

# *A Call to Journey with our Lord Jesus Christ*



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## ***A Call to Journey with our Lord Jesus Christ***

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.<sup>1</sup> 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 prayers, fasting, and almsgiving. This season of forty days provided a time in which converts were prepared for baptism into the body of Christ, the church. 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 need for the grace of God through Jesus Christ, let us journey with our Lord Jesus Christ this Lenten Season. With the aid of the Holy Spirit, we will meditate on God's Word and examine ourselves by using the spiritual disciplines of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving.

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<sup>1</sup> 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.***

## **Revised Common Lectionary Readings for Lent, Year B**

### **Ash Wednesday, February 14, 2024**

- **First Reading** Joel 2:1-2, 12-17  
or alternate **First Reading** Isaiah 58:1-12
- **Psalm** 51:1-17
- **Second Reading** 2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10
- **Gospel** Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

### **The First Sunday in Lent Sunday, February 18, 2024**

- **First Reading** Genesis 9:8-17
- **Psalm** 25:1-10
- **Second Reading** 1 Peter 3:18-22
- **Gospel** Mark 1:9-15

### **The Second Sunday in Lent, February 25, 2024**

- **First Reading** Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16
- **Psalm** 22:23-31
- **Second Reading** Romans 4:13-25
- **Gospel** Mark 8:31-38

### **The Third Sunday in Lent, March 3, 2024**

- **First Reading** Exodus 20:1-17
- **Psalm** 19:1-14
- **Second Reading** 1 Corinthians 1:18-25
- **Gospel** John 2:13-22

### **The Fourth Sunday in Lent, March 10, 2024**

- **First Reading** Numbers 21:4-9
- **Psalm** 107:1-3, 17-22
- **Second Reading** Ephesians 2:1-10
- **Gospel** John 3:14-21

### **The Fifth Sunday in Lent, March 17, 2024**

- **First Reading** Jeremiah 31:31-34
- **Psalm** 51:1-12 or alternate **Psalm** 119:9-16
- **Second Reading** Hebrews 5:5-10
- **Gospel** John 12:20-33

## **Palm Sunday (Passion Sunday), March 24, 2024**

### **Liturgy of the Palms Readings:**

- **Psalm** 118:1-2, 19-29
- **Reading** Mark 11:1-11 **or alternate Reading** John 12:12-16

### **Liturgy of the Passion Readings:**

- **First Reading** Isaiah 50:4-9a **or alternate Psalm** 31:9-16
- **Second Reading** Philippians 2:5-11
- **Gospel** Mark 14:1-15:47 **or alternate Gospel** Mark 15:1-39 (40-47)

