

Good Enough:

Embracing the Imperfections
of Life and Faith

Lent 1

"Ordinary lives can be holy."



PANTHER VALLEY ECUMENICAL CHURCH

Holy Communion
March 6, 2022

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

*Our Worship can be viewed on our website
PantherValleyChurch.org*



**THERE
MAY BE
TIMES**

when we are
POWERLESS

to **PREVENT** *injustice*
**BUT THERE MUST
NEVER**

*be a time
when we*
**FAIL TO
PROTEST**

-elie wiesel

#PRAY FOR UKRAINE

PRELUDE

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

The liturgical season of Lent developed over the centuries as a time of deepened reflection. Originally a period of preparation for baptisms on Easter Eve, it later became a time for all Christians to take stock of their lives and examine how the connection to their faith was progressing—or not—and to recommit to a life of goodness. This year we will indeed open up and take stock. But rather than feel guilty (a popular Lenten pastime) about what we haven't accomplished in our lives and faith, we will spend some time questioning how our culture's obsession with achievement and perfection actually keeps us from the true depths of life and faith. This Lent, we'll take some time to turn ladder-climbing into garden-tending, nurturing our souls and embracing our holy, "good enough," lives.

*What in our lives do we dream about for tomorrow, void of sorrow?
Time spent regretting decisions of our yesterdays, mistakes we made?
Sometimes we get what we get,
life disappoints us and yet,
God is still here and somehow; this faith is good enough.*

CALL TO WORSHIP *Based on Psalm 91*

ONE: Let us pray together:

ALL: **Holy One, Our Refuge and Shelter, we call out to you, sometimes in praise, sometimes in distress—as life goes.**

Whether we perceive it or not, you are there.

Open us this day to your presence in the smile of a friend, in the call of a bird—in the simple and good enough moments that fill our days.

Amen.

CHILDREN'S TIME

HONEST QUESTIONS, COMPASSIONATE RESPONSE

ONE: We find ourselves hungry for many things that we believe will bring us satisfaction. In today's Gospel, the devil lays a bet that Jesus will jump at the chance for glory, fame, and the quick fix. Who wouldn't? But Jesus keeps up the pithy one-liners long enough that the Tempter just has to slink away. What are the temptations that catch your ear, singing out promises that your life should be more special than it is? What if ordinary life is already holy—as is? Let us take a moment of silent reflection...

Silent Reflection

ONE: Hear this compassionate word from the Letter to the Romans: “The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart... Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

Know that already, God is offering us freedom from the temptations of the “not enough-ness” of our time, inviting us to love and revere the seeming ordinariness of the day-to-day so that we might recognize its true beauty. 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

Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven

Praise, my soul, the King of heaven,
to the throne thy tribute bring;
ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,
evermore God's praises sing.

Alleluia! Alleluia!

Praise the everlasting King.

Praise the Lord for grace and favor
to all people in distress;
praise God, still the same as ever,
slow to chide, and swift to bless.

Alleluia! Alleluia!

Glorious now God's faithfulness.

Fatherlike, God tends and spares us;
well our feeble frame God knows;
motherlike, God gently bears us,
rescues us from all our foes.

Alleluia! Alleluia!

Widely yet God's mercy flows.

Angels in the heights, adoring,
you behold God face to face;
saints triumphant, now adoring,
gathered in from every race.
Alleluia! Alleluia!
Praise with us the God of grace.

Gospel Reading Luke 4: 1-13

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished. The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread." Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone.'"

Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And the devil said to him, "To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours." Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'" Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you,' and 'On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'" Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.

MESSAGE *Ordinary Lives Can Be Holy*

HYMN

Jesus Walked This Lonesome Valley

PVEC Choir

PRAYERS FOR THE LIFE OF THE WORLD

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, 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.**

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

ONE: The Holy Living God be with you.

ALL: And also with you.

ONE: Lift up your hearts!

ALL: We lift them up to the Lord!

ONE: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

ALL: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, anytime and everywhere to give thanks to you. You created this world full of so much beauty and sorrow and called it Good. And called it Enough.

Although we feel lost at times, you are ever present.

We doubt, resist, turn away, and rage, insistent on our own power to pull us through, and yet sure that we are to blame, making life seem like a confusing paradox.

But you are patient.

You are here to meet us—reside with us in strange and alienating times, always faithful, always present in this Body ... in this Body.

And so, together we proclaim the praise-filled truth of your glory along with all the saints:

**ALL: Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

Holy are you and blessed is your Son Jesus Christ. He proclaimed freedom for the bound, justice for the oppressed, grace for the lost, love for the prodigal. Through the life and ministry of Jesus, we can imagine and live in a community where all who struggle are taken into loving arms and those who struggle to love are invited into greater compassion.

On the night in which he gave himself up for us, he took bread, gave thanks to you, broke the bread, gave it to his disciples, and said:
“Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”

When the supper was over, he took the cup, gave thanks to you, gave it to his disciples, and said:

“Drink from this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.”

And so, We remember... We offer ourselves ... We proclaim God's time...

ALL: Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here, and on these gifts of bread and fruit of the vine. Make them be for us sustenance for our days, love for simple and ordinary lives, fuel for justice in this world. By your Spirit open us to each other. Open us to the world, making us one in you, through Christ, in the power of your amazing grace!

THE LORD'S PRAYER *We invite you to pray the prayer in the language you are used to speaking. Today we are highlighting the prayer in the Traditional text written in the 17th century and is used by reformed and Presbyterian churches.*

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

WE SHARE THE MEAL

Behold the mystery - The Bread we break is the Bread of Life.

