

# April 2024

# Daily Bread

Monday, April 1, 2024

## **Turn Around**

By Cindy L. Korf of Yuma, Colorado, USA

*This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.*

—Psalm 118:23

When I was a teenager, people kept talking about the beauty of sunrises. They spoke about the need to rise early in the pre-dawn cool air to experience the transformation of darkness to light, cold to warmth, black to bursting colors of reds, oranges, and yellows.

One summer, I finally decided to get up early and “experience” a sunrise. As a teenager who liked to sleep in, this was a major decision for me. The first morning I slept through the sunrise. The next morning I opened my eyes to darkness and decided my bed was too warm to leave. How can a teenager get up that early?

Forty years later, I walked west on a path in the pre-dawn hours. The sky was gray, when suddenly a flash of pink shot across the horizon in front of me. A voice said, “Turn around.”

I turned around. There, in the eastern sky was the unforgettable sunrise of the stories from my youth. Colors burst from the skyline, encircling the horizon, and lighting up the sky. Clouds transformed from black ominous shapes to iridescent reds, oranges, and yellows. The gray sky transformed into the clearest shade of blue I had ever seen. It was magnificent! It was inspirational!

At that moment, the meaning of the sunrise revealed itself to me. Sure, I have seen other sunrises and have admired them. I don't know why the memory of testimonies from my youth surfaced. But it did.

We hear testimonies of Jesus. We hear about those who have a personal bond with Christ, who know him, who have his Spirit within them. We yearn for our own testimony and experience with the Living Christ. Sometimes, as it was for me to know a sunrise, it might take 40 years before we might truly experience the touch of Jesus' hand.

For those who share the message about Jesus and worry the message isn't getting across to our friends, have faith. It will. But it is all in God's time—maybe even 40 years later. God's message is eternal.

**Prayer Phrase:** “...my God turns my darkness into light” (Psalm 18:28).

### **Spiritual Practice: Light**

Close your eyes and become centered with your breath. As you breathe gently in and out, reflect on the statement, “The light of God is in all things.” The light has a bright, soft beauty and radiates God's healing love. The light of God reaches you and permeates you with a deep sense of peace. Rest in the light as it surrounds and fills you. Thank God that you live in God's light, and it lives in you.

Tuesday, April 2, 2024

## **Broken Mirrors**

[Excerpted from *A Way of Life: Understanding Our Christian Faith* by Anthony Chvala-Smith, Herald House, pp. 75–76]

*Therefore we were buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life.*

—Romans 6:4

We are the good creatures of God, yet we are entangled in a power that Christian faith calls “sin,” a power that affects everything. The sheer fact that God created us makes us persons. To call humans “persons” is another way to speak of our God-given honor and role. To be a person is to have intrinsic dignity.

Our existence is grounded in the reality of God, which absolutely nothing can change. Yet at the same time, as *persons* we are broken and lost, fearful and wounded, rebellious and deceitful, estranged from God who made us and from vital community with others. Made to reflect the divine light, we love darkness (John 3:19). It is little wonder we baffle ourselves.

Our puzzling nature actually prepares us to know and love the One through whose life, death, and resurrection the broken mirror is being remade and our fractured humanity mended.

Jesus’ message of the reign of God recalls us to our true humanity. He restores our lives by setting them in the blazing light of divine love and the promise of creation’s transformation. In this light we see our need and our potential. In him we see the lengths God has taken to reclaim us for the divine purpose, and we are freed to respond to his invitation to new life.

That God loves this world declares the worth of every life. No humans lie outside the scope of God’s saving concern. Jesus Christ reclaims for us our proper place in creation as God’s free and honored creatures and as agents of peace and justice.

**Prayer Phrase:** “...my God turns my darkness into light” (Psalm 18:28).

### **Spiritual Practice: Light**

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Wednesday, April 3, 2024

## **The Way of Peace**

By Katie Harmon-McLaughlin, director, Formation Ministries

*Look, I will tell you a mystery! We will not all die, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.*

—1 Corinthians 15:51–52

Somewhere a candle is burning,  
Stretching light into darkness  
In a temple, a church, a home,  
A bright signal, a deep commitment  
Guiding our feet into the way of peace.

We hold these candles into darkness,  
The Blessed night that holds and forms us,  
Trusting that it still matters  
To be here, dedicating this day,  
This moment to the pursuit of peace.

Don't fear when it feels the night is endless.  
Trust that we have exactly what we need.  
Deep faith is made for these times,  
When our courage is summoned  
To keep lit our candles in bold hope.

When it feels like everything is ending  
and all you see is suffering, destruction, despair,  
Light this candle of peace wherever you are—  
In your home, with your children, in the center of the city,  
In your own quiet solitude and desperate prayer.

Light your candle and walk this way.  
Imagine how the world might change  
As we keep holding this light into darkness.  
Imagine who right now is yearning  
For the very light you dare to hold.

Creation is still yearning for peaceful humanity.  
The vision that calls us has not changed.  
It is time to remember who we claim to be,  
To light these candles of persistent prayer  
That guide our steps in the way of peace.

**Prayer Phrase:** "...my God turns my darkness into light" (Psalm 18:28).

### **Spiritual Practice: Light**

Close your eyes and become centered with your breath. As you breathe gently in and out, reflect on the statement, "The light of God is in all things." The light has a bright, soft beauty and radiates God's healing love. The light of God reaches you and permeates you with a deep sense of peace. Rest in the light as it surrounds and fills you. Thank God that you live in God's light, and it lives in you.

Thursday, April 4, 2024

## **Dark Spaces**

By Andy Horner of Centennial, Colorado, USA

*Then the Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces, and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the Lord has spoken.*

—Isaiah 25:8

Unifying Creator,

We turn to you in this eternal moment to pray for peace in our world, which so often seems so broken. We pray for the casualties and refugees wounded and displaced by warfare between nations. We pray for those who have been left behind and marginalized in our communities because of our desire to stratify our human relationships into strong and weak, winners and losers, worthy and unworthy. We pray for boys and girls, women and men who are abused by those whom we would expect to ensure their safety.

We lift our voice in prayer for the poor, displaced, mistreated, and diseased of the world because of their unnecessary suffering, even as we acknowledge the ways in which we are poor, displaced, mistreated, and diseased ourselves. Inasmuch as we are wealthy, we recognize that our wealth can confuse us into thinking that we deserve a life of luxury. Inasmuch as we are secure, we acknowledge that our security can itself displace us by convincing us that all is well. Inasmuch as we live in privilege, we confess that our privilege reflects the disease of our culture, a disease from which we are not immune. Inasmuch as we are healthy, we admit that it is a sick world that does not care for all its citizens.

