered on what to do. I prayed...some...but I felt like control of my life and the lives of my family depended on me. But in spite of me, God was with me through it all. The Lord was my shepherd (Psalm 23), even when I didn't acknowledge that he was.

Then it happened. The Lord showed me that the Lord was in control of ALL of my life. The Lord placed circumstances in my life that opened my eyes to see that only the Lord was in charge. In times of trouble, the Lord led me beside still waters and restored my soul. Yea, though I walked through the valley of the shadow of death, I feared no evil. For the Lord was with me (Psalm 23). The Lord was my light in my time of fear (Ephesians). During my times of anguish when I knew I had not been faithful and humble to the Lord. The Lord still loved me and judged me by my heart (Samuel).

*Wednesday, March 22, 2023*  
*"The Lord is My Light and My Salvation"*

There was a peace that came into my life that only trusting and believing in God could bring. My praying changed. My faith grew stronger. I know now, without a doubt, that my life is not my own. It's the Lords.

*Prayer*

Heavenly Father, thank you for being my shepherd. Thank you for being the light in my time of darkness and for loving me in spite of myself. I love and worship you Lord. Use me to do YOUR will. I give you all honor, praise and glory. In the precious name of Jesus, I pray.

*Amen*



*Deaconess Linda James*

Linda serves as a part of the Diaconate Team for CDG H, Pastoral Leader of Mission, Outreach, and Evangelism (MOE) Ministry, and Let's Talk Ministry. She is the mother of two daughters, Teena and Cheryl, the grandmother of eleven, and the great-grandmother of seven.

*Thursday, March 23, 2023*  
*Out of Darkness*

As we observe Lent, we are reminded by our Pastors that this is a time for us to acknowledge and reflect on two things. First, we are mortal, and life, as we know, will someday cease to be. Secondly, sin is an ever-present factor in us and is something we will always have to deal with and work to overcome.

The letters text for this week is taken from Ephesians 5:8-14. Paul is reminding the church of who they are in Christ. He begins by telling them that at one point all were in darkness but now in the Lord, there is light. Paul encourages the church to live as children of light instead of living a life that really profits nothing but evil and destruction. He pleads with them to work hard to discover the things that please God and to continue pleasing God. In this text, Paul also shares about being an example of God's goodness by letting their change be a guide to others so that God may get glory from their lives.

Well as I meditated on what Paul was saying, it took me back to my life before I joined the church. I remember how as a child I would hear stories about God from people and even some of the churches I attended. My vision of God as a result of some of the stories I heard was that God was this "spirit" in the sky that saw everything we did. In order to be blessed, you had to be good because when people did wrong this made God angry and God would allow the devil to do bad things to you. I remember hearing that you couldn't question God because God knew everything. You had to just trust God. Darkness for me as I listened to this scripture and reflected on my life, was not so much the bad things that I did, although they definitely were a result of the darkness,