

2018 Lenten Booklet

"40 Days of Soul Stirring Reflection"



Saint James Presbyterian Church, USA

820 Ross Avenue, Greensboro, NC 27406

"Touching Lives Through Jesus Christ!"

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Reverend Dr. Diane Givens Moffett, Senior Pastor

Introduction

“Show that you are my followers by producing much fruit...” John
15:8

John 15:8 is the theme scripture for Saint James Presbyterian Church this year. This passage reminds baptized believers of our call to serve Jesus Christ. Made new in Him, we are called to be like Jesus—to bear much fruit in our lives. The fruit a tree produces is directly related to the health of the tree. The interior state of the tree impacts what comes forth on the outside.

During Lent, baptized believers in Christ are called to reflect upon our journey of faith. What kind of fruit are we producing? How are we positively impacting our community? Are we being good stewards of the gifts God deposits within us? How might we strengthen our church’s witness and grow in the knowledge of Christ? These and other questions are what I invite us to ponder and reflect upon during the 40 days of Lent. I invite us to spend these 40 days nurturing our connection with God by praying, fasting and engaging in other spiritual disciplines designed to strengthen our relationship and awareness of God’s presence in our lives. Jesus spent 40 days and 40 nights in the wilderness, nurturing his connection with God through the spiritual disciplines of fasting and praying. In order to truly appreciate and celebrate his resurrection from the dead on Easter Sunday, we are called to die with him during the season of lent. My hope is that our “death” may stir our very souls to wake up, step up and be renewed in our commitment to serve God and God’s people in our church and community.

Before concluding let me say, I was not alone in preparing this booklet for our use. I am grateful to Elder Paula Graves who wrote the daily scriptural devotionals. I am grateful to Ms. Jasmine Evans who designed the layout and produced the booklet. And I am grateful to other staff, officers and volunteers who will participate and engage in the activities outlined within this book so that this season of Lent produces much fruit for God’s glory.

Blessings,

Reverend Dr. Diane Givens Moffett

What is Lent?

Lent is a Christian season of forty days, not counting Sundays, which begins on Ash Wednesday and ends on Holy Saturday. The term "Lent" comes from the Anglo Saxon word "lenten" which means, "spring." The lengthening of the daylight hours, and the reawakening of the earth make Lent a time of promise and hope. This year Ash Wednesday begins on February 14th and Holy Saturday ends on March 31st. You are invited to journey through Lent with us beginning with Ash Wednesday worship on February 14th at 7:00 pm. See the schedule below for the location of this important service that marks the beginning of Lent.

How did Lent start?

Lent dates back to the early Christian Church and is connected to the Christian focus on the redemptive suffering and self-sacrifice of Jesus in the season of fasting, penance, and self-sacrifice, prior to Easter Sunday. As the early church grew, the season of Lent also began to be associated with the period of instruction for new Christians prior to their baptism on Easter, and for the restoration of those who had departed from the faith. During Lent, new converts and those established in the faith were expected to engage in fasting and other spiritual disciplines following in the foot steps of Moses, Elijah, and Jesus, who all underwent fasts of forty days as a part of their prophetic call. In 604 C.E., Gregory the Great inaugurated Ash Wednesday as the way to begin Lent. On Ash Wednesday, Christians are expected to engage in the imposition of ashes and to repent of those things that distract us from our walk with Jesus. Since ashes are a long-established biblical symbol for mourning, penitence, humiliation and purification, the addition of Ash Wednesday as a part of the Lenten season, reinforced Lent as a time for self-examination, and self-sacrifice in anticipation of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Why should I participate?

The term lent carries with it the promise of new life. During spring, hibernating bears wake up. Little purple flowers burst forth. Green grass begins to grow and fruit comes forth from trees. The process of moving from death to life is more fully appreciated when one takes the time to embrace death by reflecting on one's faith journey, and engaging in spiritual disciplines that help us to die to habits and attitudes that impede our relationship with Christ and others. Serious reflection and engagement in spiritual disciplines break up the fallow ground and stir the soul to produce much fruit to the glory of God. Believers who observe a Holy Lent making sacrifices to focus on their relationship with Christ are able to discover how God is at work in their lives and so recommit to following Jesus.

What Lenten Activities Am I Being Asked to Participate in?

This year Saint James Presbyterian Church members and friends are asked to do 6 things:

1. Read the daily scriptures and reflect upon them.
2. Answer the question and engage in daily response to the scriptures
3. Attend Wednesday Evening Soup & Sharing at Saint James Presbyterian Church
4. Attend Wednesday Evening Worship Services at various churches in Greensboro
5. Serve a ministry that extends beyond the local church.
6. Tithe or give a Special Lenten offering to support Saint James Presbyterian Church

More About Our Lenten Activities

Wednesday's Soup & Sharing 5:30–6:30 pm

Saint James members and friends are asked to participate in Wednesday's **Soup & Sharing**. The purpose of Soup & Sharing is to focus on particular spiritual disciplines and pay attention to how these disciplines help develop and shape our inner life. Participants will learn about, and be asked to participate in the following spiritual disciplines during the following Wednesday Soup and Sharing times:

February 21st – Centering Prayer

Prayer is a vital spiritual discipline that can take many forms including the discipline of centering prayer. Centering prayer is a method of meditation that places a strong emphasis on interior silence. The name is taken from the late Thomas Merton's description of contemplative prayer. Centering prayer invites the participant to “empty oneself.” This kind of emptying or kenosis is mentioned in Philippians 2:5–8. Participants will be asked to engage in Centering Prayer, making time twice a day for 5 minutes of “silence” from February 21st – February 28th then come prepared to share with others their experience of centering prayer on February 28th during Soup and Sharing.