Touch us in our brokenness. Light the dark spaces we prefer to avoid with the light of your love. Give us courage, stamina, and wisdom to go to the places where you call us to witness of your love. Makes us ensigns of your peace, we pray as followers of Christ. Amen.

**Prayer Phrase:** "...my God turns my darkness into light" (Psalm 18:28).

### **Spiritual Practice: Light**

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Friday, April 5, 2024

## **Embrace Our Light**

By Zac Harmon-McLaughlin, Dean, Community of Christ Seminary

*What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.*

—John 1:3–5

I don't know about you, but in our world, it is easy to become cynical. God's beloved creation seems to be plagued with poverty, hunger, violence, oppression...and the list goes on. These problems seem so large that they overwhelm us, and we often cease our challenge to the status quo simply because we don't know where to begin.

However, John 1 gives us an insight into our own capacity to create meaningful and sustainable change in the world. "What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it" (John 1:3–5). Our being is the light of God! You, me, the other—all created with life and light! John continues, "And the word became flesh and lived among us..." (John 1:14). God not only gives us life, but God lives among us, within us, through the risen Jesus Christ. The joy of salvation, resurrection, and grace all in one place—you and me!

When I step back to recognize that I am a holder of the light of God, I am reminded of words in Matthew that call me to be a light in the world. I recognize that while these problems are vast and complex, I play a role in changing the world simply by being the person God has called me to be—God's own beloved.

My prayer is that we don't become cynical, but that we embrace our own light. We often think the only way to change the world is to do some grand publicized act. Jesus' marker of success was much smaller—love God, love your neighbor. That's how you challenge cultures of oppression and violence; that's how you abolish poverty and end suffering. Perhaps St. Ignatius was on to something when he invited his congregants to join their lights together as a community of Christ. He ended many of his letters to them in the same way I now end this: "Go, set the world on fire!"

**Prayer Phrase:** "...my God turns my darkness into light" (Psalm 18:28).

### **Spiritual Practice: Light**

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Saturday, April 6, 2024

## **Transformative Generosity**

[Excerpted from *Choose Generosity: Discover Whole-Life Stewardship*, Herald House, p.76]

*God is calling for a prophetic community to emerge, drawn from the nations of the world, that is characterized by uncommon devotion to the compassion and peace of God revealed in Jesus Christ.*

—Doctrine and Covenants 163:11a

“Sharing the peace of Jesus Christ involves generously and compassionately offering witness, ministry, sacraments, and community life that reconciles and restores people to right or righteous relationships with God, themselves, others, and creation. This holistic approach to proclaiming and demonstrating the gospel is faithful to our best understanding of God’s will” (*Sharing in Community of Christ*, 4th Ed., p. 14).

As whole-life stewards, we strive to share the peace of Jesus Christ through every facet of our lives and support others in doing the same. This involves generously sharing our tithing of time, talents, treasures, and testimonies.

“Tithing as a spiritual-growth discipline deepens our relationship with Jesus Christ, the embodiment of God’s grace and generosity. The more we deepen our relationship with Jesus Christ, the more we desire to support Christ’s mission every way we can. The more we support Christ’s mission every way we can, the more we are responding to the ministry of Jesus Christ” (President Steve Veazey, “Generosity and Sharing: Part 1,” January 2015 *Herald*).

Our generous sharing, dedicated to fulfilling God’s glorious purposes on Earth, fills us with abiding joy and enduring meaning. Our generosity releases Christ’s mission to touch many lives around the world. Faithful disciples do not just initiate acts of generosity, they anticipate the transformative effect of those acts. Uncommon generosity changes people, changes communities, and changes the world.

**Prayer Phrase:** “...my God turns my darkness into light” (Psalm 18:28).

### **Spiritual Practice: Light**

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Sunday, April 7, 2024

**Easter People Witness**

By John Wight of Blue Springs, Missouri, USA

*We declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.*

—1 John 1:3

In his first epistle, John the Evangelist was apparently trying to communicate to the people that he was sharing firsthand information he was excited about so they might be excited, too. Those who had seen and heard of all or part of Jesus' birth, life, death, and resurrection couldn't resist declaring this good news to others.

I saw a wonderful example of this kind of enthusiastic desire to witness to others several years ago. My family and I had hiked part way up a mountain in Colorado to see a beautiful waterfall. We drank in the beauty for a couple of hours. When it came time to leave, my family headed down ahead of me. As I approached the main trail from where we had been observing the waterfall, I encountered a boy, probably 8 or 9 years old, who began exclaiming in a loud, excited voice, "There's a waterfall over there! There's a waterfall over there!"

He was so excited to share his witness with me that he apparently forgot everything his parents may have taught him about not talking to strangers. He just had to share with me what he had seen and heard. Needless to say, I wasn't going to say I had already been looking at it for two hours. Instead, I said, "Really!? Please show me!" He excitedly led me back toward the waterfall and we stood seeing and hearing this glorious example of God's creation as his parents joined us.

I shall never forget that young man's enthusiastic witness to me that day and the blessings I received as a result. That memory is a constant reminder to me of the counsel we have received through continuing revelation:

Lovingly invite others to experience the good news of new life in community with Christ. Opportunities abound in your daily lives if you choose to see them.

—Doctrine and Covenants 165:1c

**Prayer Phrase:** "...my God turns my darkness into light" (Psalm 18:28).

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Monday, April 8, 2024

## **Wiggle Room**

By Deb Crowley of Urbandale, Iowa, USA

*There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold.*

—Acts 4:34

How I wish I could will the word “they” out of existence at times!

It’s so easy to love, share our resources with, sacrifice for, and extend grace to family members and extended family members. It’s not so difficult to expand our care to others in our sphere of influence, those whose faces we know and connect with. For the most part, we understand circumstances surrounding their choices and give folks near and dear to us some “wiggle room” or grace. Our hearts see the Christ in their eyes and hearts, and we understand they are loved unconditionally.

But do we ever notice, as the circle expands and faces become less visible, that it’s easier to judge or blame or criticize? It’s harder to see Christ in the eyes of a politician arguing a position with which we disagree on the Senate floor or become suspicious of decisions of church leaders struggling to decide how to keep the church financially viable while congregations struggle to keep their own doors open. Or see Christ in the eyes of a gun advocate when innocent children have been gunned down in school.

The further our circle widens and the harder it becomes to see Christ in the eyes of the “other,” the easier it is to label them as “they”! “They” are just caving in to big money; “they” do not empathize with our congregation’s situation; “they” are crazy to support gun ownership when so many innocent lives are lost! The “they” list goes on and on.