## ***Suggested Daily Readings for Lent<sup>2</sup>***

*Based on Pauline Letters, Romans through Philemon*

### **Ash Wednesday, February 14, 2024**

*Thursday, February 15, 2024*

*Romans 1:1-3:20*

*Friday, February 16, 2025*

*Romans 3:21-5:21*

*Saturday, February 17, 2024*

*Romans 6:1-7:24*

### **First Sunday in Lent, February 18, 2024**

*Monday, February 19, 2024*

*Romans 8:1-11:31*

*Tuesday, February 20, 2024.*

*Romans 12:1-13:14*

*Wednesday, February 21, 2024.*

*Romans 14:1-16:27*

*Thursday, February 22, 2024.*

*1 Corinthians 1:1-2:16*

*Friday, February 23, 2024*

*1 Corinthians 3:1-4:21*

*Saturday, February 24, 2024*

*1 Corinthians 5:1-6:20*

### **Second Sunday in Lent, February 25, 2024**

*Monday, February 26, 2024*

*1 Corinthians 7:1-9:27*

*Tuesday, February 27, 2024*

*1 Corinthians 10:1-11:34*

*Wednesday, February 28, 2024*

*1 Corinthians 12:1-13:13*

*Thursday, February 29, 2024*

*1 Corinthians 14:1-16:24*

*Friday, March 1, 2024*

*2 Corinthians 1:1-3:18*

*Saturday, March 2, 2024*

*2 Corinthians 4:1-7:1*

### **Third Sunday in Lent, March 3, 2024**

*Monday, March 4, 2024*

*2 Corinthians 7:2-9:15*

*Tuesday, March 5, 2024*

*2 Corinthians 10:1-11:33*

*Wednesday, March 6, 2024*

*2 Corinthians 12:1-13:13*

*Thursday, March 7, 2024*

*Galatians 1:1-2:20*

*Friday, March 8, 2024*

*Galatians 3:1-4:31*

*Saturday, March 9, 2024*

*Galatians 5:1-6:18*

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<sup>2</sup> For Ash Wednesday and the Sundays in Lent, read the assigned lections from the Revised Common Lectionary.

**Fourth Sunday in Lent, March 10, 2024**

Monday, March 11, 2024

*Ephesians 1:1-23*

Tuesday, March 12, 2024

*Ephesians 2:1-3:21*

Wednesday, March 13, 2024

*Ephesians 4:1-6:24*

Thursday, March 14, 2024

*Philippians 1:1-2:30*

Friday, March 15, 2024

*Philippians 3:1-4:23*

Saturday, March 16, 2024

*Colossians 1:1-2:23*

**Fifth Sunday in Lent, March 17, 2024**

Monday, March 18, 2024

*Colossians 3:1-4:18*

Tuesday, March 19, 2024

*1 Thessalonians 1:1-3:13*

Wednesday, March 20, 2024

*1 Thessalonians 4:1-5:28*

Thursday, March 21, 2024

*2 Thessalonians 1:1-2:17*

Friday, March 22, 2024

*2 Thessalonians 3:1-18*

Saturday, March 23, 2024

*1 Timothy 1:1-3:16*

**Palm Sunday (Passion Sunday) March 24, 2024**

Monday, March 25, 2024

*1 Timothy 4:1-6:21*

Tuesday, March 26, 2024

*2 Timothy 1:1-2:26*

Wednesday, March 27, 2024

*2 Timothy 3:1-4:22*

Thursday, March 28, 2024

*Titus 1:1-16*

Friday, March 29, 2024

*Titus 2:1-3:5*

Saturday, March 30, 2024

*Philemon*

## ***A Time to Reflect***

In the midst of our observance of Lent, we as African American Christians who are Baptists will share with other African Americans and the nation to celebrate Black History Month. Black History Month also known as African American History Month is a time to commemorate the struggles and triumphs of African Americans in their fight for freedom, justice, and equality. ***Our observance of Black History Month for us as African American Christians is about how God in Jesus Christ through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit is at work in our history and experience to bring about salvation of the lost, the reclamation of the backslider, the sanctification of the saints, the liberation of the poor and oppressed, and transformation of unjust structures of society.***

Each time we gather in worship we declare our identity.

We are the Metropolitan African American Baptist Church family!

We are unashamedly African American!

We are unapologetically Christian!

We are submitted to Jesus Christ! We are submitted to one another!

We are a gracious community in pursuit of peace!

Christ is here for you through us!

In addition to this statement, we recite the Apostles Creed, which is used by many church communions, and our own MAABC Confession of Faith. These statements remind us of who we are and who the Lord our God is, what the Lord our God has done for us, what the Lord our God expects from us, how the Lord our God wants us to respond and how we will respond.

### ***The Apostles' Creed***

***I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth;***

***And in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,***

***who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary,***

***suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried***

***On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven,***

***and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty;***

***from there he shall come to judge the living and the dead.***

***I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion***

***of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body***

***and life everlasting. Amen.***

## ***Metropolitan African American Baptist Church Confession of Faith***

**Leader:** Who are we? Who is the Lord our God?

**People:** We are African-American Christians who are Baptists. Our ancestors were Africans whose families were taken out of their land. We were few in number when we were brought to this land but we became a populous people. The people who ruled this land treated us harshly and forced us to work as slaves. Then we cried out for help to the God of Abraham, Sarah and Hagar, Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob, Leah, Rachel, Zilpah and Bilhah, and the Father of Jesus Christ.

