

Season of Renewal and Recommitment

2021 Lenten Fast

“His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’ - MATTHEW 25: 23 NIV

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The Rev. Dr. H. Micheal Lemmons, Presiding Elder
The Rev. Cindy Rudolph, Senior Pastor

2021 Financial Fast Message

Beloved, I greet you with the joy of the Lord, which is my strength. Through the grace and mercy of God, we are blessed and privileged to behold another Lenten season. As we continue to journey through the *Season of Reclamation and Restoration*, we want to position ourselves to receive all that God desires for us. Most of us are seeking restoration of some sort; whether it is physical, spiritual, emotional or financial. With that in mind, I am asking us to enter into a Financial Fast for Lent. Money is often a challenge, even in the lives of many believers. You may be thinking, “I don’t have money challenges.” Financial fasting is not simply beneficial for those who struggle, it can be beneficial for all. Even believers who do not have challenges with money management, giving and saving, can be blessed by the discipline and lessons gleaned from participation in our Financial Fast.

As we participate in this year’s Financial Fast, we must remember the two foundational spiritual disciplines of prayer and the study of God’s Word. During this Financial Fast, we encourage all of us to increase our prayer time with God, as we seek to grow, individually and as a church, spiritually, numerically and financially. We also encourage all of us to be consistent in our attendance at the Wednesday Night Bible Study online.

We are also asking all of us to pray over a special Thank Offering to be given on Easter Sunday, as an act of praise and gratitude for the ways we have been blessed during this year’s Financial Fast.

As we participate in our 2021 Financial Fast, I have the same desire and hope for you as the Apostle Paul had for the Church at Corinth, “*Now as you excel in everything---in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in utmost eagerness, and in love---so we want you to excel also in this generous undertaking.*” 2 Corinthians 8:7

In Christ,
Cindy Rudolph
Senior Pastor

2021 Financial Fast

Nehemiah fasted and prayed for the children of Israel when there was a need for the repairing of the temple. Daniel fasted and prayed for three weeks to draw nearer and hear from God. David fasted and prayed in a time of personal repentance. Paul and Barnabas fasted and prayed before presenting leaders in the church and Jesus spent 40 days in the desert fasting and praying before going into ministry. All of these experiences brought amazing and miraculous results.

We commend the book “The 21-Day Financial Fast: Your Path to Financial Peace and Freedom” by Michelle Singletary as a resource to assist us during our 2021 Lenten Fast. Listed below are 21 Pledges extracted from her book along with a few additional pledges.

Day 1

For the next 21 days, I will be on a spending diet, I will not shop for anything except necessities. I will not use my credit card. I will limit or eliminate the use of my debit card when possible. I will use cash for purchases that I will make during the fast. In this way, I will strive to break the chains that keep me from achieving financial freedom. Every day I will pray and ask for strength to follow this Financial Fast.

Day 2

To find the key to wealth, I have to understand that prosperity comes with conditions. I must follow God’s will and Word for my life.

Day 3

I will identify someone --- a friend, family member, neighbor or co-worker --- who needs help either with cash (I can afford to give away) or my time. I will use God’s generosity toward me as an example of how to be generous to others. As I prosper, I will share my wealth with others.

Day 4

I will commit to tithing or recommit to tithing.

Day 5

Today, I’ll think about something in my life I did or purchased that I now realize was giving into a sense of entitlement.

Day 6

Today, I promise I will not complain about anything I have.

Day 7

I will be diligent and develop a budget so every penny I earn has a purpose.

Day 8

I will commit today to set aside a percentage of every paycheck for my savings.

Day 9

I will examine my investments to make sure I am well diversified.

Day 10

I will work with my spouse to develop a set of rules to govern how we handle our money together. If single, I will work to develop a set of rules to govern how I handle money.

Day 11

I will show my child/children or some other young person by example what it means to be a good steward over money.

Day 12

I will complete a debt reduction worksheet.

Day 13

I will review my credit card statements going back at least three months and examine my spending on my credit and debit cards.

Day 14

I will not cosign with anyone other than my spouse.

Day 15

I will take an inventory of what I own so I can guard against wanting more. I will be

on the lookout for things that pull me in the direction of greed.

Day 16

I will take some time to learn about long-term care insurance and begin planning for any caregiving responsibilities that may fall to me.

Day 17

I will identify at least one aspect of my finance and decide today to stop stressing about it.

Day 18

I will stop worrying about not having enough money because God has so richly blessed me.

Day 19

I will commit that everything I have belongs to God.

Day 20

I will begin to pray about donating an above and beyond Easter Thank Offering.

Day 21

I will try to find at least one other person to help go through the 21-day financial fast.

Day 22 – Until Easter

Reflect on scriptures during the remaining Lenten Financial Fast

Beloved,

As we journey through the season of Lent together, I pray that this book of Psalms will bless you. It was prepared by various members of Oak Grove. After studying the Book of Psalms during a Bible study series, each contributor was challenged to write a psalm of their own. They incorporated what they learned about the format and content of the biblical Psalms as they told their stories and shared their thoughts. We pray that you will be blessed as you read and reflect upon them.

In Christ,

Pastor Cindy Rudolph

To the Chief Musician

Only You can pen a song that the angels cannot sing
Write a perfect harmony; make every joy bell ring.
Every instrument and voice, to You we make a joyful noise.
Lord, all to You we bring, You're the master of everything.
Bless the Lord, oh my soul and all that is within me.

Lord, I make a joyful noise because You have been with me through dangers seen and unseen. You took me on a journey. You brought me from segregated Illinois to the cornfields of Iowa to find a husband. You brought me through the cold winters of Minnesota and blessed me with a son. Even though most of my family was deceased or left behind in Iowa, You brought me to Michigan where I found an extended family, a new spiritual family and new friends. You blessed me to be a local YPD Director, local WMS President and Deaconess. You elevated me to a Life Member in the WMS.

Lord, I make a joyful noise because even though I walked through the valley of the shadow of death when my husband, who was one of your servants, made his transition, You blessed me to not stay in that valley but to see a brighter day. Lord, I make a joyful noise because you have let me see my 2 grandchildren. Bless the Lord, oh my soul and all that is within me.

Lord, I make a joyful noise because I look at the lame that could not walk. And You blessed me with feet to go into the highways and byways to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Lord, I make a joyful noise because I looked at the dumb that could not talk. And You blessed me with a tongue to give You praise. Lord I make a joyful noise because I looked at the blind that could not see. And You blessed me with eyes to see all the wonders that your hands have made.

Lord I make a joyful noise because You promised three score and ten years. And You blessed me with more than 70 years so I can give You honor and praise. Lord I make a joyful noise because You let me live to see history being made. You blessed me to see a Black President and now a Black women Vice-President. Lord they say that all lives matter. But we make a joyful noise because Black Lives Matter. Lord I make a joyful noise because even though the plague called COVID-19 has spread through the land, You used science to make vaccines to heal Your land.

Lord I make a joyful noise because even though people are trying to say that our vote doesn't count, You are showing that the laws of the land will prevail. Lord I make a joyful noise because even though shingles entered my body, You touched me with Your hand of mercy.

But Lord most of all, I make a joyful noise to acknowledge You in every way. To the chief musician, hallelujah. It is You I praise.

Amen
Barbara Chester

You are my Great God.

You are my great God.

When the enemy came into my life in the name of Covid-19, my body was racked with pain from my head to my toes. You are still my great God.