I’ve been (and probably continue to be) one of the “they”! And I’ve been one to label “they” when decisions seem unreasonable or disagreeable to me.

But we are reminded that in Christ’s realm, we do not live in a “they” world. It’s “us” and “we.” All are of worth; all are called; we are community. The love we have for our close circle of family and friends is the love Christ calls us to have for the “they” in our lives.

Experience of being a “they” has helped me tremendously to understand the importance of not jumping to quick conclusions, looking not just at one side or two of an issue, but as many sides as possible to get a clearer picture of another’s choices or actions.

To see Christ in the eyes of those we cannot see, but know Christ resides there; to show compassion to those who express harshness and hate; to generously share time, talent, treasure, testimony with those who seem to take and take and take; to sacrifice self for one who may never appreciate the act. To love the “they” in the world because all are God’s children. This is my prayer. Amen.

**Prayer Phrase:** “...my God turns my darkness into light” (Psalm 18:28).

### **Spiritual Practice: Light**

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Tuesday, April 9, 2024

## **Sunshiny Light**

By Pam Cress of Camano Island, Washington, USA

*For the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.*

—Romans 14:17

Seeking the cooler air of a heavily wooded walking trail on a very hot, end-of-summer day, I was enjoying some exercise. The trees grew so closely together that the bright sunlight only peeped through in small, rare patches. Lush ferns and moss were abundant among the trees and rocks.

After about an hour, my senses had filled with the shadowed greens, grays, and browns, and my thoughts drifted inward. My never-ending “to do” list came to mind. I mentally added some new items, and then worried over how they might fit into my already tight schedule. The burdens and concerns of some loved ones came to mind, and I offered short prayer thoughts and made mental notes of calls to make or cards or notes to send in support and care. With some labored breathing, I gained the top of an upward slope in the path and...surprise!

There stood a sunflower! In a place where a sunflower should not be! I love sunflowers with their bright yellow and gold heads that seek the sunlight. The French word for sunflower, *tournesol*, literally meaning “sun-turner” in English, has always charmed me. This one had no regular access to sunlight in the forest. Nevertheless, it had turned to face east where the sun could be expected to rise.

As I stopped to admire the little sun-turner living in the depths of the shadowed forest, I felt wonder, even hope. It felt like a sacred reminder of God’s amazing care and love...and provision above and beyond the boundaries of our expectations or shadowed concerns.

I curiously wondered who else had noticed the sunflower or who had passed by unseeing, intent on counting steps or heartrate or a billion other things. I offered a silent prayer of gratitude for seeing. Then I deepened the prayer to one of thanksgiving for the God who holds all of creation and brings sunshiny light even when I do not think to look for it.

Surprise!

**Prayer Phrase:** “...my God turns my darkness into light” (Psalm 18:28).

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Wednesday, April 10, 2024

## **Neighbors**

By Diana Hansen of Gilbert, Arizona, USA

*How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity!*

—Psalm 133:1

Loving our neighbor is foundational to Christian discipleship. We might question who our neighbors are, the type of love Jesus meant, and whether all neighbors should be loved equally. Yet the call to love God with devotion and love each other unselfishly remains certain. Loving God and our neighbor is Christ-like.

During my early thirties, repressed childhood memories began to disrupt my life at work, church, and with family and friends. I was overcome by fear, helplessness, shame, and despair. My life fell apart. Yet through these years, neighbors like those Jesus spoke of were present. Their love, compassion, and charity ministered to me deeply. When the path was too dark for human companionship, God's infinite grace comforted me. Even in my darkest hours, I was not alone. Through personal effort, time, and the love of several good neighbors, open wounds healed into scars, and I became changed—new.

This experience taught me that the good news within the commandment to love our neighbor is more fully revealed when others are viewed as God sees them—as divinely beloved. No one, myself included, is easy to love or be around when life is falling apart. Can we be mutually courageous and present through someone else's storm? Can our hope help light the way for someone else's darkness? Is our belief in others as "God's beloved" strong enough to forgive what seems unforgivable while still upholding accountability?

Christianity is not a solitary endeavor; rather it is a communal pursuit for the benefit of all creation. Therefore, loving our neighbor is foundational to our Christian discipleship. It is how we give Christ's mission life here, now, today.

**Prayer Phrase:** "...my God turns my darkness into light" (Psalm 18:28).

### **Spiritual Practice: Light**

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Thursday, April 11, 2024

## **Lost in the Mist**

By Peggy Young of Independence, Missouri, USA

*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.*

—John 14:27

Every day on my way to work, I would drive through the Little Blue River valley. One day, as I came over the rise on the east side of the valley, a winding white cloud rose above the narrow river. As my car curved down the hill, I wondered how thick the fog would be on the road below, along the river.

At the bottom of the hill, only a light film of mist surprised me. It scarcely obscured my visibility. The sun shone right through the cloud, lighting the way and evaporating the moisture still hanging like a thread in the air.

I thought, how like life that is. We see clouds on the horizon and worry that when they arrive in our lives, everything will be gray and dark. We fear becoming lost in the mist of impending troubles. Yet when the event arrives, it often turns out to be not nearly as dark as we feared. And even if it is, we know the Son is beyond every cloudbank, continually trying to shine through and light our way, even in the darkest circumstances. We have only to call on him to help guide us to peace.

**Prayer Phrase:** "...my God turns my darkness into light" (Psalm 18:28).

### **Spiritual Practice: Light**

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Friday, April 12, 2024

## **More Than a Word**

By Alex Kahtava of Blue Springs, Missouri, USA

*Jesus Christ, the embodiment of God's shalom, invites all people to come and receive divine peace in the midst of the difficult questions and struggles of life.*

—Doctrine and Covenants 163:2a

God, our constant companion on the journey of life, we come to this moment with our hearts and minds filled with the sounds and images of the many others that join us in this world. We see and hear the children, the youth, the parents, the elderly from the many places of this world, near and far, where peace is nothing more than a word, barely understood and ever elusive.

Like them, we seek meaning and purpose amid a world that is wildly careening through time without any apparent purpose. We, like them, dare to hope that despite deep divisions and injustice, the people of this world can become united.

Though the images and sounds of the world on this day reflect a world separated by race, creed, color, class, and political prejudice, still as children of the one God we seek a peace that passes all understanding. A peace that is found and experienced in your grace-filled and loving presence.

We lift our voice and join the worldwide chorus of peacemakers and peace seekers in affirming our commitment to this worthy and noble cause.

We are grateful and thankful for your continuing presence and the spiritual endowment that is ours by that companionship amid our pilgrimage. This we pray in the name of Jesus Christ who revealed in his life both the cost and the joy of peace. Amen.