February 28th – “Dream Watch”

Scriptures reveal God speaks to us in dreams. From the book of Exodus where Joseph dreams of his rise to power before it happens to Acts 10: 9–16 where Peter gains a vision for the church God speaks to us in dreams. Dreams can guide, direct, and heal us. During this session we will explore some biblical examples of how dreams are used. Participants will be asked to record their dreams from February 28th– March 7th then come prepared to share with others their experience of Dream Watch on March 7th during Soup and Sharing.

March 7th – Fasting

The use of fasting in Lent can be traced to how this discipline is used in scripture. In Exodus 34, for example, Moses fasts for forty days on Mount Sinai as a way of preparing to receive God's Word. Jesus is driven by the Spirit into the wilderness to fast for forty days in preparation for his public ministry, which marks a new time in his life. Fasting is done for a variety of reasons including repentance and mourning for our brokenness and sin, seeking the will of God, marking new seasons in our life such as baptism and new ministries, and preparing to receive God's Word. Fasting is primarily the embodiment of an inner disposition—a reorientation of the heart, which includes true repentance, self-examination and humility. Fasting is not limited to food or drink. For example, a person can fast from complaining, gossiping, television, radio, movies shopping for extra items and social media. Participants will be asked to engage in fasting during the week of March 7th – March 14th then come prepared to share with others their experience of fasting on March 14th during Soup and Sharing.

March 14th – Journaling

Journaling is a way to record thoughts regarding God's work in our lives and to keep track of prayer requests, answers to prayer, and how God is guiding us. A written record of personal reactions on spiritual matters helps guide and direct one's attitude and actions so that we may reframe from thoughts and behavior that enhance our journey with God. Journaling can be a tangible way to record our growth in faith. During the week of March 14- March 21st participants will be asked to keep a daily journal and then come prepared to share their experience of this discipline in Soup and Sharing on March 21st.

March 21st - Lectio Divina

Lectio Divina involves reading scripture and allowing scripture to read you. The term Lectio Divina is a Latin phrase that means "divine reading." Lectio Divina describes a way of reading the Scriptures whereby we gradually let go of our own agenda and open ourselves to what God wants to say to us. The steps and practice of Lectio Divina will be presented in this Session. Participants will then be asked to engage in Lectio Divina from March 21st – March 28th and then come prepared to share their experience of this discipline in Soup and Sharing on March 28th.

Wednesday Evening Worship Services 7:00 pm

Saint James will join 12 prominent churches in the city of Greensboro in celebrating Lent and Easter by worshipping together each Wednesday at 7pm. The Reverend Johnny Freeman, Pastor of United Institutional Baptist Church began inviting churches to celebrate the Lenten Easter Season together some 14 years ago. The purpose in coming together is to strengthen cooperation and support among participating congregations, and to amplify our Christian witness in the City of Greensboro and beyond. Plan to participate in Wednesday Evening Worship. The schedule is listed below:

Event	Date Time	Church Location	Preacher
Ash Wednesday	Feb. 14 7:00 pm	United Institutional Baptist 802 East Market Street	Pastor Vince Hairston
Soup & Sharing Worship	Feb. 21 5:30 pm Feb. 21 7:00 pm	Saint James Presbyterian Church Wells Memorial COGIC 1001 East Washington Street	Pastor Diane Moffett Pastor Verenander Hughes
Soup & Sharing Worship	Feb. 28 5:30 pm Feb. 28 7:00 pm	Saint James Presbyterian Church Saint James Presbyterian Church	Pastor Diane Moffett Pastor William Dingle
Soup & Sharing Worship	Mar. 7 5:30 pm Mar. 7 7:00 pm	Saint James Presbyterian Church Ebenezer Baptist Church 2700 West Vandalia Road	Pastor Diane Moffett Pastor Jerome Lee
Soup & Sharing Worship	Mar. 14 5:30 pm Mar. 14 7:00 pm	Saint James Presbyterian Church New Zion Baptist Church 408 Martin Luther King Jr. Drive	Pastor Diane Moffett Pastor Richard Thomas

Event	Date Time	Church Location	Preacher
Soup & Sharing	Mar. 21 5:30 pm	Saint James Presbyterian Church	Pastor Diane Moffett
Worship	Mar. 21 7:00 pm	Calvary Christian Center 369 Air Harbor Road	Pastor Diane Moffett
Soup & Sharing	Mar. 25 5:30 pm	Saint James Presbyterian Church	Pastor Diane Moffett
Worship	Mar. 25 7:00 pm	Shiloh Baptist Church 1210 S. Eugene Street	Pastor Daran Mitchell
Worship	Mar. 26 7:00 pm	Manasseh Baptist Church 804 Franklin Boulevard	Pastor Howard Woods
Worship	Mar. 27 7:00 pm	Saint John Baptist Church 62 NC Highway 22, Climax, NC	Pastor Darryl Aaron
Soup & Sharing	Mar. 28 5:30 pm	Saint James Presbyterian Church	Pastor Diane Moffett
Holy Wednesday	Mar. 28 7:00 pm	Trinity AME Zion Church 631 East Florida Street	Pastor Johnny Pearson
Maundy Thursday	Mar. 29 7:00 pm	Saint James Baptist Church 536 W. Florida Street	Pastor Herman Platt
Good Friday	Mar. 30 12 noon	Saint James Presbyterian Church	Pastor Diane Moffett
Good Friday	Mar. 30 7:00 pm	Providence Baptist Church 1106 Tuscaloosa Street	Pastor W. F. Wright
Easter Sunrise	April 1 6:30 am	Genesis Baptist Church 2812 East Bessemer Avenue	Pastor Johnny Freeman
Easter Sunday	April 1 8:00 am	Saint James Presbyterian Church	Pastor Diane Moffett
Easter Sunday	April 1 11:00 am	Saint James Presbyterian Church	Pastor Diane Moffett

Serve.