When I asked my wife, the Reverend Nicole Smiley, if this was a death sentence for me, she said that I was really going to have to fight for my life. But you were still my great God, because I told her no matter what happens to me, I will always give God the praise. That the devil will never steal my praise. I told her if this is my last day on earth that you are still my great God.

When I got to the hospital and they told me that they had no cure for COVID-19, I said you were still my great God. No matter what happened I still believe that You were going to bring me through. So, after nine days in the hospital, not eating for seven of those days, losing 25 pounds I still gave you the praise. Because you are still my great God.

When I came out of the hospital still very tired and very weak, I still gave you the praise because You are my great God. Then I realized that this was a test and that I had to endure. Because it is easy to worship You when everything is going well. I had to worship You when things were not going so well because You are still my great God.

When I got home and found out that my wife the Reverend Nicole Smiley had gone through COVID-19 too, just not as bad as I had it You are still my great God, because you brought

the both of us through this dreadful disease. You are my great God.

Al Smiley

A Psalms Challenge

To read a Psalm a day, and then to meditate and journal about its meaning was what I felt I needed to do.

I was seeking the God found in Matthew 6:33 “**But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you**”; through the Psalms.

Not the promises; not the blessings; not the victories; But the God of the promises; the God of the blessings; the God of the victories.

I am learning to be careful what I ask for.

I asked God to let me feel him moving in me one morning. Not 5 minutes later I received a text message from someone who had disrespected me now asking for help; also having to admit that the grass was not greener on the other side.

God was present at the very sight of her name on the text page, because I knew God was going to help me rise above my pain and anger and give me peace. The individual was able to be rehired - just not in my department.

As in Psalms 1, God watched over me in such a way I could hear and feel His presence. Each day and each Psalm has shown me Your love, kindness, and mercy. I have sought a safe place to cry; just a place to release all I was holding in. I have found it in You, Lord. I found You to be all I need.

You saw me through my own journey with Covid-19. Partially by myself while my husband was fighting the Covid-19 virus in the hospital. But I say look at God! We recovered and God protected our 14-year-old daughter, who was in the house the entire time.

Each day and each Psalm showed me I can trust you. I love the way you answered my prayers. Just to love you is another source of joy. Continue to be with me on this journey

through the Psalms and throughout my life.

Rev. Nicole Smiley

Where is my mother? She is with the Lord.

As a little girl, I remember my mother on her knees. I'd wonder why and was often a distraction to her during those times. I wanted her attention. I asked her what she was doing.

She told me "I am praying to the Lord." I asked her, "Why"? She told me, "I am praying to the Lord to thank him for blessing me with my family, and to ask him to cover and keep us from harm". As I think back over those times, I know she was with you, Oh Lord. Where is my mother? She is on her knees praying! Where is my mother? She is with you, Oh Lord!

Time goes on, Oh Lord! I look back now and I see my mother as she encouraged her four daughters to get their education. For you see she was only able to complete the sixth grade. It was a time when her widowed mother had nine children to raise on her own. My mother, one of the older children, worked in a white family's home to help support the family. She told me that praying helped her through those hard times. Where is my mother? She is on her knees praying! Where is my mother? She is with you, Oh Lord!

Time goes on, Oh Lord! I see my mother, a strong force in our lives. A strong Christian force. She takes care of her children and immerses us in the Christian way of life. She encourages us to do what the Lord would have us to do. Never forget that the Lord is with you at all times. Where is my mother? She is on her knees praying! Where is my mother? She is with you, Oh Lord!

Time goes on, Oh Lord! I asked my mother. "How will I be able to go to college?" Money is short! I have worked hard to get the grades needed to be accepted in college, Oh Lord. How can this happen? My mother says to me, "I have showed you all things are possible when you trust in the Lord." Where is my mother? She is on her knees praying! Where is my mother? She is with you, Oh Lord! Time goes on, Oh Lord! My mother sees her daughters graduate from college. She sees them move on and accomplish things she never had the chance to do. This was not an easy road, but ,Lord ,you never said it would be easy. She sees a new generation being born and rejoices in it. She rejoices in the accomplishments of her family. Where is my mother? She is on her knees praying! Where is my mother? She is with

you, Oh Lord!

Time goes on, Oh Lord. There is a shift! It is silent! It is slow! It is devastating! The diagnosis comes down, Oh Lord! It is Alzheimer's! How can this be, Oh Lord? How will we be able to handle this, Oh Lord? My mother is no longer able to voice her thoughts; to do for herself; to even recognize her children! But in that small quiet place that exists only between my mother and I, I hear her voice! I hear her whisper, "Get on your knees and ask the Lord for strength". She whispers that is the only way you will be able to make it! Where is my mother? We are here O Lord on my knees praying! Where is my mother? We are with you, Oh Lord!

Time goes on, Oh Lord. I am now the caregiver. This is not easy, Oh Lord. My mother is no longer able to do for herself! I watched , Oh Lord, as she went through the stages of this devastating disease. Slowly, she lost her ability to comprehend, to speak, to care for herself! She became bedbound! All the things she did for me as a child; I now do for her in her illness. Where is my mother? She is with me, Oh Lord ,on my knees praying! Where is my mother? We are with you, Oh Lord!

Time goes on, Oh Lord! Thanks be unto you, Oh Lord. You blessed me with a mother who knew you. Thanks be unto you, Oh Lord. You blessed me with a praying mother. Thanks be unto you, Oh Lord. You blessed me with a mother who taught me how to pray! Where is my mother? She is with you, Oh Lord!

Princess Nunley

A Psalm of Praise

I will praise You, oh Lord, for Your marvelous acts. I will praise You, oh Lord, for Your wondrous ways. I will praise You, oh Lord, for delivering me from Satan's deadly schemes. When I cried out to You from my bed of affliction "Where are You?; for You promised never to leave me or forsake me."

You quickly reminded me that in this life there would be pain; but as You were with Jesus, so You would be with me and at that moment, peace came upon me. So, I will praise You, oh Lord, for You are my perfect peace in an imperfect world. I will praise You, Oh Lord, for You are true to you word.

When I am lost and tormented in my thoughts, it is Your Word that lights my path and calms my fears! Yes, I will thank You and praise You from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same! Hallelujah...Praise the Lord!!!!

Dietta Atkins

A Psalm of Thanksgiving

I give thanks to You, O Lord, You've been my anchor throughout the years. You've given the promised 3 score and ten. You've provided me with wisdom, health and strength. You've blessed me with family and friends to love. I give thanks to You, O Lord!

You've guided my thoughts from deep within. You've blessed me with Your presence. You've given me the ability to speak, think, hear & move. You've kept Your Holy Spirit near. I give thanks to You, O Lord!

You've given me hope for a bright future ahead. You've sent me peace when there was unrest. You've accepted my worship by thought, word & deed. You've promised me eternal rest at the end. I give thanks to You, O Lord!

Bernadine Wilson

A Psalm

Lord, allow me to see myself as You see me. Insecurity paralyzes me. My purpose eludes me because I cannot move. Let me know and love myself to action.

Free me, Lord, from the shackles of fear and doubt, that I may ignore the world and live for You. Powerful men live as though You don't exist, yet exhort me to suffer their abuses as I wait for a life after life. Their disregard of Your word sometimes makes me wonder if it is worth it to try to stay on this path. Let me see beyond this physical, temporary world, to the eternity of Spirit.

Lord help me to trust in my ability to stand in your power. My life has been so blessed; I

often torment myself in anticipation of the dropping of the “other shoe”. Every good thing brings the thought that some bad thing must follow. Give me faith to know You can sustain me no matter my circumstance.