**Prayer Phrase:** "...my God turns my darkness into light" (Psalm 18:28).

### **Spiritual Practice: Light**

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Saturday, April 13, 2024

## **Shards of Glass**

By Merna Short of Oakleigh, Victoria, Australia

*Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.*

—Ephesians 4:32

Delicate shards of broken glass shattered onto the bed. Gently, I picked them up. As I looked intently from all angles, I saw tiny, glistening fragments. It soon became obvious I could not find them all, even with the use of a vacuum upholstery brush. I would have to dispose of the blanket.

As I worked, a tiny piece of glass lodged in the pad of my finger. It was too tiny to see and remove. The practical first step was to apply a poultice and draw it out.

I thought, “What a good lesson for life this is.” There are times when we need to remove items or issues that offend or detract us from God’s purposes. Often, we must discard the offense and anything tainted by it, as the blanket.

Hurts, grudges, and pricks of life left unforgiven or unresolved work their way into our lives like the unseen, but painful, shard of glass. If left to fester, they keep pricking, irritating, and disrupting our spiritual formation.

We should pray for those who have hurt us. We need to attend to these distractions without delay and remove them from our lives, leaving us free to be the useful disciples we want to be—leaving us free to engage in Christ’s mission.

**Prayer Phrase:** “...my God turns my darkness into light” (Psalm 18:28).

### **Spiritual Practice: Light**

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Sunday, April 14, 2024

## **Easter People Believe**

By Glenn Johnson, Pacific Southwest International Mission Center president

*Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. He said to them, "Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering...*

—Luke 24:36b–41a

The disciples were faced with a reality so wonderful and so amazing they couldn't believe it. Luke writes that upon seeing Jesus "while in their joy, they were disbelieving." But then he asked them for some fish, and he ate in their presence. Now they were eyewitnesses of the one who greeted them, "Peace be with you."

The eyewitnesses saw Jesus, heard his voice, touched him, watched him eat, and *knew*. Do Easter people believe because of these eyewitnesses, or do we believe because the Spirit confirms to us the good news that is so wonderful and so amazing that it is almost impossible to believe?

I remember a sermon at reunion (family camp) in which the speaker emphasized that in the Easter miracle each of us should know that we are loved individually and communally by God. After reunion, as I lay in bed thinking about this good news, I was so overjoyed by this realization of God's love that I almost leapt up out of bed. It was a moment of profound belief, a spiritual moment, that I will remember my entire life.

I live my life in the joy that comes from faith in the risen Christ. As a member of the community, I am able to share in the fellowship of the love of Easter people formed by the good news of God's love for all the world. And in that community of love, I am called and challenged by the formative stories of Jesus' profound call for justice, peace, and right-living. I do not simply live in an Easter reality of a feel-good story. I live an Easter reality that persists in opposition to a violent, inequitable, and unjust world. Jesus' position brought him under judgment and led to his death.

Easter people believe in justice. Easter people believe in peace. Easter people believe in accountability. Easter people believe in love.

**Prayer Phrase:** "...my God turns my darkness into light" (Psalm 18:28).

### **Spiritual Practice: Light**

Close your eyes and become centered with your breath. As you breathe gently in and out, reflect on the statement, "The light of God is in all things." The light has a bright, soft beauty and radiates God's healing love. The light of God reaches you and permeates you with a deep sense of peace. Rest in the light as it surrounds and fills you. Thank God that you live in God's light, and it lives in you.

Monday, April 15, 2024

## **A Kindness Discount**

By Chris Lasley of Battle Ground, Washington, USA

*The effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust forever.*

—Isaiah 32:17

Stan is the manager of a hardware store. He's well known in the community as someone to go to for a fair deal. The hardware store has become a venue for Stan to make a difference in people's lives.

Even though there weren't any ads for specials that day, the store was busy. Customers lined up at the checkout, and Stan hurried when he noticed an elderly woman holding heavy paint cans. The man in front of the woman also noticed her heavy load. He invited her to go ahead of him.

After she checked out and left, Stan served the kind customer. The man said to Stan, "You didn't charge me enough." Stan said, "Yes, I did. I know we have limited counter space here, and I appreciate you letting that woman go in front of you. I gave you a 10-percent kindness discount."

At the end of the day, Stan added up the sales at the hardware store. He left feeling peaceful and pleased. May you find peace and opportunities for kindness at your workplace this day.

**Prayer Phrase:** "...my God turns my darkness into light" (Psalm 18:28).

### **Spiritual Practice: Light**

Close your eyes and become centered with your breath. As you breathe gently in and out, reflect on the statement, "The light of God is in all things." The light has a bright, soft beauty and radiates God's healing love. The light of God reaches you and permeates you with a deep sense of peace. Rest in the light as it surrounds and fills you. Thank God that you live in God's light, and it lives in you.



Tuesday, April 16, 2024

## **Mazes**

By Joyce Bullion of Ewa Beach, Hawaii, USA

*I will both lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O Lord, make me lie down in safety.*

—Psalm 4:8

The path of our lives can be like a maze. If we change our perspective from inside a maze and look from an aerial view, we can see where the exit is and find the shortest way to get out. We don't often have that perfect perspective. Mazes have one entrance and one exit and obstacles difficult to see around like tall, broad hedges.

We can follow one path that feels right, only to find it leads to a dead end. The maze of life can also be difficult, and we can lose our way. We need guidance as found in Matthew, "For the gate is narrow and the road is hard that leads to life, and there are few who find it."

To find our way through life's puzzles and challenges, we use the wisdom and guidance of our experiences to make responsible choices. When we remain calm and keep our eye "single to the glory of God," we can often take joy in the journey.

Blessings lie along the path of our relationship with God. Sometimes we need help and encouragement from our community—a sanctuary along the way—to get through the maze. We can then find the light once hidden behind the hedge. It is a gratifying experience to find our way through a maze. We can thank God when we do.

**Prayer Phrase:** "...my God turns my darkness into light" (Psalm 18:28).

### **Spiritual Practice: Light**

Close your eyes and become centered with your breath. As you breathe gently in and out, reflect on the statement, "The light of God is in all things." The light has a bright, soft beauty and radiates God's healing love. The light of God reaches you and permeates you with a deep sense of peace. Rest in the light as it surrounds and fills you. Thank God that you live in God's light, and it lives in you.

