

# *Good Enough:*

Embracing the Imperfections  
of Life and Faith

*Lent 4*

"We often believe we are the problem."



## **PANTHER VALLEY ECUMENICAL CHURCH**

**Fourth Week of Lent  
March 27, 2022**

*Connecting with the Community,  
Growing Disciples, and Serving Jesus Christ*

*Our Worship can be viewed on our website  
[PantherValleyChurch.org](http://PantherValleyChurch.org)*

This week was Ella's birthday!

Please visit our web page

[PantherValleyChurch.org](http://PantherValleyChurch.org)

for a

Celebration of the Life of Ella R. Yager

March 25, 1923 ~ April 14, 2020



Our Worship Service on Sunday March 27, 2022  
is dedicated to Ella, a good and faithful servant of the Lord.

## PRELUDE

We invite you to begin your personal preparation at the beginning of the prelude.

*Loving God*

*may we be found and may we find a place called home  
a place where faith holds us and grace renews us  
where forgiveness longs for us  
to be who you will us to be*

*may we find a place called home  
where we are accepted as we are  
where we are taken in and loved unconditionally*

*a place called home where we belong  
and our souls fit  
and our questions are allowed  
and our anger is heard  
and our needs are recognized  
and our pain is held  
and our names are known*

*and may this be that place, O God,  
this community  
this group of travelers and doubters and companions on the way*

*this home  
where your place is our place  
and place isn't a building but a way of being together  
in relationship held together by love*

*Loving God*

*Homecoming God*

*may we make this a home to all who still yet seek  
a place of grace-filled sanctuary and gracious welcome*

*So be it*

*Amen*

## **CALL TO WORSHIP** *Based on Psalm 32*

Leader: Let us pray together:

**ALL:** Holy One, God of Forgiveness, we call out to you and you surround us with deliverance. You love us infinitely more than we love ourselves or others. Open us this day to your counsel, helping us be more merciful, more grace-filled, so that we might rejoice in simple and good enough moments that fill our days. Amen.

## **CHILDREN'S TIME**

### **HONEST QUESTIONS, COMPASSIONATE RESPONSE**

Today we will hear how one son leaves home, lives extravagantly and when famine strikes in the land of his dream vacation; he heads home, hungry, expecting that he will have to work like a slave to be welcomed. And another son who feels like a slave at home. To their surprise, both are met with extravagant love and grace. We can be pretty hard on ourselves when things don't go as planned. Guilt, shame, and fear of being seen as a failure can leave us wallowing in the pig pen. Our delusions of a perfectible life keep us disappointed in ourselves. Truth is, life is a big ole risk every single day and facing whatever each day holds is not only good enough, but worthy of love and grace. Do you find yourself being unrealistically hard on yourself? Let us take a moment of silent reflection...

### *Silent Reflection*

Hear this compassionate word from the Second Letter to the Corinthians: "From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!"

Know that already, God is offering us freedom from the guilt and shame of our past failings and our present unrealistic expectations. We are invited to rejoice that each day is a new beginning, so that we might enjoy, and not dread, the life before us. And know, that despite our sometimes-faltering steps, in the name of Jesus Christ, you are being forgiven, even now.

**ALL: In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven.  
Glory to God! Amen.**

## THE PEACE

### HYMN

#### *Love Divine, All Loves Excelling*

Love divine, all loves excelling,  
joy of heaven, to earth come down;  
fix in us thy humble dwelling;  
all thy faithful mercies crown!  
Jesus thou art all compassion,  
pure, unbounded love thou art;  
visit us with thy salvation;  
enter every trembling heart.

Breathe, O breathe thy loving Spirit  
into every troubled breast!  
Let us all in thee inherit;  
let us find that second rest.  
Take away our bent to sinning;  
Alpha and Omega be;  
end of faith, as its beginning,  
set our hearts at liberty.