Service to others is the center of Christian life. Jesus came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. His service extended beyond his inner circle. The scriptures point us to the crowds that gathered around him and how he had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd. Two years ago our congregation engaged in a study of the book, *The Missional Church*, by Reggie McNeil. This reading helped us to rededicate our efforts and focus to serve the community around us.

In an effort to be faithful to our call to serve during the season of Lent, we are asking each congregant, including our children to be intentional in serving others by volunteering once a week in agencies and programs that serve others. Below is a list of programs you may volunteer to participate in during the season of Lent.

Volunteer Opportunities:

A Message and A Meal

Who: Co-Sponsored by Saint James and the Cone Health Network
What: Assist with the various components involved in serving a free, hot meal
Day: Every Sunday
Time: Volunteers arrive at 2pm, meal service to guest begins at 3pm
Place: Saint James Fellowship Hall
Contact: Church Office, Elders Paula Graves, Tyrone Collins & Deacon Sharon Jones

Saint James Blood Drive

Who: Co-Hosted by Saint James and the Community Blood Center of the Carolinas
What: Blood Drive
Days: Sunday, February 18th
Time: 12:30pm
Place: Saint James Presbyterian Church
Contact: Church Office- Elders Sharon Smiley or Oscar Reid

Healing Greensboro

Who: Sponsored by Local Faith Leaders
What: A time for collective reflection, healing, prayer and unity
Days: Every Tuesday
Time: 12 Noon – 12:15pm.
Place: Government Plaza – Downtown Greensboro (110 S. Greene Street, 27401)
Contact: Church Office

Other Recommended Agencies:

Greensboro Urban Ministry

305 W. Gate City Blvd.

Greensboro, NC 27406

336.553.2642

www.greensborourbanministry.org

Interactive Resource Center

407 E Washington Street

Greensboro, NC

336. 332. 0824

www.gsodaycenter.org

Habitat for Humanity

617 N Elm St

Greensboro, NC

336. 275-4663

www.habitat.org

Give.

Believers are called to give to the Lord out of gratitude. The tithe or giving 10% of one's income is the standard of giving. However, there are times when sacrificial giving is appropriate. One of the reasons for sacrificial giving is that it expresses gratitude while at the same time, strengthening our faith and helping us to grow spiritually. One pastor described how sacrificial giving works with this example. He said, "if you want to strengthen your muscles you must work them beyond their current ability. In other words, you must lift a weight that is heavy enough to exhaust you by lifting it 5-7 times. Lifting a very light weight many times will not strengthen your muscles." Sacrificial giving provides God the opportunity to display God's faithfulness. When you give sacrificially, when we give to the point of it hurting a bit, we exercise our faith and we learn to trust in God by giving God a chance to prove himself trustworthy. During Lent press yourself in the area of financial giving. If you are not currently tithing, commit to tithing during this 40-day period. If you already tithe, give an additional offering. Watch and take note of how God shows up in your life.

Daily Devotional Reading

Ash Wednesday, Feb. 14 Wednesday Evening Worship–United Institutional Baptist 7:00pm
Pastor Vince Hairston, Guest Preacher

Scripture Reading: Genesis 3:19

Reflection: Today we are reminded that we are dust. We begin our participation in a season where we intentionally dig deeper into spiritual disciplines that help us to strengthen our journey of faith. We are reminded on this day of our sinful nature, our mortality and ultimately our need to repent.

What is God calling you to repent of during this Lenten season?

Prayer: Most merciful God, I confess that I have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what I have done, and by what I have left undone. Forgive me Lord and help me during this Lenten journey to recognize my need for change and to be intentional in walking in your ways. Amen.

February 15

Scripture Reading: John 1: 38–39

Reflection: As this season of Lent begins, we must ask ourselves, “What am I seeking?” Jesus asks the same question of the disciples in the scripture reading. We have the opportunity to intentionally prepare ourselves for true transformation in our lives. We must be open to the experience and remain hopeful with expectant hearts to what lies ahead.

What am I seeking?

Prayer: Jesus help me to seek You first today. I pray for a heart committed to seeking You and a willingness to endure through this journey. Amen.

February 16

Scripture Reading: Matthew 4:4

Reflection: The forty days (excluding Sundays) of lent reflect the forty days of fasting that Jesus endured in the wilderness. Traditionally during Lent we practice forms of self-denial. Some may choose to give up meat, sweets, social media and so on. The intent is for us to give up something for the purpose of deepening our spiritual life. As we remove physical things from our lives for this period of 40 days, it can help us focus on the deeper parts of ourselves that are made whole through our relationship with Christ. Be intentional about what you choose to give up. You are also encouraged to go beyond the usual practice of not only giving something up but adding something new. For example you may add a new spiritual discipline. By adding a new spiritual discipline you can experience a heightened awareness of God's presence in your daily life.