Wednesday, April 17, 2024

**For All to View**

“Lord, You Have Brought Us to This Place,” *Community of Christ Sings* 76, vv. 2–4

By Dennis S. Aldridge

*Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.*

—Colossians 3:14–15

We're lost in wonder at your grace that you for us did choose the place  
and here, in love, you deign to share your peace and joys beyond compare.  
Almighty God, we praise your name, your wondrous providence acclaim.

The streams and woodlands, flow'rs and trees, high hills and sunshine, cooling breeze;  
You made them all, a setting true, for this, your house, where we meet you.  
Almighty God, for this place fair accept our humble, thankful prayer.

We cannot give you what is yours so simply pray that through these doors  
your light may shine, that all may view your love for us and ours for you.  
Almighty God, with strength endow your children, for their witness now. Amen.

**Prayer Phrase:** “...my God turns my darkness into light” (Psalm 18:28).

**Spiritual Practice: Light**

Close your eyes and become centered with your breath. As you breathe gently in and out, reflect on the statement, “The light of God is in all things.” The light has a bright, soft beauty and radiates God’s healing love. The light of God reaches you and permeates you with a deep sense of peace. Rest in the light as it surrounds and fills you. Thank God that you live in God’s light, and it lives in you.

Thursday, April 18, 2024

## **Look and See**

By John Bonney of Springfield, Oregon, USA

*The lives of many are being sacrificed unnecessarily to the gods of war, greed, and avarice. The land is being desecrated by the thoughtless waste of vital resources. You must obey my commandments and be in the forefront of those who would mediate this needless destruction while there is yet day.*

—Doctrine and Covenants 150:7

As a psalm, the day has begun—a day created, a day given. I cannot look to the hills because it is still the dark of predawn. I look to the moonless sky, the dark sky with few stars. In its velvet depths I marvel at what is, what may be, and what has already been. How is it I can marvel when I see nothing but the dark? Even in the dark I cannot escape the presence of creation—the presence of the Creator.

In the depths of what presents to my eyes as nothing, there is Presence in all. It is the depth and the soul of darkness, and even in darkness it brings light—the light of understanding, the light of Presence, the light of an awesome God.

How is it that eternal light never blinds me as does the sun's light? How is it the Divine always tempers eternal light for my vision, and yet it always clarifies? How is it that eternal light never glares or causes me to turn away? It ever brings an invitation, a calling for me to look and see—see the offering for our discerning eye. It invites me to receive of eternity.

A new day dawns and the Cause is in it. I am led rightly. May I have the insight to follow as I am led. As the day progresses, I pray I may find myself a ready reflection of the Eternal within me. May I seek Divine expression in all Creation. May I see it in the world around me where the eternal image has been obscured, misshapen by human contrivance, and clouded with ignorance, suspicion, and greed.

Atone for me, O God of grace, that at times I may observe eternity. Where acts of human generosity, natural beauty, songs of the world, and praises are sent by the birds, the image is clear. May I behold beauty and elegance on the left and the right, above and below. Take my hand, Eternal One. The morning sky is dark; my vision is often narrow, and I lose my way. Light my path, Eternal Light, and lead me on.

. **Prayer Phrase:** "...my God turns my darkness into light" (Psalm 18:28).

### **Spiritual Practice: Light**

Close your eyes and become centered with your breath. As you breathe gently in and out, reflect on the statement, "The light of God is in all things." The light has a bright, soft beauty and radiates God's healing love. The light of God reaches you and permeates you with a deep sense of peace. Rest in the light as it surrounds and fills you. Thank God that you live in God's light, and it lives in you.

Friday, April 19, 2024

## **Choices**

[Adapted from *Choose Generosity: Discovering Whole-Life Stewardship*, Herald House, pp. 54–56]

*In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.*

—Matthew 5:16

In many cultures, money and earthly possessions are so powerful that we must learn how to deal faithfully with them. Regardless of how much money we have, we make choices daily about how to use it. In addition to money, in some places, commodities such as seeds and livestock are used instead of currency. In these situations, the same challenges exist.

If we perceive we have little wealth in whatever form it takes, depending on our understanding and attitude, our lives can become preoccupied with what we do not have and what it will take to get more. We can become so enslaved by the pursuit of wealth or the envy of others' wealth that our hearts no longer are focused on God's will, and our eyes no longer are full of God's light. If we are not careful, we find ourselves serving the pursuit of wealth as opposed to serving God and the pursuit of God's kingdom.

If we have much wealth, we can become seduced by the need to earn more wealth. We can become enticed to trust our wealth more than we trust God. Thus, we focus our hearts on material possessions, and our eyes reflect the darkness of that choice.

We have individual financial circumstances; yet God calls all of us to embrace the principles of the generous disciples. This keeps our eyes full of God's light. "Do not say to yourself, 'My power and the might of my own hand have gotten me this wealth.' But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, so that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your ancestors, as he is doing today" (Deuteronomy 8:17–18).

Our financial response is part of our spiritual condition. When we focus our financial response on God, Jesus Christ, and building God's kingdom, our light shines for our families and the world.

**Prayer Phrase:** "...my God turns my darkness into light" (Psalm 18:28).

### **Spiritual Practice: Light**

Close your eyes and become centered with your breath. As you breathe gently in and out, reflect on the statement, "The light of God is in all things." The light has a bright, soft beauty and radiates God's healing love. The light of God reaches you and permeates you with a deep sense of peace. Rest in the light as it surrounds and fills you. Thank God that you live in God's light, and it lives in you.

Saturday, April 20, 2024

## **Ever Widening Circles**

By Sharon Nesbitt

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

—Romans 15:13

Our Creator God,

I am so overwhelmed by your majesty and cannot comprehend the how and why of you. Yet, your love is so constant and so complete, I am filled with its assurance and peace.

This temporal world seems to be in a state of perpetual turmoil and chaos. Thousands of voices vie for attention, seemingly drowning the still, small voice of your Holy Spirit. Only his very persistence penetrates our hearts, bringing light and hope: hope for a better way, a reassurance of your unfailing love, joy beyond compare in personal knowledge of you, our Creator.

You, who fashions each person in such a unique way, continuously interact with each of us. Your purposes are being fulfilled. We are instruments uniquely prepared by our Maker for service in establishing your purpose right where we are. Our tasks for peace start within individual hearts and spread outward in ever-widening circles to influence every facet of our lives, touching those around us with the rays of peace which are projected from you, through those who are submissive and surrendered to you, open and ready to be used in this capacity.

May we cleanse our inner beings of all strife and discord, becoming pure vessels before you. May we be used by you to spread a sense of inner peace to those searching and struggling for someone's touch, for an indication they are of value and are loved.

Empower each of us to accept the challenge of discipleship, submit our wills to your will, that your peace, which we only glimpse in fleeting moments, may become a reality we know, bringing calm, restoration, and renewal to hearts still in turmoil.