Lord, open me up to accept and reciprocate the love and support of others. Many sow positivity into my life, yet I feel what I have to offer to them is not enough. My talents are many and I am given encouragement on every side, but I am constantly beaten down by my doubts in my abilities. Grant me discernment to know when You are speaking to me through others and insight to know how to encourage others.

Lord, even in this late stage of life, allow me to develop patience. All my life my impatience has caused me to suffer. My faith was weak; and I did not wait on You. Now that I know, Lord, give me the faith to wait on Your perfect timing.

Lord, make me brave enough to seek You intensely and learn Your ways. I know all the answers are in You. Ultimately, You are all I need.

Lord, help me to know You as You truly are.

Carla M. Furcron

Psalm No 1: America the Beautiful? Not Yet.

Why do so many Americans hate America, Lord? Why is America such a bigoted and divided nation, dear God? Why do half of us—on one side—despise the rest of us—on the other?

I guess it all began in 1619, when some weak and insecure human beings On the wrong side of history decided to grab for power, wealth and control At the expense of some precious souls You created, Lord, Whom they considered to be less than human.

They shackled them and laid them out like sardines in the belly of ships That brought them to a land they did not know or want to be a part of During the Middle Passage, Lord.

Why were these weak, white men allowed to broker and brutalize, To mock and misuse the weaker among them, Lord?

Why were these insecure beings allowed to humiliate black people By enslaving them, by stripping them of their proud names and identity, By ripping them away from the children and spouses they cherished?

That was then. This is now. And nothing seems to have changed, Lord. It is 401 years later, Lord, and some people on the “righteous” right Can see no better now than they did four centuries ago, When they hauled my ancestors to Jamestown to build one nation, Under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all—except black people.

It is 2020, heavenly Father, and their vision has not improved one iota. The 50 percent on the right still hate the 50 percent of us on the left.

Their ability to see my forebears and me as 100 percent human And deserving of human rights and civil rights and voting rights Has not increased one smidgen.

They are a disgruntled, disorganized and fragmented bunch, Lord. And, yet, they hold all the cards. They hold all the power— Or they THINK they do.

In spite of appearances, dear Lord, I know that all power is in Your hands. Despite one man’s claim that he alone can fix this mess we’re in, I know that You alone can fix it.

It won’t be easy, but I will love the other 50 percent in spite of their evil ways, As I wait on You, Lord, to restore the Divided States of America To the promised United States of America we all deserve.

Carol Bowie

“America, America, What happened, Oh God, on Thee.” (Sung)

Civil unrest, police brutality, hateful speech, racism, xenophobia, misogyny,
The disenfranchised; the privileged; and then there is me!

Oh God, hear my prayer. Tears I shed - All the prayers that have been said! Help me, Lord, in this perilous time. Oh God - the pandemic, and cancer, friends and family lost. Heal me

from myself, Oh God, so that I can see the Light.

Oh God, I need You so I can clearly see You in my sight, and hear You in my ear. Reveal yourself through your mighty acts. Work through me, Oh God!

I praise, exalt, extol, and magnify Your Holy Name! I give you honor and glory that is due You, Oh God. My trust and faith is in only You, Oh God! Make me New!

Oh God you are my rock, my strength. I need you in times like these. Heal our land from this sickness. Shield me from this evilness in the United States. I praise you for what you have done, I praise for what you are doing, and I thank you for all that You will do! Hallelujah!

“America, America God shed Your grace on Thee!
And Crown Thy Good with brotherhood, from sea to shining sea.”

Phelecia R. McCall

Blessings and Sorrow

I woke up this morning. Thank you God. My eyes opened and I could see. Thank you God. My lungs filled with air, and I could breathe. Thank you God. My mind was clear; I knew who I was; where I was; and remembered my name. Thank you God.

I stretched my body; wiggled my toes; and listened for the gentle breathing of my husband. Thank you God Thank you God for these blessings; even though I haven't even gotten out of bed yet.

So, why do I keep fighting this spirit of sadness and depression? Why are forest fires ravaging our land? Why are hurricanes, too many to name, battering our shores? Thousands of people have died from Covid-19, an unimaginable number, enough people to fill Michigan's Big House twice over.

But, I only feel the death of one man; a father, husband, brother, bowler, golfer and even a Hall of Fame member. And, because of a microscopic germ we can't even see, he had to die alone. Was he frightened? Was he confused? Was he in pain? We will never know.

There was no proper home going service; no closure; no recital of his legacy or deeds great and small. No one to tell his story.

But ,thank you God, for the gift of salvation. Yes, my father came late to the Lord's Table, but he came. God's grace paved the way for his passage into Your kingdom, so he didn't die alone. Thank you God.

And, with God's help, I will lift my eyes to the heavens and learn to live with the loss. Thank You God. With your help I will raise my head, open my mouth and shout dad's story to the angels above. Thank you God. And that will be enough. It will be enough.

Wendy Williams

In remembrance of Freddie Williams 1932-2020

Chronicles

Your faithfulness endures forever. From the bowels of the coal mine in West Virginia to the sunny plains of Ohio From the majesty of the Allegheny mountains of Pennsylvania to the Great Lakes of Michigan.

Born into a family of praying parents that stayed on their knees, you learn early at an early age to embrace God's promises for even the tiniest of another's needs. Your faithfulness endures forever.

In the journey, a cardboard template had to be fitted into shoes to fit my feet. Ah, but to the freedom to use my feet to fight for justice is oh so sweet. Your faithfulness endures forever. "Colored" water fountain and "White" water fountain labels to keep me in my place. God's promise, His mercy raised up Miss Goree, Tax Commissioner; a colored woman to run the office in that place. Your faithfulness endures forever. From redlining of areas in Detroit with no one of color allowed to buy a place, my God blessed ownership of a house with 12 rooms of space.

Your faithfulness endures forever. Sickness threatened the accomplishment with Lupus disease. Our Father in Heaven strengthened him to earn 5 degrees. A heart condition bought another child appointment after appointment. You gave him the blessing of full employment.

A time of marriage disintegration Your guidance and mercy afforded inhabitants of a 2-bedroom condo. My children, Your blessing. They know that Your faithfulness endures forever.

We said “until death do us part”. The betrayal; the cries; the tears that I shed. My Lord, my God brought me comfort and peace from the scriptures that were drilled into my head. The heart that was broken seemed to me like doom. You restored by peace and wholeness. As I ramble in comfort counting all my blessings, going from room to room. Your faithfulness endures forever.

Evil men destroyed my livelihood with all their power. But ah, 2 years later I basked at the crowds far below from atop the Eiffel Tower. Your faithfulness endures forever. My journey’s not over; another chapter as Caleb did say give me the mountain to conquer that I might fight another day. God, Your faithfulness endures forever.

Phyllis A Vaughn

“Creation”

I want to talk about the Temple— And God’s Kingdom. David is at the Temple.

I love knowing God and Jesus. God created the Earth. He created trees—And rivers and oceans. The Lord God created me.

Jesus sees and watches over us. He walks with people. He walks with us to protect us. Jesus walks with me.

I’m happy to be alive so I can go places, Like to see my grandparents, Rose and John Jackson, And my brother, Blake.

I like it cold in the winter. I like it super cold. I like it white for Christmas. To see the snow falling is beautiful.

My grandfather John is no longer living. My grandfather John went to heaven. I want to see my grandfather again. I miss him a lot.