What form of self-denial are you participating in for Lent? What spiritual discipline or other activity are you adding?

Prayer: Oh Lord, help me to be led by your wisdom. Let me die to myself so that I may serve you. Help me to recognize what is needed in my life and what is not so that I may live with an open heart recognizing the areas of my life that need to change in order for me to carry out Your mission and experience the joy You have imagined for my life. Amen.

February 17

Scripture Reading: Colossians 3:12

Reflection: We often look to things like work, other people or material things to provide us with a sense of security, value and identity. But our true security, value and identity are anchored in our relationship found in God. The Christian life is living as God's chosen ones, wearing spiritual clothing so that people see Christ in our lives.

What brings you security, value and identity? Why?

Prayer: Abundant God, forgive me for the times that I fail to remember that You are the source of my security, value and identity. May they see in me, the qualities of character that can only be attributed to Your presence in my life. Amen.

February 18

Scripture Reading: Psalm 46

Take a moment of stillness today. Put aside all distractions and allow the hurriedness of life to give way to a calm and hushed mind. Take some deep breaths and ask the Spirit of God to meet you. Reflect on the experience here. What was it like?

Lift up your personal prayer to God.

February 19

Scripture Reading: John 5:2-15

Reflection: For 38 years, day in and day out an invalid prayed the same thing, "Help me." After a while, these words started to become a hopeless mantra. He had been rejected for so many years, left to suffer alone. Then Jesus came to him as he was broken and desperate. The Lord asked, "Do you want to get well?" The man didn't even know who Jesus was, yet Jesus mercifully healed him. Jesus meets us where we are. Where do you need Jesus to meet you today?

Prayer: Thank you Lord for meeting me where I am and accepting me as a work in progress in need of your healing and hope. Amen.

February 20

Scripture Reading: Mark 6:31

Reflection: It's easy to get caught up in the busyness of life and lose focus on what's most important. Take some time to be alone today allowing your mind and heart to be recharged so that you are able to produce good fruit.

What can I do to be intentional about alone time?

Prayer: Lord, in the quietness and stillness of the day, help me to draw nearer to you. I ask Lord that you watch over me as I seek to silence the noise to better hear You. Amen.

*2/21-2/27 Practice Centering Prayer and be prepared to share your experience on 2/28/17 at Soup & Sharing

February 21 Soup & Sharing at St. James 5:30 pm; Worship at Wells Memorial COGIC 7:00 pm

Pastor Verenander Hughes, Guest Preacher

Scripture Reading: Philippians 4:6

Reflection: We are challenged to maintain a posture of prayer in every situation. Clearly, prayer is meant to be a priority in our lives. We must be devoted to communicating with God regularly so that we may experience the hand of Christ in our lives. When we pray, God moves powerfully in our lives.

What would a life devoted to prayer look like to you?

Prayer: God help me to be a person of prayer. Help me to not let my busyness become an excuse, but rather, when I get busy, compel me to seek you even more. Help me to overcome anxiety as I trust in you and bring my petitions before you. Amen.

February 22

Scripture Reading: Matthew 6:31-33

Reflection: Jesus emphasizes all throughout his ministry that three things are of supreme importance: loving God with all our heart, loving our neighbor, and seeking after God's Kingdom. If we do those things, everything else will fall into place with the help of our Creator. How are you showing love to your neighbor?

Prayer: Father God, I am ever so humbled by the intense, deep love You have for me, love that would cause You to weep for those who don't know You. Help me to trust that love, to feel it around me, and to help me believe beyond a shadow of a doubt that I am safe and sound in Your embrace. Give me courage to share that love with others through my words and actions. Amen.

February 23

Scripture Reading: Luke 19:41-42

Reflection: A key element in knowing Jesus more is the giving of your time to be in Jesus' presence, time to engage in Jesus' Word and time to act in the ways Jesus instructs. Resolve today to spend more keenly focused time with Jesus, especially during the Lenten season, with the sole purpose of knowing Jesus more.

In what ways can I rearrange my schedule so that I have dedicated time to spend with Jesus?

Prayer: O gracious Father, help me keep my eyes focused on your Kingdom, my heart centered on you, my mind illuminated by your Word, and my spirit empowered and cleansed by your Spirit. Amen

February 24

Scripture Reading: John 11:25-26

Reflection: God's power is limitless. As you grow closer to Christ and declare Him as Leader of your life, His power offers purpose, strength and the peace of knowing that no matter what earthly circumstances may arise, His power will overcome. Amen.

What challenge do you currently face? How have you seen the power of Jesus show up in your life in the past?

Prayer: Almighty God, I give you all the glory. I declare that every stronghold over my life is broken. I pray that every mountain be removed through Your working power.

February 25

Scripture Reading: Psalm 118

What are you most grateful for today? Why?

Lift up your personal prayers to God.

February 26

Scripture Reading: James 5:16b

Reflection: Fervent speaks to the level of intensity, passion and persistence. We are to remain committed to prayer and to see it as a part of our daily living. God hears our prayers and will bring an answer in His perfect timing. Commit to praying to God trusting that the answer will come in God's perfect way and in His perfect timing.

How do you feel about your prayer life? Are there any changes you need to make to recommit yourself to praying?

Prayer: Lord, teach us to pray. We have been given the gift of partnering with You in prayer. Stir our hearts to pray and give us ears to listen as You speak. During this Lenten season renew our commitment to prayer and connection with You. Thank You for the answers to our prayers. Amen.