Come, Almighty to deliver,  
let us all thy life receive;  
suddenly return and never,  
nevermore thy temples leave.  
Thee we would be always blessing,  
serve thee as thy hosts above,  
pray and praise thee without ceasing,  
glory in thy perfect love.

Finish, then, thy new creation;  
pure and spotless let us be.  
Let us see thy great salvation  
perfectly restored in thee;  
changed from glory into glory,  
till in heaven we take our place,  
till we cast our crowns before thee,  
lost in wonder, love, and praise.

## **Gospel Reading** Luke 15: 1-3, 11b-32

Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, “This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.” So he told them this parable:

“There was a man who had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.' So he divided his property between them. A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living.

“When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself he said, 'How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.”’”

“So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. Then the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

“But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. And get the fatted calf and kill it and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!' And they began to celebrate.

“Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. He replied, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound.' Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. But he answered his father, 'Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young

goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!

"Then the father said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.'"

**MESSAGE**    *Belonging: A Man Had Two Sons*

**HYMN**

*PVEC Choir*

**PRAYERS FOR THE LIFE OF OUR WORLD**

**God, we have known Your love, and experienced Your care and provision. You invite us to extend that love to the world around us — to care for others as deeply as we care for ourselves.**

**And so we bring the needs of our world before You now.**

**In Your mercy, hear our prayer.**

**We pray for the many who do not have enough:**

**enough food to eat, or shelter to keep warm;**

**enough employment, or money to pay their bills;**

**enough medicine or medical care.**

**Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.**

**We also pray for those who have more than enough, but who still struggle to find meaning and purpose in life; who indulge in dangerous or self-serving activities to dull their pain or loneliness.**

**Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.**

**God, Your grace reaches out to all of us.**

**You call us to live as citizens of heaven, working together with one heart and mind. Strengthen us to live in a manner worthy of the Good News we have received, offering our lives in service of Your kingdom, where the last are first, and the first are last, and there is grace enough for all.**

**Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.**

**In the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, Amen.**

## **THE OFFERING**

We invite you to take this time to express your gratitude to God for all that you have been given by dedicating your time, talents, witness, service, and resources. The gifts you give are helping God build the community of love in this place and in our world.

We offer several ways that you can give your fiscal pledge: in person by placing your offering in the “church mailbox” in the narthex, dropping it off at the office, by mail, through our website [www.panthervalleychurch.org](http://www.panthervalleychurch.org), or add PVEC to your online bill pay. Thank you for your generosity.

When we give our tithes and offerings, we are witnesses to the transforming love of God in Christ. I invite you to give as generously as you have received.

## **OFFERTORY PRAYER**

**Generous God, in light of your extravagant blessings –  
no matter what the state of the world or our imperfect lives –  
we offer our gifts and ourselves, and know that you transform what we  
plant into the produce of love. Amen.**

## **A BLESSING FOR BECOMING REAL**

"Blessed are you who do not despise your realness.

It may hurt. You may not recognize yourself in the mirror.

But this is what we hoped for, right?

To live and love. To be loved.

To have our experiences show on our faces and in our cells.

It is the real life of Jesus in us, being made visible, as all our seams show.”

## **BENEDICTION**

And now, may the God who loves all of creation, especially the ordinary parts, and Jesus, our companion along this crooked path called life, and the Holy Spirit, who loves to improvise in surprising ways, go with you, dwell among you, and give you joy. Amen.

## **POSTLUDE**

*Flowers are donated by Cylvia Ultz in memory of*

*Ella Yager.*



**Credits:** All liturgy and leader parts, except prayers for The Life of Our World are written by Marcia McFee © [www.worshipdesignstudio.com/goodenough](http://www.worshipdesignstudio.com/goodenough). Used and adapted with permission.

Prayers for the Life of Our World adapted from a prayer written by Christine Longhurst.

Opening prayer written by Roddy Hamilton and posted on Mucky Paws.