I love my grandparents. They built a house in Georgia. I went to Georgia on a plane to visit them. And I went to Texas to visit my sister And her husband.

I hang out sometimes with my grandmother. She took me, my dad and my cousin Downtown to the Riverfront. I liked seeing the water moving. Some people caught fish that the Lord created. God created everything. Thank You, God, for creating the Earth And Your Kingdom and the Temple— And Your animals, too!

The lion is my favorite animal. And the elephant— That's my mom's favorite animal.

Arrington Jackson

“CRY FOR HELP”

PRAY TO YOU, DEAR LORD. PLEASE LISTEN TO MY CRY. I BEG FOR YOUR HELP FOR GUIDANCE AND DIRECTION. HOW LONG DO I HAVE TO BE ABUSED AND MISTREATED IN THIS WORKPLACE?

YOU PLACED ME HERE AS YOUR CHOSEN VESSEL, DEAR LORD TO MANAGE YOUR PEOPLE. I TRUST AND BELIEVE, DEAR LORD, THAT YOU WILL RIGHT ANY WRONG. BUT YOUR PEOPLE ATTACK ME FROM ALL SIDES – WANTING TO DO ME WRONG. I WALK OUT OF MY OFFICE – STAFF WALK IN AND TURN OUT THE LIGHT. THINGS THEY DO RILE AND UPSET ME TO SAY EVIL WORDS NOT PLEASANT TO YOUR EARS.

I'M DESPERATE, DEAR LORD, PLEASE HEAR MY CRY THAT FACES ME EVERY WORK DAY. I PRAY TO YOU, DEAR LORD – SHOW ME HOW TO OVERCOME EVIL FOR GOOD. HEAR MY PRAYER, OH LORD – SAVE ME FROM ANY PITFALLS THAT COME BEFORE ME.

THANK YOU, LORD, FOR HEARING MY PLEA FOR MERCY. I OBEYED YOU DEAR LORD – FOLLOWING YOUR LEAD – GOT DOWN ON MY KNEES AND PRAYED FOR ALL THOSE THAT MISTREATED ME.

LORD, YOU WRONGED A RIGHT AND THINGS GOT BETTER FOR ME TO BE ABLE TO FACE ANOTHER WORK DAY.

LORD I CAN'T THANK YOU AND PRAISE YOU ENOUGH FOR BLESSING ME. "THANK YOU, LORD, FOR BEING MY LIGHT AND SALVATION. WHO SHALL I FEAR. THE LORD IS MY STRONGHOLD OF MY LIGHT; OF WHOM SHALL I BE AFRAID".

BETTINA DOZIER

Deception Leads to Depression

Oh LORD my GOD, that day I cried out to You for understanding. Give my family comfort in our grieving hearts, For the news that would be revealed to us how our "Loved One" died. The tragedy of our Loved One's death would be so unbearable to hear and face.

Why LORD did he allow the stifling cloak of his past and guilt, the abyss of family confusion, and the spirit of deception and depression take him down into the pit of darkness; Never able to see that there could be light if only he could have trusted You with his pain and heart.

LORD, was the pain he felt, the evils of the human heart so strong to block him from knowing YOU as Savior could have led him out of darkness into Your marvelous light?

LORD, that day I knew I had to trust You with my pain and grief, in order to receive Your comfort and peace. You took this pain from my heart and allowed the pain to be a teacher in my life, so the spirit of deception and depression would not overtake my heart, my mind or my life.

Oh LORD I give thanks to You and I am grateful that I knew that day to cry out to You. LORD, You will be my forever refuge and comfort as I continue to lift my eyes to the hills from where my help comes.

Denise Lee

"Don't Leave Me Alone"

Don't leave me alone GOD; don't leave me alone. I know you're surrounding me – Thank You LORD, Thank You! I'm living in a world where people are dying from COVID-19. Police brutality and racism – Raging Fear!

I wake up, LORD GOD, with the “news” – With all the things that are going on around me, LORD GOD, peril and doom and crisis... My children – I’m worrying about – are they going to be ok? Sick? Are they working? Do they have jobs? Are they able to be ok? I look in the world and people don’t have jobs. Our families are hungry! I look in the World!... Don’t leave me alone GOD; don’t leave me alone with my thoughts and fears and anxieties, but YOU never leave me alone GOD!

I wake up every morning to a new day. The sky is blue – the sun is shining. LORD GOD, I’m breathing; I’m moving around – walking. I had a good night’s sleep GOD – I woke up, Oh GOD. I’m still in my right mind and my health, though, at 70 is deteriorating, I’m still moving my limbs GOD; I’m able to eat and move And cook and breathe and shop... Don’t leave me alone GOD – You haven’t left me alone. Though I walk around sometimes with worry and fear, You surround me – You enter my mind. You anoint me for the day. I can oil my head with your anointed oil and can put it in my “mouth”, LORD. I know my imperfections – I know I’m weak. If You don’t fill me up, I can’t do it! But You never, ever, ever, ever have left me alone – You’ve never forsaken me! Glory to You GOD – Glory to You!

Amen

Stephanie Bowen

Do You hear my cry?

Oh Lord, do You hear my voice? Will you lend me Your ear? Listen to my cry. I pray to You for forgiveness. Do You hear my plead in the morning and evening? I don’t boast because You, oh Lord, told me not to boast or brag, but to give You praise. I try to praise You, but I get a loss for words. However, I still need to know do You hear my voice when I don’t speak out loud or at all. I plead to You to lend me Your ear and listen to my cry, even when I sin. My mother taught me to give You praise not just in the good times, but in the bad times as well. Thank You Lord for hearing my cry. I gave You praise and you heard my cry.

Yolanda Sain

Esther's Psalm of Lament

Psalms 42:1-3a. As the deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God. My soul thirst for God, for the living God. When shall I come and behold the face of God? My tears have been my food day and night.

October 2020 was such a difficult time for me. Diagnosed with COVID-19, I felt so helpless. I had no strength to eat or talk. I saw pain and despair in my daughter's eyes as she attempted to nurse me back to health. Yet, I could not help her, help me.

Leper- I really feel like a leper. Unclean and banished to one room and a bathroom that no one else uses. I am a leper. No visible outside scars, but yet a leper in my own home. While at my doctor's appointment, I am escorted to a "special secluded area". I hear LEPER!

But, in the midst of my leprosy, I hear Pastor Rudolph praying. I feel the prayers of my Oak Grove family and friends! I love and appreciate everyone for praying for me when I was too weak to pray for myself!

As I got a little stronger, I began to thank and praise God for sparing my life. But I also got brave enough to question Him....Lord, I did all the right things....masked up, washed my hands regularly, and sanitized. I begged you to cover me and my family from this horrible virus. His response was swift. "I did cover you, because you can breathe on your own!"

Luke 1:46 (NIV) Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her! AMEN.

GOD REMOVES DOUBT A Psalm of Reassurance

HALLELUJAH, God will remove the doubt. The children of Israel suffered; forced to make bricks without straw. Doubting, doubting that deliverance would ever come. God chose Moses to become their Leader to lead them to the Promised Land. Sending manna from heaven, a pillar of Cloud by day, a pillar of fire by night. Through the Red Sea, out of bondage FINALLY! Hallelujah, God removed their doubt.

African people taken from their Mother Land to a place of enslavement and cruelty. Working hard from sun-up to sun-down. Wiping sweat from the brow.

