

Walk: The Way of the Lamb



Baldwin Community United Methodist Church
5001 Baptist Road
Pittsburgh, PA 15236

Walk: The Way of the Lamb

Dear friends,

About this time last year, a virus was spreading rapidly across the globe. We had no idea of the implications to follow as we began to refrain from activities and discipline our lives in completely unexpected ways. How much has our quarantining felt like fasting? We have socially distanced from each other, donned masks to keep one another safe, and been introduced to new, innovative ways of gathering. As more and more of our community receives the COVID-19 vaccine, we begin to allow ourselves to feel inklings of joy as our lives are slowly being returned to us. Hallelujah!

But before we go too far, Lent is all about going in the opposite direction of prevailing culture and society! On Ash Wednesday, we will be invited to put away our shouts of “Hallelujah!” to wrestle with our sins and brokenness so that we will be free, joyfully free on Easter Sunday.

Your Lent At Home bag is filled with resources to help you on your journey. On Monday February 15th at noon on Facebook Live, Pastor Pam will share about the items and resources in your bag. If you would like more information on how to use your bag, go to our Facebook page to get tips or ideas for you and your family to have a holy Lenten experience.

On Good Friday, April 2nd, from 5-7 pm in the church circle, you are invited to an outdoor worship experience as we bring our wooden crosses, candles, and burlap bookmarks, as well as our donations to St. Vincent de Paul, as we walk Baldwin Community UMC’s own variation on the Stations of the Cross.

We pray that Lent this year will be a meaningful experience that brings you closer to Christ and prepares you for the joy and hope of Easter.

Your pastors,

Pamela Gardner and Ginger Thomas

What is in your bag?

- Your Lenten Guide
- A copy of “Invitation to the Observance of Lenten Discipline”
- A copy of *Walking in the Wilderness: Seeking God during Lent* by Beth A. Richardson
- One candle
- One palm cross
- One burlap bookmark
- Two tongue depressors
- Finger Labyrinth page
- Hiking Club map



Ash Wednesday

Daily Walk: *Jonah 3:1-4:11*
Luke 18:9-14

Ash Wednesday is an invitation for every Christian to consider their walk with God. Looking back over the past year, how did your faith grow and mature? What parts of your spiritual life might need some attention and growth? In our Daily Walk scriptures, we are reading two scriptures that look at how resistance to change and growth might work against how we daily live as Christians. Read these scriptures over the next few days and ask yourself how Jonah and the confidently righteous people around Jesus are being challenged in each situation. What resistance is being addressed? Why wouldn't change or new growth be welcomed in this situation? Write your thoughts down in your journal or in the margins of this page.

Observing Lent can be a scary and unsettling experience as it invites us to encounter our own pockets of resistance with God. Where are you being resistant to change with God? Has God been working in your prayer life asking for a change that you can't seem to welcome? Resistance is a natural part of our spiritual work with God. We don't just become perfect or righteous in the blink of an eye! New growth in Christ takes commitment to pray, release, experiment, and take small, deliberate steps towards a renewed faith. New growth is an ongoing, dynamic, and surprising gift given to those who will choose to walk with intention toward whatever new things God might have in store for us. But, if you are feeling a little bit like Jonah right now, resistant and afraid... that's okay. Walking in the way of the Lamb takes time and practice repeated over many days. Good News! We have time--in fact we have 40 days!

Let's begin!

God, help us come to attention as we yield all that feels broken, afraid, sad, disappointed, frustrated, and hopeless as we begin Lent. You are God, and we are not. As we remember this reality today, give us strength to walk our own journey of faith. We remember that we are dust, and to dust we shall return. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Read your Invitation to the Observance of Lenten Discipline card. Ashes mingled with holy oil were imposed upon your card. Can you smell the smoky, sacred scent? Begin to quiet yourself, close your eyes, find a comfortable place to sit, and slowly read over each word. What is the invitation being given to you? Ask God to show you the changes you could work on throughout the season of Lent. Write down one or two areas that you want to commit to during Lent. Begin to write a plan or series of steps that will help you be successful in moving from resistance to relationship with God.

Week One (Feb 21-27) Walk!

Daily Walk: Mark 2:14-22

Let's use Week One to consider more deeply our walk with Christ. The Daily Walk scripture as we read it throughout the week will challenge us to make some adjustments on our 40-day journey. Jesus is reminding his listeners that new practices or ideas cannot be put in old ways of living. Change has a way of making us alter how we approach our life to include new blessings. For instance, let's think about shoes for a moment. Could you wear a pair of 20-year-old shoes to walk long distance? Are your feet in the same condition that they were 20 years ago? How hard did you use those 20-year-old shoes? Would the wear and tear of the shoes accommodate the wear and tear of your feet? Unless you are super lucky, chances are if you choose to slip old shoes on "renewed" feet for a long hike, you are probably coming home with blisters and achy feet. Our souls change with God over time, and we need new practices and experiences to bring a renewed sense of health and renewal with God.