Each day, may we respond to your call, your touch, your voice beckoning us toward the reality of peace and life which are found in relationship with you, our God. May your Holy Spirit guide us in our daily walk—a walk of peace and healing of spirit—heart to heart, sharing in love and joy.

In the name of your Son, the Christ. Amen.

**Prayer Phrase:** "...my God turns my darkness into light" (Psalm 18:28).

### **Spiritual Practice: Light**

Close your eyes and become centered with your breath. As you breathe gently in and out, reflect on the statement, "The light of God is in all things." The light has a bright, soft beauty and radiates God's healing love. The light of God reaches you and permeates you with a deep sense of peace. Rest in the light as it surrounds and fills you. Thank God that you live in God's light, and it lives in you.

Sunday, April 21, 2024

## **Easter People Act**

By Rick Bunch, World Church Earth Stewardship Team

*We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us—and we ought to lay down our lives for one another. How does God’s love abide in anyone who has the world’s goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help? Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action...*

—1 John 3:16–18 Life Application Bible

Some years ago, I wanted to learn to play the guitar. My family bought me an acoustic guitar, and I began to take lessons. At the time, I was engaged in several camps and reunions, and I wanted to be able to accompany the songs at campfires. The difficulty came when I desired to learn more than just strumming, to engage in more complex forms of plucking. I became impatient because it did not come rapidly enough, and I was not willing to spend the time and effort to practice. Eventually, I gave up.

We who watch TV have become accustomed to detectives solving crimes in just an hour, or the entire world news broadcast in thirty minutes; even worse, we are satisfied with just sound bites. The reality is that challenges in life often do not go away quickly. It takes effort and sometimes it is just plain hard work.

Before Jesus died, he shared his ambition for a peaceable kingdom. That dream was not realized in his lifetime, and his followers and people of Israel were left again to long for the arrival of a peace-keeper Messiah. They missed the point that they had some responsibility in the process. The religion that emerged, too often, was caught up in ritual and piety. Love was an afterthought.

As people of faith, as Easter people, it behooves us to expend whatever effort and resources are required to bring to pass the eventuality of life-giving—a love sharing in that dreamed-of realm of peace. In the process, what if we began to live as if we are already residents in such a place—a place where love knows no bounds and the Easter message of hope has become our watchword? If we truly wish to become active Easter people, the effort, maybe even the hard work, will be our dream, our ambition, no matter how long it takes. Easter people persevere. Easter people act.

**Prayer Phrase:** “...my God turns my darkness into light” (Psalm 18:28).

### **Spiritual Practice: Light**

Close your eyes and become centered with your breath. As you breathe gently in and out, reflect on the statement, “The light of God is in all things.” The light has a bright, soft beauty and radiates God’s healing love. The light of God reaches you and permeates you with a deep sense of peace. Rest in the light as it surrounds and fills you. Thank God that you live in God’s light, and it lives in you.

Monday, April 22, 2024

## **Earth's Generosity**

By Laurie Gordon, Climate Justice Team

*I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them, and I will bless them and multiply them and will set my sanctuary among them forevermore.*

—Ezekiel 37:26

As we celebrate Earth Day, I can offer nothing more valuable than to dare us to love the Earth ever more boldly and fiercely. It is the one action we can take that will “make a difference” in years to come. It’s easier to offer gifts from a heart made spacious by love than to force actions driven by despair. Let us become containers expansive enough to hold our hearts steady and true in these portentous days of climate emergency, biodiversity loss, and impending environmental collapse.

She is still beautiful, our Mother Earth. How shall we love her and receive her love? How shall we love her back to health for the welfare of all? I offer a brief Earth Examen inspired by Robin Wall Kimmerer’s “Epiphany in the Beans” in her book *Braiding Sweetgrass*.

Remember a moment that ignited an awareness of your love for sacred creation. What does it feel like to love the Earth? When might you have come into relationship with a particular created being and felt the stirrings of love? Get up and walk out your door; renew and deepen your love for God’s sacred creation this very day.

Do you know the Earth loves you? How do you know? Invite a memory or awareness of the Earth loving you back—perhaps through a creature, place, or experience. (Keep it particular!) How is Earth’s love for us expressed differently than what we have come to expect from the way humans love?

Holding as one your love for the Earth and the possibility that the Earth loves you back, sense the sacred bond flowing between you. This is what’s called *reciprocity*...the love we share is a two-way flow of mutual love. Abide here awhile, feeling the expanses of gratitude and your answering response. Experience your kinship in the family of all beings, the Kin-dom of God on Earth. “As the trees and plants breathe in; you breathe out. As you breathe out, the trees and plants breathe in.”

Feeling the expanses of gratitude that well up in you, tend any answering desire to reciprocate Earth’s generosity with your own generosity. What gifts are you moved to offer? A whispered prayer? A song or dance? A gesture of reverence or respect? Giving prophetic voice or action on behalf of creation? What response arises naturally, not as a *quid pro quo* but in a mutual flow of gratitude, generosity, and reciprocity.

**Prayer Phrase:** “...my God turns my darkness into light” (Psalm 18:28).

### **Spiritual Practice: Light**

Close your eyes and become centered with your breath. As you breathe gently in and out, reflect on the statement, “The light of God is in all things.” The light has a bright, soft beauty and radiates God’s healing love. The light of God reaches you and permeates you with a deep sense of peace. Rest in the light as it surrounds and fills you. Thank God that you live in God’s light, and it lives in you.

Tuesday, April 23, 2024

## Seeing Jesus

By Grace Andrews of Blue Springs, Missouri, USA

*Instead, love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, for he himself is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked.*

—Luke 6:35

There once was a lonely, miserable man who asked himself, “Why am I so unhappy?”

A voice came saying, “Because you do not see or hear. What if you knew one of your neighbors was actually the Messiah?”

He thought, “That’s ridiculous! My neighbors could not possibly be the Messiah. They are lazy, prideful, constantly occupied with their cell phones...”

Nevertheless, he began watching them and saw acts of kindness and care among them. They looked so happy. He wondered if that was the key, so he looked for ways he might help others. His eyes took on a new light; the bounce returned to his step; he moved with purpose. When asked about his changed attitude, he simply said, “All I know is things changed when I started seeing Jesus in my neighbors.”

This man almost missed Jesus because he didn’t know what Jesus looked like. The people in Jesus’ day missed him because they thought they knew exactly what he should look like. Artists portray him as tall, striking with a great physique, wearing a beautiful white robe—fresh from the cleaners—with a drop-dead gorgeous smile. According to Isaiah 53, that is likely far from the truth.