February 27

Scripture Reading: Colossians 3:5-10

Reflection: Some behaviors are clearly wrong in God's eyes. Read through the list of behaviors in Colossians 3 and ask God for His forgiveness and His power to overcome the patterns and behaviors that you know are clearly not God's way.

What old habits do I need to get rid of during this Lenten Season?

Prayer: Dear Lord, I realize that I have some bad habits. I do things that are not beneficial for me and my well-being. Please help me to break these bad habits and exercise self-control to be better. I am so appreciative to have your Holy Spirit transforming me! Thank you for Your direction, guidance and the encouragement found in Your Word. Amen.

*2/28-3/6 Practice Dream Watch and be prepared to share your experience on 3/7/17 at Soup & Sharing

February 28 Soup & Sharing” at St. James 5:30 pm; Worship at St. James Presbyterian 7:00 pm
Pastor William Dingle, Guest Preacher

Scripture Reading: Philippians 3:12-14

Reflection: Everyone falls short of God’s glory. Recognizing the things that are keeping you from a deeper relationship with Christ and asking for His forgiveness is the first monumental step. Next there is a need to turn from the behavior, and follow Christ’s way with intentionality for the purpose of knowing, loving and following Him more deeply.

What is going on in your life that is keeping you from growing deeper in your relationship with Christ?

Prayer: Dear Lord, thank you for accepting me as I am. Thank you for forgiving me when I have gone my way instead of Yours. I ask for strength to make the necessary changes in my life to help me be the best version of me. Amen.

March 1

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 26:3

Reflection: In today’s Scripture Isaiah is giving us the remedy for dealing with the storms of life. “You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in You.”

Yes, there will be storms in the forecast for us. Storms are inevitable. But we also have the confident assurance that the Lord will shelter us in the storms. Do you want peace in the midst of your storm? Place your trust in the Lord and do not allow the storm to shake your faith.

List at least 3 things you can do to find peace in the midst of life’s storms.

Prayer: Dear God, you remind us over and over in the Word that You are with us. In You is where we can find refuge from the storms of life. Thank You Lord that the storm will not last forever. We press in close to Your Presence, and no matter what obstacles we’re facing, we choose joy. Amen.

March 2

Scripture Reading: Romans 7:18-20

Reflection: Paul reminds us of the struggle that we may sometimes face within when we desire to do the right thing, but in our own efforts, we don't have the power to and we mess up. When we're facing this type of struggle, we must rely on God's power that lives within us through the Holy Spirit and not our own false sense of power. We must learn to yield to and become totally reliant upon the Holy Spirit.

Are there areas in your life causing an internal struggle?

Prayer: Gracious God, give me the desire to please You in all things and in all my ways. Forgive my stubbornness and pride when I want to do things my way instead of following Your way. Thank you for grace and mercy. Amen.

March 3

Scripture Reading: 1 John 4:18-20

Reflection: God is love! When you are afraid remember that you are a part of God's family and you are protected by God's love. Our Lord is more powerful than anything. There is no fear in love, but God's perfect love casts out fear.

Think about something of which you are afraid. Name it out loud. What do you fear most right now?

Prayer: Lord, help me to stop living fearful when You have given me Your perfect love. I pray that my life reflects Your will for me and that Your promise of protection will help me walk in love and compassion for others. Amen.

March 4

Scripture Reading: Psalm 36

In what ways has God demonstrated his love for you? Recount it here. Lift up your personal prayers to God.

March 5

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 64:8

Reflection: The Bible says that God is the Potter and we are the clay. When we are open to God's will in our lives, He molds, transforms, and sanctifies us as we walk with Him.

When we come to the Potter, we need to surrender all to our Lord including our imperfections. We need to let Jesus mold us and make us the vessel of honor that He wants us to be. We are the work of God's hands.

In the journey of our lives we realize that many experiences shape and form us, those that are positive and those that challenge. Name how at least one experience or person has helped to shape your faith.

Prayer: Dear Lord, give me eyes and ears to hear Your voice. Open my heart to Your Word. As I'm challenged in the days ahead, please give me what I need to humble myself and honor You. Help me to take time to be holy, to spend time with You in secret, to trust in Your Word. You are the potter. I am the clay. Mold me and make me according to Your will. Amen.

March 6

Scripture Reading: James 1:2-7

Reflection: What do you expect when you pray? When we pray with earnest expectation, we are exercising our faith. The earnest prayers of people walking in step with God can produce powerful results, and the most earnest prayers come from us recognizing our need for God.

What are you trusting God for in this season?

Prayer: Lord, help me to stand firm in my faith as I walk with you. Guard and renew my mind, body, soul and spirit in Christ Jesus according to Your will. May my life be filled with faith and expectation that You are working all things for good. Amen.

*3/7-3/13 Practice Journaling and be prepared to share your experience on 3/14/17 at Soup & Sharing

March 7

Soup & Sharing at St. James 5:30 pm; Worship at Ebenezer Baptist 7:00 pm

Pastor Jerome Lee, Guest Preacher

Scripture Reading: John 4:3-42

Reflection: Sometimes we carry shame, guilt, feelings of rejection or assume our sin makes us unlovable. Like the Samaritan woman, we may find ourselves at an empty well trying to fill a void in our innermost being with the things of the world that can not satisfy our longing. The great thing is Jesus knows us and meets us at our loneliest hour and in our deepest thirst. Jesus is the living water that fulfills our every need.

What are you thirsty for?

Prayer: Lord, You know our hearts and what we thirst for. Grant each one of us with the necessary insight into our thirst. Remove all that hinders us from seeing the fullness of who You are in our lives. Amen.

