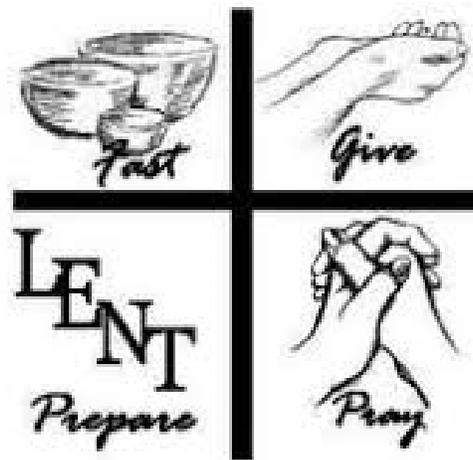


Lenten Reader 2019
1st Parish Church, UCC
Yarmouth, Maine
Week 2
March 13 – March 19



March 13

This blessing spoke to me as I have been grieving the death of Patty, my beloved daughter-in-law! –
Nancy Gregory

Blessing in the Turning

You have turned my mourning into dancing. – Psalm 30:11

May you know
the slow mystery
in which mourning
becomes a dance,
turning you toward
the gladness
that wants to meet you
in your grief.

May comfort
come to enfold you,

not to take away
all sorrow
but to infuse it
with tenderness,
with rest,
with every grace
it has.

May you give yourself
to the rhythms
of joy,
even when your steps
are stumbling,
even when you are
most fragile
and faltering.

May you know
the dancing that comes
in the dying,
moving you in time with
the heart that
has held you
always,
even when you
could not hear
its beating,
even when you could not bear
its love.

From *The Cure for Sorrow: A Book of Blessings for Times of Grief* by Jan Richardson

March 14— Psalm 30

I give you all the credit, God—
you got me out of that mess,
you didn't let my foes gloat.

2-3 God, my God, I yelled for help
and you put me together.
God, you pulled me out of the grave,
gave me another chance at life
when I was down-and-out.

4-5 All you saints! Sing your hearts out to God!
Thank him to his face!
He gets angry once in a while, but across
a lifetime there is only love.
The nights of crying your eyes out
give way to days of laughter.

6-7 When things were going great
I crowed, "I've got it made.
I'm God's favorite.
He made me king of the mountain."
Then you looked the other way
and I fell to pieces.

8-10 I called out to you, God;
I laid my case before you:
"Can you sell me for a profit when I'm dead?
auction me off at a cemetery yard sale?
When I'm 'dust to dust' my songs
and stories of you won't sell.
So listen! and be kind!
Help me out of this!"

11-12 You did it: you changed wild lament
into whirling dance;
You ripped off my black mourning band
and decked me with wildflowers.
I'm about to burst with song;
I can't keep quiet about you.
God, my God,
I can't thank you enough.

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March 15

Lyrics to Lord of the Starfield by Bruce Cockburn

“Music for me is a way of sharing experience among people. I wrote one song for God, on purpose, and that was ‘Lord of the Starfields.’ I attempted to write a biblical psalm, and it’s kind of written in the style of the psalms and it’s addressed to God, in a way, and it’s ... ya know, I mean, I don’t know if God’s impressed by things like that. I suspect not really.

What impresses God, if that word can even be applied, is the raw emotion, the raw feeling behind the creation of a song like that, which was there in that case. It’s not always there in the songwriting process. The songs come out better when there is something raw and visceral going on, but sometimes that’s a little harder to access. And sometimes you feel the feelings and there are no words to frame it in, so there is no song.” Bruce Cockburn, 2006

Lord of the starfields
Ancient of Days
Universe Maker
Here's a song in your praise

Wings of the storm cloud
Beginning and end
You make my heart leap
Like a banner in the wind

O love that fires the sun
Keep me burning.
Lord of the starfields
Sower of life,
Heaven and earth are
Full of your light