Mothers, Fathers, Sisters, and brothers separated and sold for an auction bid. Black bodies hanging from trees. Oh, the pain and agony. Two centuries of enslavement; what a heavy toll. Doubting, doubting that freedom would ever come. God raised up a man, President Abraham Lincoln, delivering an Emancipation Proclamation. The enslaved peoples are on this day FREED he extolled. Hallelujah, God removes their doubt.

Oh, to be truly free. To have the rights of liberty; to enjoy the pursuit of happiness in this foreign land. To worship God uninhibited. To sit in the front of the bus, to walk into businesses and shop with pride and respect, to obtain an equal and quality education would be such simple delights. Doubting, doubting that human dignity would prevail. All the while, God prepared Leaders to organize the people to peaceful demonstrate. Some rules were changed; new human and civil rights laws were enacted. Hallelujah, God removes the doubt.

One more hurdle to overtake; the Negro people want the right to vote. For fifty now, white women have the right to vote. Is the Negroid race more underclass? Praying, meeting, marching onward to gain full citizenship is all the black people want to have. Enduring many bombings, time in jails, water hose drenching, vicious dogs and Surviving a Bloody Sunday, Selma, Alabama Bridge attack; and the people are again Doubting, doubting that hatred will ever end. God pricks the heart of President Lyndon Johnson to do the right thing for the people of the land. Voting Rights legislation is signed into law. The right to vote is equal for all across the USA. Hallelujah, God removes the doubt.

Fast forward through the annuals of time to the year of our Lord, 2020. Voting Rights laws are stripped down; Voting intimidation; Voting restrictions all abound. Doubting, doubting asking questions: Will my vote count? Will just one vote make a difference in election results? God used the media for His own good: Television, Radio, Political Action Groups, Social Media platforms all spread the word, VOTE!

After much planning, active participating, Absentee ballot casting, long voting line standing, Mask wearing and Social distancing over 160 Million people did VOTE! The results are tabulated, recounts are held, votes are certified. Fraud is dispelled. The presidential election result is upheld. A new President is declared. The people have spoken. God gives the victory to the side of right and integrity. Hallelujah, God removes all doubt. Praise ye the Lord!

Virginia Langford

God, You showed out

God, You showed out for a Queen given to us. As I laid between home and hospital; Bedrest for 117 days, You said, “Be still, and know that I am God.”

God, You showed out for a Queen.

As weeks passed, the doctors provided bad news regarding the uncertainty of our Queen. I found myself in labor and delivery on three separate occasions. But again, God, You showed out for our Queen whom You allowed me to continue to nurture internally. O God I thank thee. The doctors were astonished to see us week after week, but God taught me to have faith of a mustard seed.

God heard my cry.

God showed out and allowed me to deliver a healthy and amazing daughter whom I affectionally call Queen. Thank you, God, for always showing out.

Gods Open Hands

My life is in Your hands O Lord. I lay in this bed, afraid, suffering in fear of dying. My body is limp, lifeless with no strength or movement. All faith and hope have left me.

I cry out Your name, O Lord. I pray “Save my life.” O gracious and merciful God, restore my health and strength. Hear my prayer O Lord. My eyes fill with tears and my hands lifted high in total praise to You O God as fear consumes my body.

Lord speak to me. Show me a sign that You hear my plea. I want to believe and have faith, but I’m so afraid.. help me Lord.

I see Your image, high in the clouds; both hands open wide; the letters FEAR spelled out in Your hands as You close Your hands and ascend in the clouds to Heaven. A feeling of Your Holy Spirit fills my body, and my soul has been delivered. My faith has been restored. The thought of death no longer frightens me.

When I close my eyes and envision You, my Lord, I smile. For I know my life is in Your hands. I will continue to be faithful even in the midst of trouble and suffering. And I will

forever rejoice and praise Your holy name all the days of my life.

Karen R. Williams

Grace and Mercy

Hallelujah unto you, Oh Lord. Thank you for your grace and mercy unto me. Lord, you knew me even before my mother knew me. You knew that I would endure exposure to lead poisoning, growing up two blocks from two lead smoldering factories. They later proved to be the cause of high blood pressure, and other health related issues for our entire neighborhood.

Lord, your Grace and Mercy has kept me, allowing me to complete my education, even though it proved to be a struggle for me at times, Oh but Your Grace and Mercy, you were right there with me to see me through.

Lord, your Grace and Mercy kept me, even through a marriage where I endured domestic violence. Even through that, Oh God, your Grace and Mercy gifted me with a wonderful son.

Lord, your Grace and Mercy kept me while raising my son alone. Lord, your Grace and Mercy placed me in places I would have never imagined myself. Lord, I thank you for the opportunity to work in your kingdom.

Lord, sometimes the road seems overwhelming. Family look to me to guide, direct, and protect the legacy left to our family. Various roles where I am called to lead; sometimes I wonder, who will help me, who will lift me when I need to be lifted up. I thank You, God, for your grace and mercy. For You, Oh God, are the lifter of my head and my shield.

I thank You, God, for a praying grandmother being there for her family, praying for all of us, And passing down a prayer life to all us. I thank You, Oh God, for Your Grace and Mercy.

Healer, Protector, Way Maker

My Heavenly Father is my healer, my protectoy way maker. You are merciful, gently guiding, and forgiving of our sinful thoughts and acts. I thank you for each victory, set back, new path, disappointment, decision, and challenge.

You were always there ready to answer the prayer, but I was the one who hesitated, stumbled, Rushed to help you; or listened and obeyed the guidance. My Father is my healer, my protector, my way maker.

Oh, my Father, Mama, forty-eight, has gone home to be with you. You are her healer, too; she is with you, safe, protected, loved. I was only twelve; she was good, kind, and loving. Why did she have to go? I missed her; our Saturday trips to the market; our bus trips from my home to hers For my after-school care, daily cooking lessons and sharing time. Help me, Lord, to be obedient to Your will.

Oh no, Father, Big Mama, forty-nine, took me to church every Sunday morning. Taught me the Lord's Prayer, how to be a cheerleader, and try my hardest to be the best. I was only thirteen; she was a praying woman, kind to neighbors, and loving to friends and family.

Why was it her time to go with you? She worked so hard at her job with little or no recognition, cared for her husband who had seizures, And lived on limited finances. When he died, she left the funeral, returned home, went to bed, and passed, too. Guide me, Father, to live righteously, love generously, serve the needy, and Maybe Big Mama will smile from Heaven.

Heavenly Father, not Mother Dear, not now, she was forty-one, she was going to be a grandmother. I know I was married, twenty-three, and had a bachelor's degree. But how can I be a mother without a mother? Why did she have to go now? She was a nursing assistant, had healing hands and was returning to school to become an LPN. She sang in church and community choirs, gave clothing baskets to families suffering from loss. She was my best friend and taught me not to procrastinate; "tomorrow is not promised". But, Heavenly Father, you wanted her home with you, Mama and Big Mama.

My Heavenly Father is my healer, my protector, my way maker. You are merciful, gently guiding, and forgiving of our sinful thoughts and acts. I thank you for answering prayers, increased knowledge about preventative health diseases, stress, And the food connection. I am grateful that I was courageous to change my lifestyle in 1974. To eat more vegetables, grains, and eliminate beef, pork, and lamb.

My Heavenly Father is my healer, my protector, my way maker. You are merciful, gently guiding, and forgiving of our sinful thoughts and acts. Holy Father, your generosity and grace produced world touring opportunities for my son and me.

