

“Even so, I have confidence that I’ll see the goodness of YHWH in the land of the living! Wait for God—stand tall and let your heart take courage! Yes, wait for YHWH!” Psalm 27

Dear Beloveds of God,

God’s mercy is new every morning.

God is faithful, and we are blessed with steadfast love. In this season of Lent, we intentionally turn toward God, seeking to trust in God’s eternal love for us more faithfully. In that turning, which is also a process of letting go, we experience new life.

Let us ground ourselves in God’s love for us because in the midst of life and especially through these unprecedented political times with violations of our human and democratic values, we can feel fear, anger, shock, confusion, exhaustion, denial, disbelief, and filled with doubts. During our Lenten journey, let us remember that we are not alone, especially as we experience lostness and wilderness. Jesus certainly was tempted in the desert, and we, too, have our dry and arid places of struggles. We may doubt God. Let us come into this season of Lent to journey into the depths of spiritual life, including anxieties, doubts, struggles, and feelings of alienation.

In this season of Lent, let us practice all the *means of grace* available to us, to draw closer to God and one another. Communal worship, learning, and serving together are occasions to be reminded of what takes priority in our lives. Jesus faced testing with the presence of God in Spirit, and in living words of scripture and tradition, companions of strength and truth, I invite us to reflect on these questions:

What-and who-have been your companions in wilderness times in your life?

Through what words and traditions do you, as an individual and as the church, find your trust in God most energized in the face of challenges and tests?

Let us remember that wilderness times are in the presence of God in Spirit and transformative, as we recall other biblical wanderings and times of trial and repentance. The Israelites wandered in the wilderness, formed as a nation, the 40-day journey of Elijah on Mount Horeb, honestly seeking God’s presence and discovering a call to prophetic ministry. It was the wilderness where Hager found spiritual renewal, where John was baptized, and where Jesus fed the multitudes.

We enter into our 40 days of lent, also living in wilderness, communities hurt by racial injustices, systemic oppression of the already marginalized, and neglect/abuse of our planet/cosmos. Again, I invite us to reflect on these questions:

How will we move toward liberation in solidarity with those who are suffering?

What might practicing solidarity with these communities look like in Lent?

We journey in the presence of God in Spirit with and for us. The power of Love is an act of justice in solidarity and resistance.

Like Mary on Easter morning, the Psalmist reminds us that we shall see the goodness of God in the land of the living: “Wait for God, stand tall and let your heart take courage! Yes, wait for YHWH!”

With prayers for slowing down, entering our own wilderness, to reflect, pray, and find ourselves renewed in God’s presence toward our Alleluias on Easter Sunday,

Pastor Wongee