March 8

Scripture Reading: 2 Corinthians 1:8-9

Reflection: Did Jesus suffer? Was Jesus sometimes lonely? Was Jesus tempted to be discouraged? Was Jesus misunderstood and criticized? Yes! None of us are exempt from this happening to us. It is during these times that we must remember the character of Christ and believe that God is using our dark and stressful times for good.

What do you normally do when going through difficult times? If that's not working for you what can you do differently?

Prayer: Lord, help us to stop our griping and complaining and trust that You will give us peace in all situations. Help us to rest our minds because we can count on a living God to do what we can't do. Amen.

March 9

Scripture Reading: Romans 12:2

Reflection: It is easy to be caught up in what's going on in the world today. It can appear appealing to follow what the majority does. But if we want lasting change in our lives we need to refocus our mind. We have to let go of old attitudes and old thought patterns. God is concerned with what is going on within us. It's important that we stop trying to control our actions by ourselves and allow God to change our actions through the renewing and transforming of our hearts and minds.

What practical steps can you take to renew your mind?

Prayer: Father, I pray that you would search my heart and mind and show me any area that is not in agreement with what You say about me in Your Word. Help me to see the gifts and strengths are that You have placed on the inside of me, and help me to use them for Your glory. Transform me from the inside out so that I may be all that You have called me to be. Amen.

March 10

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 2:10

Reflection: A masterpiece does not happen by accident. It is not the result of something random but the result of an inspired plan. We are the inspired masterful work of God.

As the masterpiece of God's creation, describe some of your qualities?

Prayer: Lord, I am honored and humbled to be Your handiwork. Thank you for allowing me to be a part of Your kingdom here on earth. Amen.

March 11

Scripture Reading: Psalm 130

What am I expecting as I wait upon God? Lift up your personal prayers to God.

March 12

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 1:17-18

Reflection: It is clear that there is certain wisdom and revelation that only God can give. We can receive this by simply asking God to give us “a spirit of wisdom and revelation.” God has all the answers we need to help us see clearly the things we need to understand.

Can you remember a time in your life when a light bulb went off in your spirit and you saw a new revelation from God that you’d never seen before?

Prayer: Lord, open my eyes to see You more clearly and my ears to hear anything You desire to speak. I pray for a Spirit of wisdom and revelation that I might know Jesus more deeply and have a profound understanding of the hope that is in His heart for me

March 13

Scripture Reading: John 15:4-5

Reflection: The key to fruitfulness is for us to have our lives joined to Jesus. As our lives are joined to Jesus and we abide in Him, then fruitfulness happens naturally. As branches, we derive our health and productivity from the Vine and are called to live according to Jesus’ example bearing the same kind of results we see in His life.

What is the evidence in your life that you are bearing fruit?

Prayer: Lord, help me to remember that apart from You I can do nothing. Apart from You, I have no sustenance for life. But with Your word dwelling in me, I can bear more fruit than I could ever imagine, fruit that will last. I seek Your presence and power in all that I do. Amen.

*3/14-3/20 Practice Fasting and be prepared to share your experience on 3/2/17 at Soup & Sharing

March 14

Soup & Sharing” at St. James 5:30 pm; New Zion Baptist Church 7:00 pm

Pastor Richard Thomas, Guest Preacher

Scripture Reading: Romans 8:5-6

Reflection: Sometimes what appears to be clean is not and requires us to do some deep cleaning. Over time we can allow situations and pressures to build up inside of us. This build up can eventually consume our lives causing us to lose our peace, joy and our passion for the things of God. Fasting is an effective way to do some spiritual deep cleaning that helps us take our mind off of the things of this world and instead have a refreshed focus on the things of the Spirit.

As you pray, ask God to show you any areas where you could use a refreshed spiritual focus. What is revealed to you?

Prayer: Lord, at times I grow tired and lukewarm in my love and service for You. Forgive me for allowing the distractions of the world to take my focus off of You. Please renew the joy of my salvation and give me a fresh passion for You. Amen.

March 15

Scripture Reading: Philippians 4:6

Reflection: We all struggle with worry in different ways. Somehow in our minds we like to think that worry works for us. It reminds us what needs to get done or it motivates us to get to the next step. But the truth of the matter is this: worry works on us; it doesn't work for us. It steals our joy and robs us of peace. It times of worry we must choose to have faith and trust God.

How do you let go of worry?

Prayer: Gracious Lord, in my time of worry and doubt, please give me peace. Help me not to worry about things that are out of my control. Help me to be mindful that you are with me in all situations. Amen.

March 16

Scripture Reading: Mark 1:12-13

Reflection: Even Jesus disconnected from the world to fast and pray. There are times that we, too, need to pull away from the things of the world and focus on God. Fasting is a means of disconnecting from the distractions of daily life and consciously choosing to bring God into greater focus.

What do you need to deny yourself so that this can be a powerful time in your life?

Prayer: Lord, during this Lenten season, help me to be still before You as you fill me with strength, peace and a hunger to grow closer to You. Break the power of sin and worldly habits that keep me from you. Amen.

March 17

Scripture Reading: Luke 4:1-2, 14-15

Reflection: Fasting and prayer are helpful in receiving a clear vision of God's specific path for our lives. This period of intentional prayer and fasting can often help in clarifying our understanding of the part that we are to play in the body of Christ. The power of the Spirit is essential for us to accomplish the assignment God has for our lives and in helping us to receive His specific instructions for our lives.