Behold the mystery - The Cup we Share is the Cup of Love

These are the gifts of God for the people of God.

ALL: Thanks be to God.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

God of grace, you have given us all things, and you have fed us with Christ's presence through this sacrament. We commit ourselves to you now, and we give ourselves to the work of your kingdom, which is upon us in Jesus' life. Thanks be to God! Amen.

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

Credits: All liturgy and leader parts Marcia McFee ©
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Hymn: Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven, CCLI #800443, Public Domain
Jesus Walked This Lonesome Valley, Public Domain

Stewardship Snippet (First Sunday in Lent - Year C) Luke 4: 1-2

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished.

As we all know - "One does not live by bread alone." During our 40 days of lent, Stewardship leads us to reflect on our lives through prayer, fasting and almsgiving. We are urged to reevaluate who we are as disciples of Christ and how we live out our discipleship. So much of our energy and time and life is spent trying to accumulate more wealth, more belongings, more self-interest – as if we were going to have these forever, as we ourselves were going to live forever. The danger is that we spend so much effort accumulating things that it diverts us from the things in life that are really important, namely loving the Lord our God with all our being and loving our neighbors as ourselves. Blessings, Donna Weinberg

Announcements & Upcoming Events

Please pray for:

The Ukrainian People & Our World, Joanne & Jack Wiltshire (Carol's sister and brother-in-law who is critically ill), George Cappola, Patrick McNeal, Greg Weinrich, Lynnette, Dan, Family of Dan Conkling, Doris Kaiser & her family in the loss of her mother Theresia Kluzner, Nick in the loss of his grandmother, Ninabeth & The Metcalf Family, The PVEC Congregation

There will be a short **Congregational Meeting today** following church service to vote on the 2022 budget.

Friends and Family, If you receive a text from 908-257-0844 that asks you to contact Pastor Ninabeth Metcalf, it is a scam. The scammer is looking for \$ in gift cards. Please delete the text.

Lunchtime Meditation Wednesdays began this week from 12:30pm-1:00pm in the Sanctuary. Join us on your lunchbreak for a guided meditation to gain clarity and reduce anxiety. Each week we will explore a different meditation practice.

Calling all vendors and crafters! PVEC Spring Fling is April 2nd from 2-6pm. If you are interested in renting a table, contact Elizabeth Efremov at 973-975-8248 or pvec.events1@gmail.com.

April Rummage Sale – We are seeking donations.

4/22, Sat 4/23, Sun 4/24 after worship, Sat 4/30. Contact Liz Silva with questions at 908-343-1305.

Event Dates

- Sun. 3/6* Congregational Meeting for Budget Vote after worship & Sacrament Class
- Sun. 3/13* Deadline to Order Easter Flowers, Moving Outward & Forward in Love
- Sun. 3/20* Sacrament Class 11:45 am
- Sun. 3/27* Moving Outward & Forward in Love
- Sat. 4/2* PVEC Spring Fling Vendor Event & Chicken Slider Dinner 2-6pm
- Sun. 4/10* Moving Outward & Forward in Love
- Th. 4/14* Maundy Thursday Service 7pm
- Fri. 4/15* Good Friday Service 7pm
- 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 & Rummage Sale after worship
for Congregation only
- Sat. 4/30* Last day for Rummage Sale 9am-2pm

Pray

We are calling our fellow Ukrainians, Russians, Europeans, Americans and others to pray for peace. We suggest that every day at 7 am and 7 pm we meet in our churches, temples, synagogues, mosques and offer our prayers for peace. If we can not meet in the houses of worship we should meet in our homes for prayer. If we are not allowed to pray openly for peace let us pray in the sanctuary of our heart. It is essential that we do not succumb to the fear of the murderous forces. The inadequate ambition of one single person inflicts suffering on tens of millions of people, animals, birds, and of course the mother earth. This is a suicidal attempt to push the whole of creation towards unprecedented disaster.

Act

Praying is essential but this is not nearly enough, the prayer should be accompanied by action and this action will become a prayer itself. "I felt my legs were praying," wrote Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heshel after the protest walk to Selma. Similarly, we need to be engulfed into prayerful action:

If we can use our hands to stop the war, we should use our hands,

If we can use our brains to stop the war, we should use our brains,

If we can use voice to stop the war, we should use our voice,

If we can use our resources to stop the war, we should use our resources,

If we can use our time and energy to stop the war, we should use our time and energy.

Show compassion

While striving to stop the war we should also need to commit ourselves to show compassion to the innocent people who have already been afflicted by the war: children, elderly, refugees from either side of cruel divide. There is no mother, no parent wishing to see their children brought in bags from the battlefields, there are no children wishing to see their parents dead. It is in such a time when our true identity is tested: who are we, what are the values we affirm, does justice and fairness mean anything to us. We need to be companionate towards the suffering of the creation and all its members if want to maintain human dignity

Believe

It is indeed the time of Sadness, frustration and anguish. But these circumstances should never blind our perspective that in the end justice will prevail, hatred and lie will be defeated, love and compassion will definitely win. It is essential to believe that forces of darkness and stupidity will fail. It has always been the case; it shall always be the case. Therefore, let us heed the words of the prophet Amos: "Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream."

Malkhaz Songulashvili, Archbishop of the Peace Cathedral, Tbilisi, February 25th, 2022

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

Music Director: Diane Van Dongen

Church Administrator: Nikki Nicinski

Email: pvecsecretary@gmail.com

Office hours: Mon. – Fri. 9:00am – 2:00pm

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FAMILY ~ FAITH ~ FRIENDS