Jesus was a Jew. He blended in with the people—dark olive skin; short, curly, black hair; a prominent nose. He likely stood about 5’1” (1.55 meters), weighing about 120 pounds (54.4 kg). Jesus had ordinary looks, dirty hands, and sweat-stained shirts. He was neighbor, carpenter, friend. On a morning after a night in the hills, he did not show up in a nearby village clean shaven, teeth brushed, nice cologne, neatly dressed in a black suit, white shirt, and tie. He probably wore a simple hand-woven robe made by his mother. People were attracted to Jesus because of His message, His mission. They were encouraged when He spoke of peace and love and joy and hope.

Where do we find this Jesus? He might be our next-door neighbor.

**Prayer Phrase:** “...my God turns my darkness into light” (Psalm 18:28).

### **Spiritual Practice: Light**

Close your eyes and become centered with your breath. As you breathe gently in and out, reflect on the statement, “The light of God is in all things.” The light has a bright, soft beauty and radiates God’s healing love. The light of God reaches you and permeates you with a deep sense of peace. Rest in the light as it surrounds and fills you. Thank God that you live in God’s light, and it lives in you.



Wednesday, April 24, 2024

## **Pruned by God**

By Anne Bonnefin, communications coordinator, Australia Mission Centre

*And all of you must clothe yourselves with humility in your dealings with one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”*

—1 Peter 5:5b

A tree in my back garden was “not well” according to the horticulturalist who visited me several months ago. But I thought it was a spectacular tree! It had glossy leaves and sometimes flowers.

It carried the fancy name of a *port wine magnolia*, though if you know this species, you will know you have to look hard to see the purple flowers. The harsh prognosis from the gardener: “It has scale and needs to be severely pruned before I can do anything about it.”

I was horrified! First, because it looked fine to me, and second, because a severe prune would ruin my small garden where the tree was the standout hero.

What should I do? Listen to the expert or ignore the problem? With the assurance that the tree would grow back, I listened to the professional’s advice. For months now it has been a trunk in the ground with a few sticks limply attached. I have been waiting...and waiting...and *waiting!* And nothing!

One day I thought, “I just have to trust.” I gave it some fertilizer as the gardener had said. I watered it with care, and gradually the tree is starting to come back to life. The first signs were hundreds of purple flowers. On the thick, woody stems—here, there, and everywhere—I now see little green shoots, no bigger than the top of a toothpick.

This tree makes me think about life and the cycles of life. I am still learning how God is always whispering to me to pay attention, right where I am. In Jeremiah 29:13 we read, “You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.” I think about what it means for me to seek God with all my love and devotion in the midst of where I am and just as I am. I think I will find connection and learn to see in the deep alignment of my body, heart, mind, and spirit to God. It will happen in the present moment. It will happen whether I am joyful, I’ve been pruned to the core by grief or disappointment, or somewhere between.

**Prayer Phrase:** “...my God turns my darkness into light” (Psalm 18:28).

### **Spiritual Practice: Light**

Close your eyes and become centered with your breath. As you breathe gently in and out, reflect on the statement, “The light of God is in all things.” The light has a bright, soft beauty and radiates God’s healing love. The light of God reaches you and permeates you with a deep sense of peace. Rest in the light as it surrounds and fills you. Thank God that you live in God’s light, and it lives in you.

Thursday, April 25, 2024

**Full Attention**

By Patricia Henshaw of Independence, Missouri, USA

[From “Are You Really Listening?”, Nov/Dec 2023 *Herald*, pp. 28–29]

*...and above all things, clothe yourselves with the bonds of charity, as with a mantle, which is a bond of perfectness and peace; pray always, that you may not faint until I come; behold, and lo, I will come quickly, and receive you unto myself. Amen.*

—Doctrine and Covenants 85:38c

That day at school, the young boy had been struggling with issues that prevented him from giving his full attention to schoolwork. The disruption was so great that he was moved to a safe place in another part of the school. After a time, I was notified that he was ready to talk.

I sat on the floor with him, and after a few minutes he began to talk about what had happened. It was as if he were pouring out his heart. Not saying a word, I listened. As he finished, tears began to roll down his cheeks. He turned to me and said, “Jesus doesn’t like me anymore.”

After a moment I said, “Jesus probably is not very happy with your behavior, but he will always love you, no matter what.”

The Enduring Principle Grace and Generosity reminds us that a way of sharing, besides our monetary gifts, is through listening—*really* listening. Too often as we listen to someone we forget to *really* listen because we are thinking about what our response might be.

We are given opportunities to be good stewards of generosity. We should willingly share our abilities with others. Sometimes we might find ourselves in uncomfortable situations, but through sharing generously we are being the hands and feet of Jesus. This type of relationship-building allows us to realize how important it is to share our gifts.

Sharing can allow us to be generous with our gifts. Generosity comes in many forms. How can you become generous with your gifts?

**Prayer Phrase:** “...my God turns my darkness into light” (Psalm 18:28).

**Spiritual Practice: Light**

Close your eyes and become centered with your breath. As you breathe gently in and out, reflect on the statement, “The light of God is in all things.” The light has a bright, soft beauty and radiates God’s healing love. The light of God reaches you and permeates you with a deep sense of peace. Rest in the light as it surrounds and fills you. Thank God that you live in God’s light, and it lives in you.

Friday, April 26, 2024

## Steps

By Don Wiley of Murrieta, California, USA

*Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long.*

—Psalm 23:6

Since before I can remember  
there has been a yearning  
a desire  
a hope  
a seeking  
something out there (or in there)  
that needs to be found  
discovered  
reached  
achieved  
just something.

At times it seems close  
and other times very distant  
almost disappears  
but always there  
even when I don't pay attention.

At first it would surprise me  
like déjà vu or awe  
Then it causes me to search  
not sure what for  
but search nonetheless  
Seeking answers to questions yet unknown  
never feeling satisfied  
yet knowing  
there is something to be found.

Then there is an experience  
that provides a glimpse of the unknown  
and I think I've found it!  
Tears and jubilation express the joy of growth and  
vision

Yet the little bit of light and hope  
soon is overshadowed by life  
and complexity  
and doubt.

Study and practice slowly  
very slowly  
lead to more glimpses  
more "aha's"  
and more awareness that what is to be found  
is much, much greater  
than this moment or this finding.  
The glimpses are becoming  
evidences of openness  
and emptiness  
that are part of the process  
of becoming who I am called to be.  
A glimpse occurs when trust peaks  
trust in the unknown  
leads to faith  
and some knowingness.