Are there areas of your life that need more clarity?

Prayer: Holy Spirit, thank You that Your power lives within me. I want to live more in Your power. I do not want anything to block me from growing closer to You. I ask for a clear calling and discernment as I desire to live out the assignment You have given me. Amen.

March 18

Scripture Reading: Psalm 51

With the psalmist, I realize that God's compassion helps me to acknowledge my sins; God's presence creates in me a resolve to do better; How does this scripture speak to you?

Lift up your personal prayers to God.

March 19

Scripture Reading: Proverbs 3:5-6

Reflection: Christ promised us that he would take care of us and supply all of our needs. We must trust Him without doubt, hesitation or worry. We must rest in the promises of God.

In what areas do I need to trust God?

Prayer: Lord, I recognize that I must trust You in everything. Help me in those times when I am weak and my trust is wavering. I welcome You into every corner of my life, Lord, so that no matter where I am and what I am doing, behind it all I am trusting You in everything. Amen.

March 20

Scripture Reading: 2 Peter 3:10-18

Reflection: Growing in a relationship with Jesus doesn't just happen by itself. Whether you're a new Christian or you've been a Christian for a while, growing is easier said than done. There are days that we feel stuck or far away from God instead of closer to Him. Rather than being concerned about when we will get through something, we can maintain focus on who promises to be with us through it all. Because Jesus is patient, He doesn't give up on us.

What is one way you can grow in your relationship with Jesus?

Prayer: Loving God, You are always with us, guiding us and loving us. Sometimes we get so focused on our lives that we forget to spend time with You. This week, help us find new ways to focus on You. Help us learn how to trust You, love You, and share Your love with others. Amen.

*3/21-3/27 Practice Lectio Divina and be prepared to share your experience on 3/21/17 at Soup & Sharing

March 21

Soup & Sharing at St. James 5:30 pm; Calvin Christian Center 7:00 pm

Pastor Diane Moffett, Guest Preacher

Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 13:4-8

Reflection: We read in this chapter that nothing compares to real, genuine, Godly love. A love that is unconditional. It doesn't matter how much of the gifts we are operating in, if we do not have God's love inside, it means nothing. Everything we do needs to come from a heart of real, genuine love. We need to operate out of Godly love to be effective in reaching out to others especially those that are in need of a genuine love that does not judge or condemn.

How does this passage connect to your life?

Prayer: Dear Lord, today and every day I surrender my heart to you. I want to learn to live my life in Your love and be filled with Your love. Help me to accept others, just as you've accepted me. Help me to love others unconditionally, just as you have loved me. Amen.

March 22

Scripture Reading: Joel 2:12-17

Reflection: Though the land has been devastated by drought and the plague of locusts, it is not too late for Judah to repent. Sometimes, we think we are too deep in sin for God to forgive us when He is still patiently waiting for us to return to Him. Christ will never abandon His children. Jesus will heal, restore, and renew.

What parts of my life are on "E"? What can make me whole again?

Prayer: Lord, please give me a heart of repentance to see myself as You do. Give me the grace to respond to Your merciful call for change. Let me be commitment to renewing my spirit everyday through my relationship with You. Amen.

March 23

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 30:15-21

Reflection: God had warned Judah not to turn to Egypt and other nations for military help, but to trust him and wait quietly. They became impatient and rejected God, relying on human cleverness and power instead, which caused big problems for them. Like Judah we miss out on God's grace when we don't wait on God, but hurry to act by human power.

Write one word or phrase from this Scripture reading that the Holy Spirit impresses upon you?

Prayer: Dear Lord, I come to you as I am-tired, confused and impatient. I ask for Your strength. Lift me up Lord as I surrender all that I carry to You. I pray for patience as I wait on answers to my prayers. Your Word steadies me and brings forth the truth. Write Your Word upon my heart that it will guide me all the days of my life. Amen.

March 24

Scripture Reading: Psalm 139:1-14

Reflection: This Psalm shows us how God uses His infinite knowledge and power to bring us closer to Him. We are reminded that our lives are no accident and the purpose for our lives was ordained even before we were born. Our Lord knows everything about us and is present everywhere around us. This helps us to take comfort in knowing that God is thinking of us and is always with us.

Enter into the Scripture passage. What do you feel?

Prayer: All knowing God, You know us better than we know ourselves-all our thoughts and actions-and yet You love us. No matter where we go or what we do, Your love encircles us. Thank You for Your faithful presence in our lives. May Your Spirit continue to move in our hearts and minds as we allow Your Word to guide us to paths that lead to life. Amen.

March 25

“Palm Sunday”

Scripture Reading: Psalm 34

We are spiritually nourished by feeding on God’s Word and by doing His will. Ask God to open your spiritual eyes and ears to receive His Word as life-giving and sustaining.

Take a moment to reflect on how God’s Word nourishes you and brings life to you.

Lift up your personal prayers to God.

March 26

Scripture Reading: Philippians 3:14

Reflection: The Apostle Paul reminds us to discipline ourselves by the Word of God so that we can not only stay in the race, but also complete it in a way that brings glory to God. Discipline for the believer is achieved when we read and obey the Word, and allow the Holy Spirit to lead and guide us.

What do I need to do today to be more disciplined?

Prayer: O God, I run toward Christ. Enable me to increasingly concentrate on that goal in all of my life. Help me to remain encouraged by Paul's emphasis on forgetting the past and straining forward to what lies ahead. Help me not to let yesterday's failures derail me from the goal of your upward call. Amen.