**Leader:** What has the Lord our God done for us?

**People:** God heard us and saw our suffering, hardship, and misery. By God's great power and strength, God saved us from sin to righteousness, from death to life, from slavery to freedom, and from oppression to liberation. God worked miracles and wonders and caused terrifying things to happen. God is forever opening doors for us that were once closed.

**Leader:** What does the Lord our God expect from us?

**People:** You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and you shall love your neighbor as yourself (Luke 10:25-28). A new commandment I give unto you, that you shall love one another as I have loved you (John 13:34).

**Leader:** What is our response?

**People:** So, we gather in worship this day as African-American Christians to offer praise and thanksgiving to God for all that God has done and is doing for us and through us. We offer ourselves and our resources to God that God may through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit empower us to live our lives in accordance with God's will. We will participate in history as agents of salvation in relation to the unsaved, agents of reclamation in relation to the backslider, agents of sanctification in relation to the saints, agents of liberation in relation to the poor and the oppressed, and agents of transformation in relation to the unjust structures of society.

**Leader:** What about those of other races, nationalities, colors and creeds who come within our gates?

**People:** We welcome them as persons loved and valued by our Lord Jesus Christ. We love them and affirm their dignity and worth as human beings.

These summary statements are the ways we affirm our faith but so often, we give little consideration to what we are saying. However, as we journey with our Lord Jesus Christ through this Lenten Season, let us take time to reflect during the Lenten Season, who we are and how God in Jesus Christ, through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, is at work among us and through us as African American Christians.

- Reflect on some thoughts, words, metaphors, or expressions that come to us time and time again.
- Share how these thoughts, words, metaphors or expressions inform our identity as African Americans who are Christians.
- What spiritual discipline (fasting, prayer, study, confession, acts of compassion) is God in Jesus, through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, calling you to practice during this time? Share why you have been led to engage in this discipline and the impact it has had on you and others (family, church family, coworkers, friends).

## ***An Ash Wednesday Reflection***

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent. Many Christians will set aside time this day to gather in worship for clergy to impose ashes on their foreheads and to hear the declaration, *"Remember you are dust and to dust you shall return"* (Genesis 3:19c).

This worship experience emphasizes a dual encounter: our mortality and the need to confess our sins before God and others within the community of faith. To put it bluntly, our gathering in worship on Ash Wednesday signifies the reality of death. We all are going to die. Our gathering in worship points to the fact that we die because we are sinners. We sin against God, each other and creation and sin leads to our death.

Being that we sin and we die, what is the hope that we can find as we enter the Lenten season? The ashes that are imposed on our foreheads remind us that as sinners we face deathly situations. Yet the ashes imposed on our foreheads are in the shape of a cross. The cross is the source of our hope. The cross says that God, in Jesus Christ through the presence of the Holy Spirit, is able to bring life in deathly situations.

In our Let's Talk Ministry Group, members were asked to reflect on the images, words, thoughts, metaphors or expressions that come to their minds as they consider the imposition of ashes on their foreheads and how participation in this worship experience impacts them as African American Christians. Sister Theresa Randall was led to focus on our Affirmations of Faith: the Apostles' Creed and MAABC Confession of Faith. For her, forgiveness of sin has given and gives her hope. This leads her to be used by God as God's agent of salvation, reclamation, sanctification, liberation, and transformation. In other words, she can make a difference as she lives on earth and certainly, she can look forward to the resurrection of life made possible through the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. She wants to journey with our Lord Jesus Christ by practicing the spiritual disciplines: worship, reading the Scriptures, attending to the teaching and preaching of the Pastors, saying and keeping covenant.

To God be the glory! May we all journey together with our Lord Jesus Christ knowing that we can receive God's grace that is activated in our lives through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. We can have victory over sin, death, slavery and oppression.