Throughout Lent we are going to be using the phrase, "The Way of the Lamb is always..." in Sunday worship. Listen to how each phrase is ended, what words are being used? Practice using this phrase as you walk around the grocery store, your house, or you may wish to join the Lenten Hiking Club as they travel to parks around Pittsburgh for exercise and prayer. Use the finger labyrinth to find focus as you follow the path to the prayerful center and slowly return to the rest of your day. Begin to nurture a mindfulness about how you are walking your journey with Christ. Extend the journey into your own neighborhood by taking with you this breath prayer: "The Way of Lamb is always...". Notice how the phrase changes the circumstances that you are experiencing and how you can bring the power of the Kingdom of God to earth through this simple breath prayer.

Walking Prayer:

God, help me pay attention to my spiritual walk today. Show me the habits that no longer work well for me and how these habits might harm others. Reveal to me how new habits might bring joy that I would miss if I chose to be resistant and stubborn. Guide my feet in holy paths that each person I meet will understand and see that I am on a journey of discovery and renewed faith. Holy God, I hold you first in my heart. The Way of the Lamb is always.... (choose your word to place here.)

Preparing for Good Friday: Choose the one word that helped you most during Lent when you prayed "The Way of the Lamb is always..." As a reminder, write your word down here:

Week Two (Feb 27-Mar 6) Walking Unburdened

Daily Walk: *Matthew 14:22-36*

Wouldn't it have been incredible to see Jesus walking on the water that night on Galilee? How we admire the audacity of Peter when he decides to go meet Jesus on the rough and stormy waters! But like Peter we are weighed down by thoughts and things that make traveling light with Jesus impossible. We have too much baggage. Perhaps you have already done some pandemic purging already. Lent is a time of critical reconsideration. If you have already rid yourself of extra things, let's take one more look. What were the items that you just can't seem to part with, but truth be told you have not used it since? Clutter allows us to feel secure in being able to provide for ourselves anything that we want for as long as we want. Decluttering frees us to appreciate the essentials, to put what we have to good work, and encourages trust in God through dependence. When we risk unburdening our lives to become more dependent upon God, in times of need we learn that God does hear our prayers and supplies our needs in surprising ways. Think about a time when God supplied your need by giving you exactly what you needed. How are you still grateful for this experience? Are there 40 things laying around your home that have been untouched in months--forty items that someone else might be able to use? Grab a big box and start looking through cupboards and storage rooms for items that you are ready to release for another's blessing. Just think, by releasing something that you do not need, you can participate in God's blessing of others by supplying what they need! Fill your box with forty things over 40 days and feel the joy that comes with releasing unnecessary things! We might be light enough to walk on water... maybe!

Walking Prayer

Companioning God, we carry around within us so many heavy things. We are not finished forgiving some. We are not finished forgiving ourselves. We cling to broken dreams in the hope that a miracle might happen to override what should never be ours. We fear change and resist new opportunities because they mean great change for us. Teach us how to unburden our spirits by releasing toxic and unhelpful habits and materialism. Show us a picture of what true freedom in Christ looks like that we might daringly step out of our comfort and into faithfulness. The Way of the Lamb is always... Amen.

Preparing for Good Friday: Bring your full box of donations to our Good Friday worship service. The Saint Vincent de Paul truck that will be on site to collect donations from 5-7pm on April 2nd.



Week Three (Mar 6-13) Walking Introspectively

Daily Walk: *John 5:1-15*

Walking through this pandemic, we have all had moments where we felt helpless and incapable of changing our situation. Reading our gospel lesson for the week, we encounter a man who has remained on his mat hoping for change and help for 38 years. We can only imagine how many mats he used up laying daily in the same spot aching for a saving grace to help and change his situation. We wonder, didn't he have a friend or family member that could help? Were there no other options than to lay helpless for 38 years? When Jesus appears on scene, he asks the man what seems like a very insensitive question, "Do you want to be made well?" The reader wants to shout "Yes! Yes, I want to be made well!" on behalf of the man. We want to swoop in to rescue and give hope! But 38 years is a long enough time for bad habits to settle in, to block healing, and dampen hope. Our friend on the mat is stuck.

During the next week, you are invited to concentrate on the burlap bookmark placed in your Lent at Home bag. Spend time feeling how rough and uncomfortable this material is under your fingers. Imagine laying for 38 years on a mat made of burlap. And then begin to ponder places where you are stuck in your relationship with Jesus. Where have you been looking for healing? Are you waiting for a miracle to help you change, or would it mean more to you to have a personal investment in healing all that is broken within? Pray on your brokenness and inability to see reasonable steps into healthy living. Pray with your piece of burlap. How long do you want to be stuck in place with no hope? What are the small steps you can take this week to change?