You created a career ladder enabling me to travel across Michigan, Major cities throughout the United States, and on other continents. Almighty God, you blessed me with an opportunity to go to four countries in Europe Meeting different people speaking different languages, seeing the Black Madonna, Vatican, And the Statue of David. Blessed Lord, you opened the door for me and my son to be members of a Detroit 'Educational and Cultural Group' that donated a well to a drought engulfed African village and visited Gore Island.

Going home was an indescribable, beautiful affirmation that Yahweh, The Creator, chose Africa as the birthplace of life on earth. Mama, Big Mama and Mother Dear are smiling from heaven.

My Heavenly Father is my healer, my protector, my way maker. You are merciful, gently guiding, and forgiving of our sinful thoughts and acts. I prayed for a life of 50 years and was obedient in changing my lifestyle, Physically active, ate meatless meals, spiritually faithful in tithing, praying, and learning. I had an excellent Internist who knew my family history; I displayed no problems, But she scheduled an Ultrasound and Cat Scan. Kidney cancer confirmed. The same as my mother. Almighty healer, protector, and way maker, you made me whole. All cancer removed, no radiation, no chemotherapy, 22 years cancer free. Almighty healer, my protector, my way maker.

God of Grace and Mercy has given me 72 years and counting. I have been blessed to travel places my Mama, Big Mama and Mother Dear wanted to go, but could not. I learned to be courageous and go into new directions because you were my protector, my shield. I thank you, merciful Father, for fighting the battles, and destroying enemy lies and misrepresentations. Your laser beam of truth lifted me up and created divine resolutions that blessed all and glorified you.

Lastly, Protecting Father, I bow to your Grace and generosity for granting me time With my 49-year-old son, grandchildren (30, 29 & 6), and great grandchildren (12 & 3). My Heavenly Father is my healer, my protector, my way maker.

Oh Lord, Your divine help I seek

Help me in this place of responsibility. They covered me and gave me what I wanted and needed. They loved and cared for me. They pushed me to do better. He was an ox – strong and forceful She was a lioness – fearless and social Now he is a lamb – wondering aimlessly and unsure she is a Tasmanian Devil – mean and unforgiving.

I am holding my breath when I see them interact. It is painful to watch their exchange. When he asks me for the 13th time within 7 minutes, “How them girls doing?” or he forgets that there is nowhere to go because we are in a pandemic when she calls me in the middle of the staff meeting to tell me she is out of Rum Chata or she wants to know how to join a Zoom call I will breathe and smile. I will walk them through the steps just like she did when I had that English assignment. I will speak slowly and clearly like he did when I was learning to drive. Give me the strength to endure and not be impatient.

Help me in this place of confusion the CDC says “Wear masks, social distance, stay home” The rebels say “don’t be a sheep, it’s not real, it’s only the flu.” The health department says “please adhere to the safety guidelines.” The renegades say “Yur vialaytin’ mah civil rahts!” The governor says “We will get through this...together” The insurgents say “Crucify!” Too much division and uncertainty. Too many different messages. Make your Word plain to me; to Your people, Give us clarity to know what to do and who to trust.

Help me in this place of anger. You can’t trust the mail-in ballots. All of this will go away on November 4th. You can’t let the radical left win. Sleepy Joe, do you really want this nasty woman to run the country? We are gonna win by a bigly margin. Vote for me and I’ll set you free. They are trying to steal this election. The fake news media is at it again. I have done more the African American community than any other President. I won the election because... well, because I say so Don’t worry about certifying the election in Detroit, because they cheated. If you don’t get off my television and go sitcho evil raggedy a... This is why I need Your help because words have power. And I do not want to speak death. I am supposed to do better because I know better. Give me the wisdom and restraint to pray rather than to lash out.

How long must I be in this purgatory? Is there a glimmer of hope? Yes. In all things, You O God are still King. You O Lord are still victorious We, Your people do not always see what blessings await us. But You know all and see all You are in control.

So I praise You because while I struggle with my parents, they are still here with me and I can still talk to them I praise You because I chose to follow the science and I have been healthy throughout this time I praise You because You bridle my tongue at the right time, every time. I praise You because the battle is not over I praise You because I know You hold the future I praise You because in every situation, no matter how dark it may seem You are the light that shines forever And this too shall pass. Just help me to keep my focus on You Father

How Long?

How long, O Lord, must we cope with this virus? Its effects have been known for many months. Experts looking for treatments and cures in a rush. Protecting ourselves and others is something we all must do. By wearing masks, washing our hands, and keeping our distance too. There were still many cases though we really tried. Yet, sadly hundreds of thousands have died. Our faith is in You as we go day by day. Knowing you are with us all along the way. In the midst of it all, You are God and God alone. And we still give You praise as You sit upon the throne.

Juanita Ellerson

I AM GRATEFUL

AWESOME is a term only applicable to You Lord; I am annoyed to hear it applied to people, places and things. BOUNTIFUL are Your blessings toward me and I am so grateful. CONFIDENTLY I seek your face - knowing You are waiting to comfort me in times of distress. DELIBERATELY I delight myself in You.

I seek to please You not out of duty, but out of love. EVERY-TIME I come to You with great expectations - hoping You will reveal yourself through the Word or while listening for Your still small voice. I am never disappointed. FAITHFUL You are to me, even when I am unfaithful and fail to bear spiritual fruit. GLORY to Your name Oh God, for the oil of gladness You put into my heart when difficulties come my way. HONOR is what You deserve - help me Holy Spirit to bring honor and glory to the Lord with my entire being. Intimacy is what You desire; I must be intentional about spending time with You; it is when I am intentional that I feel Your manifest presence. JOY pours out of my heart when I see Your justice reign over the unjust.

KING of Kings, I thank You for Your kindness, it's because of Your kindness that I want to and am able to show kindness to others. Lord of Lords I thank You for your love - for giving Your life that I might have eternal life. You taught me submission; now I must stop fighting applying it in my life.

Majesty, I thank You for Your mercy and allowing me to come boldly before your throne of grace every day. I am far from perfect, but will continue to yield to the Holy Spirit to do the transformative work.

Never ending is Your love and faithfulness. I am grateful that You meet my every need. Omniscient, Omnipotent, Omnipotent God, thank you for getting in my way and not giving me my way, especially when it does not line up with Your perfect will.

PERFECT is what I desire - I know that permissive may temporarily satisfy me but perfect is what will grow me and please You.

QUIETLY I sit before You seeking Your guidance and direction; wanting to walk in Your will and not my own.

RIGHTEOUS King: Sometimes it's hard to resist temptation until I remember You resisted satan himself three times in the wilderness - surely I can take the way out You provide for me.

SAVIOR my soul longs for the sweet peace that comes only from keeping my eyes focused on You.

THERE is no one like You in all the earth - that can be trusted to never fail me. Therefore, I must trust You and not lose heart, even when the wait is very long. UNCONDITIONAL love is what You give me. I struggle sometimes to show the same kind of love to those who do unspeakable things. VICTORY is Yours not mine - I never have to worry about defeat, because I am in You and You are in me. You have already won the battle for every fight that I will encounter. WHY do I still doubt, when I know Your timing is always perfect?

XENODOCHIAL - I try to be to all, not just to strangers; from friendship - bonds develop and love can genuinely be shown. Love is who You are and what You are. YOU are worthy of all glory, all honor and all praise. Thank You Lord for every trial, struggle and heartache, because You were with me, and brought me out a better person....and for that ZEALOUS is my heart and my spirit as I am grateful Lord to let the light of Christ live in and through me.