Voice of the nova
Smile of the dew

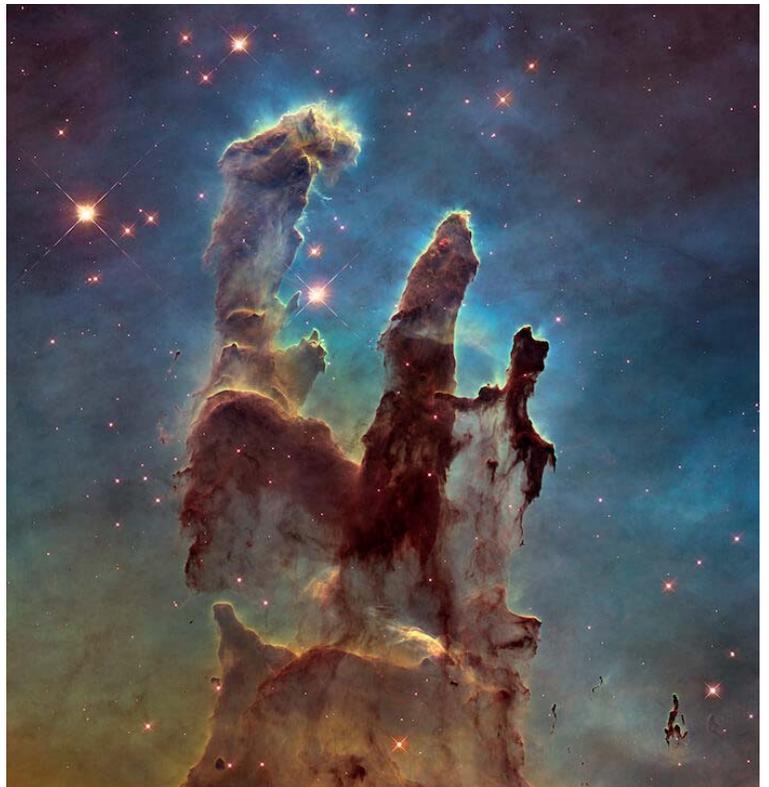
All of our yearning
Only comes home to you

O love that fires the sun
Keep me burning

Songwriters: Bruce Cockburn Lord of the Starfields lyrics © Rotten Kiddies Music LLC, BRO N SIS MUSIC, INC., ROTTEN KIDDIES MUSIC, LLC

March 16— Psalm 147:1-11

Hallelujah!
It’s a good thing to sing praise to our God;
praise is beautiful, praise is fitting.
2-6 God’s the one who rebuilds Jerusalem,
who regathers Israel’s scattered exiles.
He heals the heartbroken
and bandages their wounds.
He counts the stars
and assigns each a name.
Our Lord is great, with limitless strength;
we’ll never comprehend what he knows and does.
God puts the fallen on their feet again
and pushes the wicked into the ditch.
7-11 Sing to God a thanksgiving hymn,
play music on your instruments to God,
Who fills the sky with clouds,
preparing rain for the earth,
Then turning the mountains green with grass,
feeding both cattle and crows.
He’s not impressed with horsepower;
the size of our muscles means little to him.
Those who fear God get God’s attention;
they can depend on his strength.



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March 17—Psalm 139

A personal Version by Melanie Connor

Psalm 139 has been one that I have gone to whenever I was feeling down and unworthy. There is something about being fully known and loved anyway that has helped me over the years. I don't remember if someone introduced it to me or if God led me to it on one of those darkest days. I have also passed this one to others I knew who were suffering in a similar way. Taking the time to rewrite it in a creative way now has given me renewed affirmation that the Original Psalm is so powerful and reaches out beyond the generations and genders. I pray for all who are impacted by mental health issues, either in themselves or loved ones, that they would feel the healing power of this message of God's magnificent love for them.—Melanie Connor

I praise you God, the Playwright with all my heart!

My life is like a beloved movie that You know the beginning, middle and end of.

You wrote the manuscript.

You know every word and action of every scene;

The plot,

The success,

The failure,

The love,

The despair,

The mystery to solve,

And even the surprise ending is not a surprise to You!

All of this is too magnificent to for me to comprehend;

Yet, comforting and peaceful when I really think of it.

Why do I ever go to that dark place and flirt with that self-loathing?

That part in the climax when I know I should not go out into the darkness without my guiding faith, but I do anyway...

and then You "cut scene" and get me back on track.

You know me and know I can perform better than that.

I am so thankful for Your perfect directing and producing of this epic starring me.

