

An outward-facing Lent

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MOST OF US ARE USED TO the season of Lent having a slower pace. We sing songs in minor keys. Many of our prayers turn us inward, reflecting on the reality of individual sin and the ways in which we may feel far from God. While these practices are not incorrect, they are somewhat out of step with this truth: Christianity is a community faith.

With rare exceptions, Christians are called to support

one another and to be out in the world as stewards of creation and good neighbors to all we meet. The Holy Spirit helps us balance our baptismal callings to be still and know God, and to be the hands and feet of God in the world.

As Lutheran Christians, we have a particular—perhaps even peculiar—view of vocation. While “vocation” is often the word used for paid work, Martin Luther and

his spiritual descendants also use “vocation” to refer to all kinds of roles we take on as baptized people. In addition to paid occupational work, we have the vocations of family roles, volunteering, neighborhood and community participation, creation care, friendship and citizenship.

Use this Lenten devotional (published in the January/February, March and April issues of *Gather*) with any age group



to explore the fullness of what vocation means. Let's take time over these 40 days of Lent to pray for others and for ourselves. Sometimes we will reflect on occupations we tend to forget, but that make our lives possible. At other times we'll ponder the roles we take on throughout life, and how God uses these vocational roles to shape us and others.

We do not arrive at the resurrection alone, but surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses—saints who have gone before us and those still at work beside us. This Lent, let's join together in outward-facing prayer, asking God to guide us in our vocational understanding and to help us see Christ's presence and power in all people.



DAY 1: WEDNESDAY, FEB. 17

We often take for granted how easily we can flush away things we would rather not see. We also know how quickly plumbing problems can become very bad. Plumbers, septic tank pumpers and wastewater treatment plant workers make our homes and communities sanitary and livable. Their work mirrors God's help, lifting us out of the muck created by bad choices and things that just happen.

Dear God, thank you for people whose work it is to deal with our waste and keep our communities clean. Thank you for doing the same in our hearts. Amen.

DAY 2: THURSDAY, FEB. 18

Want to learn how to change windshield wipers, use eye makeup or make cartoon character cupcakes? Someone on YouTube has made a video to help you learn, step by step, how to do that very thing. All kinds of people, even those of us who don't use the internet, benefit from the creativity of YouTube artists and their how-to videos.

Thank you, loving God, for those who share how-to videos. Help me to be generous with what I can do too. Amen.

DAY 3: FRIDAY, FEB. 19

Aunts and uncles are not always blood relatives. Sometimes they are grown-up friends of the family, providing support and love. Families are rarely simple, which helps us remember the vastness of God's love in the world and the many ways divine love embraces all creation.

Holy Parent of us all, we thank you for the aunts and uncles in our lives. The family you create through your love is the largest of all. We are grateful to be in it through Christ. Amen.

DAY 4: SATURDAY, FEB. 20

With their vials and needles, phlebotomists draw blood samples, which are used to determine the health and needs of our bodies. They have to deal with people's anxieties, worries and grief while carefully completing their tasks. God's mercy in the world is present in what is seen and unseen. Those whose vocations help reveal mysteries and bring healing are participants in God's mercy becoming known on earth, just as it is in heaven.

Gracious God, thank you for people whose vocations help reveal mysteries and bring healing. Amen.

DAY 5: MONDAY, FEB. 22

Altos, basses and baritones most often sing supporting notes, doing the work of harmony. While we may admire and remember the melody of the soprano or tenor voice, the support of harmony gives music its fullness and depth. Vocations of harmony and support matter, in music and beyond.

God of sounds, help me perceive and participate in the harmonies of creation and community. Amen.

DAY 6: TUESDAY, FEB. 23

While most of us sleep, the night is full of people preparing food, cleaning buildings, stocking shelves and driving trucks. The Holy Spirit watches over all who keep moving, even in the dark, so we may wake to food, deliveries and clean spaces each morning.

God of all time, bless those who work at night. Make your presence known to them in clear and tangible ways. Amen.

DAY 7: WEDNESDAY, FEB. 24

Line workers install and repair our electrical lines and

distribution systems. Their work keeps our lights on, our heat going, our water running. Many are on teams that travel to places where storms or disasters have disrupted power. While people connected in Christ can never truly be separated, the gift of connection through electricity has become more important over time.

Connector of all, thank you for people whose vocations keep us comfortable and connected. Amen.

DAY 8: THURSDAY, FEB. 25

The bread and wine at communion carry Christ's presence to us. These elements also connect us to the people who grew the grapes, planted the wheat, built the barrels and shaped the bread. The Holy Spirit is present from the beginning to the end of the process. In communing with bread and wine, we are connected to Jesus and to everyone who works to bring these elements from God's earth.

Creator, we thank you for gift of communion. Bless the people who work to bring these elements into our hands. Amen.

DAY 9: FRIDAY, FEB. 26

Pretty parks and peaceful cemeteries represent the work of dedicated landscapers and groundskeepers. They weed, mow, plant and tend so we may have beautiful public spaces. Beautiful spaces and parks remind us of God's gardens—in Eden, around the empty tomb and in heaven. When we find peace in a well-kept space, we experience how things are meant to be.

God, thank you for people who tend our public spaces. Help us find moments of peace in your garden of creation today. Amen.

DAY 10: SATURDAY, FEB. 27

Sharing one's space with a beloved pet can bring support and peace. In this way, the animals we care for also take care of us. When we share pets with others, through visits or just a pat in passing, this mutual comfort creates community. Caring for pets gives us a glimpse of unconditional love.

Dear God, we thank you for the opportunity to care for animals and to receive their love in return. Amen.

DAY 11: MONDAY, MARCH 1

While we most often use maps for driving or walking directions, cartographers make maps of mountains, deserts and even the ocean floor. Maps show where we can go and where we cannot. Mapmakers help us understand our world and its possibilities. Scripture is a map too. It shows us how God has been at work in the past and what God is likely doing today.

God of all places, bless the mapmakers who help us travel safely and explore new areas, in the world and in Scripture. Amen.

DAY 12: TUESDAY, MARCH 2

Morticians care for the bodies of those who have died. With gentle hands, they wash, embalm and dress our loved ones. With kind hearts, they do the work of cremation. This is truly the work of merciful people—to treat the dead with respect and to comfort the living. The Spirit is evident in all who do this work with love.

Bless, O God, those who care for the dead. May they receive comfort and peace in the same measure that they give to others. Amen.

Note to readers: Look for more devotions in the March issue of *Gather*. 🌿



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