Psalm 2 – 2020

Dear Lord, Thank You for another day. Thank You for Your love, Your grace, and Your mercy. Lord, how excellent You are. You are over the entire universe. You rise the sun and set the moon. You whisper and the trees bend You laugh tears and the ocean waves soar. And yet, Lord, You know each and every one of us by name. You call out to us, but we often don't listen.

When we take our eyes off You, Our world shakes with hazard. Then You put Your hand on our shoulder, And all things are right, straight, and calm. Lord, thank You for Your love, Your grace and Your mercy.

Alethia Carr

MY PSALM

(My Song)

When I first wake up in the morning before I get out of bed, Sorrows, politics, troubles, all types of anxieties crowd my head. When I look out my window at the beautiful day You have made, Thoughts of all the world's issues begin to fade.

I see the sunshine, the flowers, the birds and the bees, I see the sky, the beautiful clouds and even the trees. When I raise my window, I feel the air---You are the air we breathe, My soul begins to feel joy, so I have to fall to my knees.

Thank you, Father, for another day, Why You are so merciful to us, I cannot say. You have given us clothes, shelter and food to eat, You have given us health, strength and the use of two feet.

Which we need to use to tell others about you, About how Jesus saves and what we all need to do. We can tell about how Jesus died on the cross, So that souls like mine would not be lost. And as I rise from my knees thanking You for all You have done, I know there is no one like you, no not one.

As for all the chatter crowding my head there is no need, Everything is all right if we give you the lead.

Amen

Roshelle Mason

Introverted Parallelism style (example as in Psalms 91:14)

Because You brought me into this world, Only You know my purpose. Because I was baptized as a child, I wonder, am I a fan or a follower?

Because I became of age and make my own decisions, Not depending on the religion or traditions of others, Not just believing what my parents believed in, I am responsible for my life in Christ.

Knowing Him in my heart, I asked to be born again, Confessed with my mouth, “You, are my Lord and Savior”. Must begin to grow with him every day.

You gave me the desires of my heart. I forgot about Your word, until trouble came my way. Life happened and the world began to consume me. You saved and forgave me as you promised.

I let everyone know what You mean to me. I pray for my purpose to be revealed. Ask, and it shall be given onto you All grown up now, beginning my faith journey.

Now, standing in the gap of elders Keeping family in prayer and giving praise. Feeling this is my given assignment, Reminding all to stay on the righteous path and remember to whom we belong.

Karin Hendricks

Lord You are my strength and I put all of my trust in You

Lord, You are my strength and I put all of my trust in You. When darkness fills my room and heaviness my heart, Lord, You are my strength and I put all of my trust in You. Mountains are sometimes hard to climb, but giants they do fall. Lord, You are my strength and I put all of my trust in You. Friends don't treat me like they used to since I made you my choice. Lord, You are my strength and I put all of my trust in You.

Losing my way, I stumbled and fell. My life was spiraling down to the pit of hell. Out of darkness I saw a bright light and with a made-up mind, I prayed my way out. Lord, You are

my strength and I put all of my trust in You. The sun is shining for me today. Daily reading of Your word and prayer helps me to stay focused, encouraged, determined and fearless come what may. For Lord, You are my strength and I put all of my trust in You.

Lord, it's me

Oh Lord, please hear my cry to You. In all of Your splendor, please address my concerns. I beseech You Lord, acknowledging Your graciousness – continue to grant me the present of your presence; The Holy Spirit, to guide and comfort me.

Lord, You are so good and so kind. Never have I ever deserved the favor that You constantly bestow upon me. Thank you. I am Your loyal Soldier – enlisted in your army. Every day I take a battle stance with my boots on the ground and with a mind to fight the good fight. For every battle that's lost Lord, You dry my tears and I come forth stronger in my faith.

Even though some battles may be lost, I know that the war has been won and that victory is mine. Lord, I thank You for Your Word and the truth of your Word. Thank You for making it plain through interpretations that even I can understand and apply to my life. Yes Lord, I have grown. Thank You. You deserve all the glory and all the praise. I will forever and ever be grateful to You for Your sovereignty, grace and mercy. Your humble servant,

Jeanette Colvin Jackson

My Monday Blues; My God's Everyday Assurance

O Lord, did Heaven make a mistake when You told me the last shall be first? You said, "For I know the plans I have for you." I, Your Father, don't make mistakes! (Matthew 20:16)

O Lord, did Heaven make a mistake when You told me You would always show Yourself faithful to me, even in my unfaithfulness? You said, "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are My ways your ways." I, Your God, don't make mistakes! (Psalm 18:25; Jeremiah 29:11)

O Lord, did Heaven make a mistake when You told me that I was called to stand in the gap for my marriage, even though I would be rejected by family? You said, "Stand on My Word, a remnant of the faithful is all I need. My grace is sufficient for you." I, the Lifter of your head, don't make mistakes! (2 Corinthians 12:9; Psalm 3:3)

O Lord, did Heaven make a mistake when You called me to walk in places, through doors, and serve in positions that some deemed me unworthy? You said, “Be like a tree planted by streams of water; Have not I commanded you, be strong and courageous; do not be afraid.” I, your Guardian, Guide, and Counselor, don’t make mistakes!(Psalm 1:1-3; Joshua 1:9)

O Lord, did Heaven make a mistake when You told me not to compare myself to others nor complain when I can’t see Your Hand, but continue to celebrate the gifts You have given me? You said, “All things work together for good for those who are called according to My purpose.” I, your Rewarder, don’t make mistakes! (Hebrews 11:6; Romans 8:28)

YOU SAID:

When I created you I had a powerful purpose in mind, a purpose unique just for you. My purpose is based on love, My love for you. Knowing this should equip you with the power to be all that I have destined you to be. “I am not a man that I should lie.” I, your Redeemer; I, your God; I, the Great I Am, DON’T MAKE MISTAKES!! (Numbers 23:19; Exodus 3:14)

Katrina V. Dunigan

No Empty Spaces in God

Glory to God for His goodness to me. From the time I was a young woman, grieving lead me to the realization that it’s true that God will not take you through more than you can bear. Having lost four brothers and two sisters before losing my mother, then my father and two brothers, It was God’s Grace and Mercy that returned home with me after each of those grave sites.

It was God’s Grace and Mercy that filled those empty spaces with the joy of a happy marriage and the birth of a son. God’s Grace and Mercy was with me while caring for my husband and on Memorial Day 2017, It was God’ Grace and Mercy that reminded me that the Holy Spirit had traveled this journey with us and that there are no empty spaces in God.

I thank God for the memories; I can’t thank him enough for being my sister, brother, mother and father too. I can truly say that my good days out numbered my bad days; and as we are going through this season of Covid 19 and human politics. Remember Our Lord Christ conquered death and all power is in his hands. Glory to God.

Myrtis Jenkins

PANDEMIC

O Lord, my God we have been in this Pandemic since the early part of March 2020. Our Leader, Trump, is not taking this plague seriously and makes statements such as “It will go away” “and not to wear masks” Thousands of people have lost their lives because of this.

I have read the word, fast, and meditated that you O Lord will deliver me, my family and friends from this Pandemic. Only you O Lord can do this. You sit high and look low and is able to fight our battle.

I give you the praise and honor O Lord for I have put my trust in you Lord, God, that I may declare all thy works.

Emma Weaver

Prayer for Our Dying Children

Hear my prayer, O Lord, My heart cries out for our children of today. Please incline Your ear to me, hear my plea, Lord, we are losing our children by the numbers to gunfire.