Thank You for the talented cast You have shown me as examples of follow-through;

Encouraging me to be like...

As I get older I am tempted to reach for the popcorn,

To hit the pause button and take it all in;

Not to miss an important scene...

I want to read the subtitles...

But You remind me...I'm not merely watching!

I am in the moment and I want to act with passion and compassion,

Love and empathy,

And be moved to serve as You wrote me to do in every scene.

Search me, oh God, challenge me and audition me for the role You need.

Be with me always and I will thrive in Your production.

There will be time to reflect on this in the end credits.

I praise You and love You, the Playwright, Director, Producer of this wonderfully made movie;

And all of the Oscar awarded movies You have made and continue to make.

Preserve the creativity and gracefully direct the manuscript to Your everlasting perfect, no surprise ending.

March 18— Psalm 139

1-6 God,
investigate
my life;
 get all the facts firsthand.
I'm an open book to you;
 even from a distance, you know what I'm thinking.
You know when I leave and when I get back;
 I'm never out of your sight.
You know everything I'm going to say
 before I start the first sentence.
I look behind me and you're there,
 then up ahead and you're there, too—
 your reassuring presence, coming and going.
This is too much, too wonderful—
 I can't take it all in!
7-12 Is there anyplace I can go to avoid your Spirit?
 to be out of your sight?
If I climb to the sky, you're there!
 If I go underground, you're there!
If I flew on morning's wings
 to the far western horizon,
You'd find me in a minute—
 you're already there waiting!
Then I said to myself, "Oh, he even sees me in the
dark!
 At night I'm immersed in the light!"
It's a fact: darkness isn't dark to you;
 night and day, darkness and light, they're all the
same to you.
13-16 Oh yes, you shaped me first inside, then out;
 you formed me in my mother's womb.
I thank you, High God—you're breathtaking!
 Body and soul, I am marvelously made!
 I worship in adoration—what a creation!
You know me inside and out,
 you know every bone in my body;
You know exactly how I was made, bit by bit,
 how I was sculpted from nothing into something.
Like an open book, you watched me grow from con-
ception to birth;
 all the stages of my life were spread out before
you,
The days of my life all prepared
 before I'd even lived one day.
17-22 Your thoughts—how rare, how beautiful!
 God, I'll never comprehend them!

I couldn't
even begin

to count them—
 any more than I could count the sand of the sea.
Oh, let me rise in the morning and live always with
you!
 And please, God, do away with wickedness for
good!
And you murderers—out of here!—
 all the men and women who belittle you, God,
infatuated with cheap god-imitations.
See how I hate those who hate you, God,
 see how I loathe all this godless arrogance;
I hate it with pure, unadulterated hatred.
 Your enemies are my enemies!
23-24 Investigate my life, O God,
 find out everything about me;
Cross-examine and test me,
 get a clear picture of what I'm about;
See for yourself whether I've done anything wrong—
 then guide me on the road to eternal life.

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March 19—
Friendship House and the Season of Lent

Psalm 25:11 For thy name's sake, O God, pardon my guilt, for it is great.

25:16 Turn to me, and be gracious to me; for I am lonely and afflicted.

25:18 Consider my affliction and my trouble, and forgive all my sins.

Many of us have, or have had, family, friends and loved ones trapped in the prison of substance abuse and have suffered with them. Privately- supported Friendship House puts those unfortunates , who desire to straighten out their lives, on the road to freedom from their liquid shackles and bad life choices. First Parish Church, through the kindness and generosity of a group of dedicated meal providers and delivery drivers, assists in supporting the house's sixteen recovering addicts by providing a complete meal every month. The program's major emphasis on religious observance by the residents provides nourishing food for the soul. The program's success rate is approximately 70% recovery, more than four times that of government-supported facilities.

Lent is a time for us to reflect on the meaning of God's gift to us of Jesus, the sacrifice of God's Son, God's grace and forgiveness of our sins, and God's endless love for us. The First Parish Church outreach support program to Friendship House reinforces the residents' awareness that in addition to God, others care for them and wish them success. I am privileged to have been involved with this excellent program for more than eight years. I have learned that in helping others, we help ourselves, and add meaningful fulfillment to our own lives.— Don Grosset