Part of the process is accepting the limitations of  
this moment,  
not being focused on limitations,  
but accepting them (naming them)  
and taking another step—  
into the unknown.  
Study and practice  
in openness and receptivity to take another step...  
until you reach through the veil.

**Prayer Phrase:** "...my God turns my darkness into light" (Psalm 18:28).

## Spiritual Practice: Light

Close your eyes and become centered with your breath. As you breathe gently in and out, reflect on the statement, "The light of God is in all things." The light has a bright, soft beauty and radiates God's healing love. The light of God reaches you and permeates you with a deep sense of peace. Rest in the light as it surrounds and fills you. Thank God that you live in God's light, and it lives in you.

Saturday, April 27, 2024

## **Reflect the Light**

By Nina Warriner of Bath, New York, USA

*Give to the one who asks of you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you.*

—Matthew 5:42

I was driving home one mid-October evening. As I approached the top of a hill, I was met with the bold intensity of an almost-full moon that demanded my attention. I pulled my car over, turned off the engine, and rolled the window down, sensing the need to just sit, gaze, and take in this sight.

I couldn't help but contemplate the glow of the moon. The sun itself was no longer visible, having disappeared due to rotation of the earth. However, the moon was reflecting an incredible amount of that light (from 93 million miles away) and casting a glow bright enough to allow me to see the outline of the quiet world around me.

Many times, the things of this world can overshadow the Light. Lives can feel as if they are in darkness. And yet, there is a moon. It reflects the sun when the light cannot be seen. We are called to reflect the light of the Son—to be the hands and feet and beating heart of Christ in this world; to bring light where there is darkness; to bear the fruits of hope, peace, and love to a wanting world.

The moon reflects the sun when it is overshadowed by the Earth.

Be a moon.

**Prayer Phrase:** "...my God turns my darkness into light" (Psalm 18:28).

### **Spiritual Practice: Light**

Close your eyes and become centered with your breath. As you breathe gently in and out, reflect on the statement, "The light of God is in all things." The light has a bright, soft beauty and radiates God's healing love. The light of God reaches you and permeates you with a deep sense of peace. Rest in the light as it surrounds and fills you. Thank God that you live in God's light, and it lives in you.

Sunday, April 28, 2024

## **Easter People Love**

By Michele McGrath, Long Beach, California, USA

*Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another.*

*Those who say, "I love God," and hate a sibling are liars. The commandment we have from God is this: those who love God must love their siblings also.*

—1 John 4:7–8, 11, 20, 21 adapted

I recently watched an episode of the TV comedy "The Big Bang Theory." Penny and Leonard are in a romantic relationship. Leonard tells Penny he loves her. Penny is not ready to say those crucial words back. Leonard becomes frustrated when Penny later exclaims how much she *loves* chili cheese fries! Love is an overused word. It is used to mean so many things that it can cause confusion.

Today's passage from 1 John reminds us that love is the foundation of our faith and practice as Christians. It makes clear the connection between loving God and loving others. It says it forward and backward. If we love God, we'll treat each other lovingly. If we do not treat each other lovingly, it shows we do not truly know God and reveals us as liars if we claim to love God but persist in taking actions that knowingly hurt others.

What does "Easter people love" look like in action? It is the Christian disciple who takes a genuine interest in getting to know their neighbors, even when those neighbors come from different religious, ethnic, or economic backgrounds. It is the person who gives a week of their hard-earned vacation time to serve at a youth camp. It is a congregation that is willing to go through the process to become a Welcoming and Affirming Congregation, creating a purposefully affirming space for our LGBTQIA2S+ siblings longing for a safe place in a faith community.

For 1 John, love is a verb. How are you putting love into action in your life and congregation today?

**Prayer Phrase:** "...my God turns my darkness into light" (Psalm 18:28).

### **Spiritual Practice: Light**

Close your eyes and become centered with your breath. As you breathe gently in and out, reflect on the statement, "The light of God is in all things." The light has a bright, soft beauty and radiates God's healing love. The light of God reaches you and permeates you with a deep sense of peace. Rest in the light as it surrounds and fills you. Thank God that you live in God's light, and it lives in you.

Monday, April 29, 2024

## **Standing Still**

By Laura Herdman

*The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and shouting.*

—Isaiah 35:1–2

Almighty God, we see your power in designing the galaxies, the oceans, and the sands; and we behold your gentleness in the butterfly, the firefly, the violet. How can we not stand in awe before the grandeur displayed on Earth? Help us now reflect on the times when peace entered our souls as we stood still, listened, and beheld the beauty surrounding us. And so we do at this moment. We thank you for expressions of peace others tell us through their insight of your splendor: the artists, the musicians, architects, poets. And we, too, witness of the good feeling we have each time we create or work at making something a little better than it was. We feel a kinship with you, and peace enters our soul.

Help us create opportunities to take the touch of Jesus to others to sense his peace. We ask forgiveness for moments when we have not acted on his behalf. Forgive our reluctance, our apathy, our daily busyness that hinders our sensitivity to others' needs. You give us opportunities to be peacemakers, but we do not always see, hear, or do.

Today we pledge our efforts anew. We pledge to take the peace from the beauty surrounding us in the arts and nature and give it human expression in our relationships. Somehow, we feel that as we do so, we carry out the purpose for our being. Give us your blessing this day, and receive our petition simply because our Master urges us to pray. Amen.

**Prayer Phrase:** "...my God turns my darkness into light" (Psalm 18:28).

### **Spiritual Practice: Light**

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Tuesday, April 30, 2024

## **Called into Light**

By Kenneth L. McLaughlin of Independence, Missouri, USA

“Lord, Who Views All People Precious,” *Community of Christ Sings* 637

*For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.*

—Colossians 1:19–20

Lord, who views all people precious, worthy, lovely in your sight;  
who, through mercy and compassion, calls us forward into light,  
we accept the great commission.

May we, strengthened by your power,  
join with Christ in common purpose serving nobly in this hour.

Heal the bruised and brokenhearted, those enmeshed in sin and strife;  
by the Spirit, grant your people wholeness in this earthly life.  
God of reconciliation, we, your people offer praise for your grace  
and patient guidance as this prayer, with joy, we raise. Amen.

**Prayer Phrase:** “...my God turns my darkness into light” (Psalm 18:28).

### **Spiritual Practice: Light**

Close your eyes and become centered with your breath. As you breathe gently in and out, reflect on the statement, “The light of God is in all things.” The light has a bright, soft beauty and radiates God’s healing love. The light of God reaches you and permeates you with a deep sense of peace. Rest in the light as it surrounds and fills you. Thank God that you live in God’s light, and it lives in you.