<http://www.nkchurch.org.uk/index.php/mucky-paws>

*Hymn:* Love Divine, All Loves Excelling, CCLI #40306, Public Domain

Lamb of God, CCLI#16787, 1985 Jubilee Communications Inc., Mountain Spring Music

### ***Stewardship Snippet*** (4th Sunday in Lent - Year C)

March 27, 2022 - Joshua 5: 9-12

The LORD said to Joshua, "Today I have rolled away from you the disgrace of Egypt." And so that place is called Gilgal to this day. While the Israelites were camped in Gilgal, they kept the Passover in the evening on the fourteenth day of the month in the plains of Jericho. On the day after the Passover, on that very day, they ate the produce of the land, unleavened cakes, and parched grain. The manna ceased on the day they ate the produce of the land, and the Israelites no longer had manna; they ate the crops of the land of Canaan that year.

This year, let's try developing a sense of holistic stewardship for our lives. Stewardship, of course, looks at how we use not just our financial abundance but all the blessings that God has given us – our health, our family and friends, our faith, our time, our intelligence. That's the "manna" we should celebrate as we look forward to what God has provided for our future: Immanuel (GOD WITH US). Blessings, Donna Weinberg

### **Announcements & Upcoming Events**

#### **Please pray for:**

The Ukrainian People & Our World, Refugees Everywhere, The Lawson Family, The Warenberg Family, The O'Reilly Family - Jan, Dan, Tom, Elaine O'Reilly, Eleanor at Heath Village, Don, Gordon, Lois, Sally, Patrick McNeal, Laurie Washer



The Discernment Team & Search Committee met last weekend. Information will follow from the liaison, Anne Ellis.

### COFFEE HOUR TODAY

Penny and Donna would like to invite everyone to coffee and cake immediately after worship.

The Spring Fling Vendor Event & Chicken Dinner is only 10 days away!

**Calling all brownie bakers** to please make those delicious dessert treats. Thank you!

### **Event Dates**

- Sun. 3/27* Moving Outward & Forward in Love meeting - FH/Zoom 11:45am
- Sat. 4/2* PVEC Spring Fling Vendor Event & Chicken Slider Dinner 2-6pm
- Sun. 4/10* Moving Outward & Forward in Love meeting - FH/Zoom 11:45am
- Th. 4/14* Maundy Thursday Service 7pm
- Fri. 4/15* Good Friday Service 7pm
- Sat. 4/16* \$5 Bunny Breakfast, Photos & Egg Hunt 9-11am
- Sun. 4/17* Easter "Sonrise" 6:15am, Communion 10:30am
- Fri. 4/22* Chicken Lunch/Dinner 12-6pm, First day for Rummage Sale 9am-6pm
- Sat. 4/23* Rummage Sale 9am-2pm
- Sun. 4/24* Moving Outward & Forward in Love meeting - FH/Zoom 11:45am & Rummage Sale after worship
- Sat. 4/30* Last day for Rummage Sale 9am-2pm
- Sat. 6/18* Fish & Chips Dinner 4:30-7pm, proceeds to VBS
- 8/1-8/5* VBS

## **PANTHER VALLEY ECUMENICAL CHURCH**

1490 Route 517 Hackettstown, NJ 07840

~Welcome—we were built for you!~

Panther Valley Ecumenical Church is a multi-denominational church serving northwest New Jersey since 1969. We are formally affiliated with:

The Episcopal Church, The United Church of Christ,  
The Presbyterian Church USA, and The United Methodist Church.

We are a congregation of many Christian traditions who worship together in accordance with Christ's prayer: "that they may all be one."

May God's Blessing go with you this week.

**Pastor:** Ninabeth Metcalf

Email: [pvecpastor@gmail.com](mailto:pvecpastor@gmail.com)

**Music Director:** Diane Van Dongen

**Church Administrator:** Nikki Nicinski

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**FAMILY ~ FAITH ~ FRIENDS**