Walking Prayer

Healing Christ, when you see us on our mats of despair and helplessness you do not despise us; you love us. We thank you for loving us in seasons of self-pity, anger at our current situation, fear of what it really means to be made well, and despair that we might not have enough fortitude to walk out of our suffering. Ask us this week persistently if we want to be made well, and we will do our best to answer your probing question with honest, open hearts. Show us when we should pick up our mats to begin living and walking with a renewed sense of purpose and love.

As we cling to our burlap bookmark in prayer, we ask for release and freedom from all that would prevent us from fully living faithful lives. We pray into the roughness of the fiber all the prickly, uncomfortable thoughts we have become so accustomed to thinking about ourselves. And when we close this prayer, we leave our sinful thinking behind and claim our freedom to walk. The Way of the Lamb is always... Amen.

Preparing for Good Friday: Bring your bookmark with you to our Good Friday service where you can attach your prayers with others in our congregation as we weave our bookmarks together to create a beautiful tapestry of release and healing.



Week Four (Mar 14-20) Watch Where You Walk!

Daily Walk *Luke 11:37-44*

“Watch where you are walking!” We’ve all heard the command to pay attention to our path. Someone observing witnessed our carelessness, disconnection, or mindlessness as we moved through space and time. In our Daily Walk scripture this week, we will be reading part of the passage where Jesus is rendering woes over the faithless and unaware. Jesus is pointing out the wretchedness of the Pharisees who are responsible for leading God’s faithful into an intimate, joyful relationship with God, except as Jesus says it, they “are like unmarked graves, which men walk over without even knowing it.” The Pharisees have become a lifeless, joyless presence offering nothing of value to those seeking God. In essence, the Pharisees are dead.

In your Lent at Home bag, you should have two wooden sticks. As we walk through our 40 days, pray that you might become more aware or softened to habits or disconnecting thoughts that bring about trouble, disagreement, frustration, or emptiness for you. Write a word or phrase on one of the wooden sticks to symbolically remind you of habits, quirks, or sins that trip you up on your journey into a closer relationship with Jesus. Begin to ask Jesus to show you a new path towards awareness, reconciliation, and a newfound freedom in Christ that you might experiment and boldly move forward into a new kind of walk in Christ.

Walking Prayer

Convicting Christ, we admit that we do not pay attention to where we are walking many days. We are preoccupied, distracted, and sometimes too selfish to see any other way but our own. Forgive us, we pray. Forgive us and illuminate our minds toward a newness of heart and life that brings us good awareness, love, and your ongoing presence. We commit this day to watching ourselves through your eyes as we speak, work, and embrace this day. We want to know where we are not doing well. Reveal your truth to us! Restore to us care-filled, connected, and mindful living for the sake of Christ alone! The Way of the Lamb is always... Amen.

Preparing for Good Friday: On the two wooden sticks provided in your bag, write down thoughts or words that symbolize the areas in your life where you are not paying attention to your Christian walk. At the end of the week, glue or attach the wooden sticks together in the shape of the cross. Place the cross in your home where you can see it and remind yourself to pay attention to how you walk in the world. Bring your wooden cross to our Good Friday worship experience and prepare to repent as we leave behind all our unthinking ways.



Week Five (Mar 21-27) Walking in Radiance

Daily Walk *John 12:20-36*

One of my grandfather's memories of his childhood had to do with bedtime. His younger brother would turn off the bedroom light and race to bed before the light extinguished and the room went completely dark. Growing up in a world of modern light bulbs, my sister and I struggled to make sense of the story; after all, for us there was only off and on. Only recently when in a much older home with many original fixtures did I observe for the first time the light delay emitted from the older light bulbs. It was an illuminating moment... sorry!

In our Daily Walk scripture this week, Jesus is predicting his own death to the disciples. What he was telling them didn't make sense, as they had never encountered a messiah quite like Jesus before. In this passage Jesus is saying that the light of Jesus' presence will only be with them for a little while longer, so they will have to immerse themselves in the power of his radiance now. Once his death is accomplished, the disciples will have to find the radiance of Jesus' teachings and presence to become the children of light emitting their faithful witness.

As we finish our 40-day walk through Lent, we hope that you have enjoyed your devotional book *Walking in the Wilderness* by Beth Richardson, and that you included one or two thoughts or practices into who you are becoming in Christ. Review the Sunday chapters as you think about the kind of light that you want to absorb in this holy season and will carry through the days ahead. Are you more present for having devoted time and attention to God? How does it feel to speak about our lament or things that make us sad in God's presence? Are your steps more deliberate, intentional, trusting, and kind as you move closer into Christ's heart for you?