March 27

Scripture Reading: Luke 23:34–46; Matthew 27:46; John 19:26–30

Reflection: Forgiveness can sometimes be a very difficult thing to do yet it is what we are to offer others. But no matter how difficult we perceive it to be we are not alone. Jesus provides us with the blueprint to forgiveness. Through forgiveness you release healing into your own life including healing of your soul and the potential for healing in your relationships.

Who do I need to forgive today and what steps will I take to do that?

Prayer: Gracious God, please reveal to me those I need to forgive. Shine the bright light of Your truth into the dark corners of my heart where I hide unforgiveness. Please help me to forgive, deeply, from my heart, as You have forgiven me. Amen.

March 28 Soup & Sharing at St. James 5:30 pm; Worship at Trinity AME Zion Church 7:00 pm
Pastor Johnny Pearson, Guest Preacher

Scripture Reading: Luke 23:32-34

Reflection: Those who crucified Jesus knew that they were killing an innocent man. They crucified Him anyway. They might have known that what they were doing was not right, but what they did not know was the depth and profound impact of their actions. Jesus' death on the cross is for our forgiveness of not only the things we know we have done, but also for the depth of the impact of our wrong actions that we don't even see now.

How does the fact that Christ died so that our sins can be forgiven impact your daily life?

Prayer: O God, who forgives us, lives in us, and calls us to do the same, may we find peace in your forgiveness, and the forgiveness be shared with others. Amen.

March 29

Scripture Reading: Matthew 26:18-19

Reflection: The Passover meal in the Old Testament was a way of remembering the night God saved His people from destruction. On that occasion, the blood of lambs was smeared on the doorways to mark the households that were to be spared bloodshed. The Last Supper is a Passover meal with new significance, with Jesus' (The Lamb of God) blood soon to be spilled to "pass over" those who accept Christ as their Redeemer.

As you remember Jesus' sacrifice during Communion, will you more deeply feel the weight of His death? Will you more deeply commit to a life of obedience and passion in following Him?

Prayer: Forgive me, Lord, for any time that I may have been unwilling to live in a manner that proclaims you as my Lord and Savior, as well as Lord and Savior of the world. Cleanse me from my denials and betrayals of you, and empower me by your Spirit to live as a faithful disciple in submission to You. Amen.

March 30 "Good Friday" Worship at St. James Presbyterian Church 12:00 pm

Scripture Reading: Luke 22:42-44

Reflection: Jesus knew what was coming. He knew that in order to follow God's will for Him, He would suffer the crushing weight of the sin of all humanity through His death. Yet even in this moment of sheer anguish, Jesus trusted His Holy Father and followed through willingly. Take a few moments today to ask God to help you deepen your understanding of what it meant for Jesus to accept God's wrath for us so that you would be spared His punishment and instead live in Jesus' everlasting light and hope.

Prayer: Lord help me to remember the love you have for me. Help me to focus on the sacrifice you made on my behalf. Help me to heed the call to sacrifice for others and for strength to follow Your will, even when it isn't what I would choose. Amen.

March 31

Scripture Reading: John 19:28-30

Reflection: God's offering of Jesus for the sin of the world came at great personal cost to Jesus. The public humiliation, the emotional cost and the intense physical suffering of death on the cross were just a few of the many costs of Jesus' offering for the redemption of the world. What action will you take to ensure the great cost of Jesus' death on the cross is fully remembered? What can you do personally? Within the larger church family? Take a few moments today to commit to following through on what God is asking you to do, so that Jesus' gift is fully realized through you.

Prayer: Jesus, I thank you for this Lenten journey. I thank you for the work that you have done in my life as I have tried to submit myself to you for my spiritual growth. Thank you, Lord, for your sacrifice on my behalf. You suffered greatly that I could be healed and forgiven of my sin. Jesus, continue to prepare me today for the celebration of your resurrection tomorrow. Amen.

April 1 "Easter" Sunrise Service at Genesis Baptist Church 6:30 am,
8:00 am & 11:00 am Worship at St. James Presbyterian Church

Special 2018 Lent and Easter Worship Services

Ash Wednesday, February 14, 7:00 pm – United Institutional Baptist Church

This Ash Wednesday Service is a special worship service that marks the beginning of Lent. During Ash Wednesday worship service members and friends will be invited to come forward for the imposition of ashes as a symbol of penitence for personal sins and the corporate sins of our world. Friends and family members are invited to join us for this special time of worship.

Maundy Thursday, March 29th 6:30 pm – Saint James Presbyterian Church

The Maundy Thursday *Tenebrae Worship* also known as *Service of the Shadows* is a special worship service that marks the “night that Jesus was betrayed.” The term “Maundy,” means “mandate” and refers to the new mandate Jesus gives on the night before his death. This mandate is that we “love one another.” The Maundy Thursday Tenebrae Service includes Holy Communion and scripture reading followed by the increased darkness as lights are turned down. Please plan to attend this special time of worship and bring family members and friends. Nursery care is provided.

Good Friday, Friday, March 30th 12 Noon – Saint James Presbyterian Church

This year the Good Friday Worship Service will feature preaching of the Seven Last Words by officers of the Congregation, along with special music, dance and dramatic recitation of scriptures and poetry.

Easter Worship Services

6:30am Sunrise Worship Service – Genesis Baptist Church

8am Easter Worship Celebration with Holy Communion

9:15am Easter Breakfast

11am Easter Worship Celebration with Holy Communion