Walking Prayer

Faithful Jesus, you knew that we would need encouragement to face the dark night, to make sense of a world not illuminated by your presence and grace, and to become your light for the world. Right now, as we feel the tension of Holy Week, you are preparing to leave us. We are beginning to imagine our lives without you. Help us to hold the difference between darkness and light as we work through our fears, faithlessness, and sorrow as frail human souls. We want to run ahead to the next part of your story, the glory of resurrection, to beat the light before it goes out. No matter how we try to control our situation, the light will go out and we will feel despair. Yet even in the dark, you are with us. Thank you. The Way of the Lamb is always... Amen.

Preparing for Good Friday: In your Lent at Home bag, you were provided a candle to bring light to your devotional reading. Bring whatever is left of your candle or a new candle with you to our Good Friday experience. We'll place our used candles in boxes of sand to share the light of Christ with our community.



Week Six (Mar 28-Apr 2) Walking into Jerusalem

Daily Walk *Mark 11:1-11*

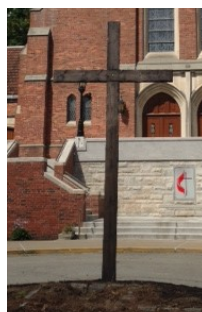
Our 40 days of Lent are almost over for another year. If you are like most people, you have had a few epic highs and lows on this journey into faith. No one walks throughout the entirety of Lent or life with the same kind of intensity as we began when we anticipated our commitment to observe a holy, disciplined Lent. Going on a spiritual walk with Christ is hard work exacting a real price on our heart and soul for each revealed sin and flaw. We feel the cut of our failure not because we're all perfectionists, but because we want to do better as disciples. This week our Daily Walk scripture celebrates Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem surrounded by a crowd full of people uncertain about the future. Some of the crowd expressed joy at Jesus' arrival clinging onto all that they hoped while missing the troubling hints of displeasure from the high priests and Sanhedrin. Others lackadaisically waved palm branches, unsure if this man Jesus was who he said he was, and others outright judged him as a troublemaker coming to ruin a holy time for everyone.

This week, spend time with our Daily Walk scripture paying attention to the details tucked into the choices Jesus was making as his crucifixion drew closer. Read the words out loud and pay attention to how you are feeling as you speak each word. Just a note: there are no right feelings to have in response to Mark 11, only feelings that might indicate to you something wanting to be thought about, pondered, or revealed to you for the very first time. So, if you feel doubt, that's normal. If you feel shame, that's normal too. Disappointment, fear, anxiety, joy, happiness, and hope--all normal. Just remember, our emotional life can be a great source of discovery as we bring authentic feelings to Christ in prayer.

Walking Prayer

Daring Jesus, you knew all that was before you when you entered Jerusalem on a young colt. You saw the mean-spirited glances, felt the looming conflict, and heard the murderous murmurings. Nothing was withheld from you, and yet you still entered weeping over a lost city. The point of our whole Lenten walk has been to reconnect with this sacrificial, loving moment when we realize that you still choose us over the evil powers of this world. Create within us a desire to walk in paths that don't end on Easter Sunday morning, and help us anticipate the journey continuing into new paths of service, worship, and freedom. Be with us, confirm us, and our response will be to sit in loving silence as we listen to your triumphal entry into Jerusalem and our hearts. The Way of the Lamb is always... Amen.

Preparing for Good Friday: When you arrive at our Good Friday service, you will see chairs placed before the cross for you to come and listen to how the Gospels share the final days of Jesus' life. When you are ready, pull up a chair, allow the noise of traffic and conversations to recede to the background, and listen as Jesus makes his final walk towards the cross. Feel the anguish of loss and bitterness of false accusations. What are we to do when we are powerless to change circumstances? Come to Jesus in prayer, ask him how to walk your path from this moment until Easter morn. The Way of the Lamb is always...



Good Friday Worship Experience

April 2, 2021 from 5-7 pm

Join us in the church circle as we wind down our Lenten walk, bringing all the items you've collected throughout the 40 days. You will find a prayer station for each activity listed in this Lenten guide. All are welcome!

Easter Sunrise

April 4, 2021 at 8:00 am

Join us in the church circle for a half-hour prayer service to welcome Christ's victory over the grave. Bring a lawn chair if you would like to sit down for comfort. Watch for the worship page that you can print off at home and bring with you on this beautiful Easter morn!



Easter Online Worship

April 4, 2021 at 10:00 am

Join us on Facebook, the website, or YouTube for our traditional Easter worship service.

“Pilgrimage: In Search of the Risen Christ”

Sundays, April 11-May 16, 2021