Each day I awaken to the news of, yet another young life taken. It appears our children do not fear the threat of death, but only see it as another way of life. A life consumed in violence and strife, Unafraid to die for a worthless cause.

Lord, please remove the hardness that has taken possession of their hearts, And replace it with your almighty love and compassion. Lord, have mercy on our children of today, blot out their transgressions. Create a clean heart in our children and wash away their sins.

Praise be unto You, O Lord for your endless mercy. Lord you are worthy to be praised. I give praise and glory to you my whole life long. Praise be unto you O Lord, O my soul.

Mary Nunn

Lord, we thank You for Your wondrous works

Lord, we thank You for Your wondrous works. Your creations are magnificent in all the earth! Man and woman, what a wonderful sight. Working by day, resting by night.

Feeling the wind reminds us that You are there. Forever keeping us in Your care. The sun, the moon, and the stars that glow, Storms, clouds, rain, and the beautiful snow.

Ponds, brooks, and lakes, Rivers, oceans, and streams, The birds of the air; the fish of the sea. The trees that bud; the flowers that bloom; The leaves and the grass; we are grateful to You! Animals frolicking to and fro, Some made to move fast; some made to move slow.

All these are awesome in our sight, We sing praises to You both day and night. Lord, we thank You for your wondrous works, Your creations are magnificent in all the earth!

Juanita Ellerson

Teague's Psalm

“O Lord, my God O Lord, my God” Until you came, I had no hope. I could not summon my strength, until you came. With downcast eyes and thoughts, I gave into despair.

I despaired of losing what my ancestors had worked so hard to obtain. I despaired of losing What had been built; What had been sowed; What had been imagined; What had been reaped.

I despair of losing what I have been entrusted to maintain and expand. I despair of losing A treasure of homes built by my grandfather's hand. Acres of land where corn and cotton once grew; A haven longed for in an idyllic place; A forever place for me and mine.

I despair of having lost what my children and grandchildren need as foundation. I despair of having lost the knowledge and skills of two carpenters How cows and crops educate beyond a family-built school Faith and education as stalwarts of higher learning and community entwined the will becoming a struggle to overcome.

But You, O Lord, my God were the Rock that gave my ancestors trust. The trust that solidified their Faith;

Faith that gained more land; Land that nurtured roots.

But You, O Lord, my God Are my rock. The rock upon which my foundation is stabilized; The solidness from which grew strength and hope; A fighting strength and battling hope that grow my Faith.

You, O Lord, my God are the rock from which grows a shield. The shield keeps my children and grandchildren from that despair. A shield of Faith cleaved into the foundation of Rock. You came, O Lord, my God into my heart and despair fled! You came, O Lord, my God Into my life and despair cannot seep through the shield! With saving Grace and new mercies each day, O Lord, my God, you came.

Despair gone. Hope and Faith now grow. Hope that what was built will flourish; Hope that what was forged will stand; Faith that what was planted will sprout; Faith that what was done will grow, will last, will increase. You came, O Lord, my God and hope and strength are renewed. O Lord, my God you came!

PSALMS OF PRAISE

I LOVE THE LORD. HE HEARD MY CRY. HIS PRAISES ARE FOREVER IN MY MOUTH. WHEN SICKNESS CAME UPON MY FAMILY, DOCTORS, NURSES, NO ONE TO HELP. HOSPITAL RULES WITH COVID, ONLY ONE VISITOR AT A TIME.

MOM, AT AGE 85, WORRIED ABOUT HER HUSBAND. COULDN'T MAKE DECISIONS BY HERSELF. THEY DEPENDED ON ME TO HELP.

EVERYTHING NOT GOING AS EXPECTED. EVERYDAY A WAITING GAME. ON BENDED KNEES, I CRIED OUT WHY. MY HEART WAS SO HEAVY, WITH NO WHERE TO GO.

BUT THEN I WAS SHOWN A WAY TO COPE. GOD STEPPED IN AS I KNEW HE WOULD. GOT A CALL TO TAKE DADDY HOME. NURSE AND PHYSICAL THERAPIST WILL DO IN HOME CARE. ALL IS WELL WITH THE FAMILY NOW.

I LOVE THE LORD; HE HEARD MY CRY. HIS PRAISES ARE FOREVER IN MY MOUTH.

Speaking to Me

Sometimes when my mind is all joggled-up inside, You quiet my mind Lord and speak to my heart. For as I look back over my life, the good, the bad, the nurturing of first learning of You in Church, as a child, and even in school, to now as a mature woman, I continue to yearn for a closer walk with Thee.

Always praying for others, for life, for the world and also even for myself. Not having all the answers or even the understanding so much, yet allowing my spirit to trust and believe in You and even on occasions left my heart open...and yes have doubted. In this divided world I live in today, I am reminded of:

Suffering & Deliverance
Patience & Endurance
Doubt & Trust
Willingness & Compliance
Grace & Mercy
Blessings & Love

Your Word speaks of how I was made in the image of God, like a mirror. Having one purpose to reflect a reality other than my own, that Jesus Is the Holy Spirit! Thank you, Lord, for you quiet my mind and continue to speak to my heart!

Helen Lee

Lord, You are mighty. You are powerful,

Lord, You are mighty. You are powerful, And You are merciful. Oh Lord, I praise Your name. Oh Lord, I call out to You right now. Oh Lord, I thank You for the blessings You give me.

Father, only You can stop the whole world with something as small as a virus, Yet so powerful that it rages worldwide and kills many of my brothers and sisters. And yet, God, only You can continue to give us days with beautiful sunshine, And change the leaves on the trees to beautiful colors that form a gorgeously coordinated palate.

Lord, only You can make your people pray daily. Lord, only You can make us wash our hands Lord only You can make us stay home to stay safe. Lord only You can spare my life, when so many have gone home to be with you.

Lord, only You can show me the evil of the world, and yet give us the ability to choose to look to the hills where you are, Ask for Your help, strength and comfort, And know that You, Lord, will carry me through it all.

Alethia Carr

Psalms of GH

Lord I see beauty in your creation, Yet is there justice in the land. Your handywork I know, But where is Love? I know your faithfulness and your mercy Lord. Unlike the sinful who do not see Your image in me.

Will the wicked continue to take the breath of our children, Even when we praise and give thanks? Will our cities continue to suffer and burn, Even when your people worship and praise you?

Will the unrighteous continue to claim victory in suffering, Even when there is a Savior and a cross?

Tragedy and affliction and injustice have attacked by spirit, Yet have You protected me as Your child. Your Angel Army has covered me under your wings of peace, For which I will continuously praise you.

You are my light in the darkness of Politics And lover of my dark skin in the presence of Hate. My song to You for all things is one of love and joy and praise, Lord.

I will always keep my eyes on you, for you have healed my body and have blessed my soul. Offer Thanksgivings all who love him. Make Praise your song and shout victory to the Lord.

Gregory Hines, Sr.

Saving Grace

O God, my Savior. Praise your Holy Name. You rescued me. You saved me to live another day. What comfort it is to know that you are constantly watching over me. Aware or unaware. The Car Crash. Broken Glass. Crushed Metal. Screams. In and out of consciousness. Sirens. A flurry of people and activity!

Sudden coldness! Will the driver be charged with neglect or homicide? I was told that my heart stopped twice. Resuscitation.

God, you reached down and saved me from the valley of shadow and death. Nothing can compare to your power. One hundred fifty stitches. Four plastic surgery procedures. Complete recovery.

Thank you Lord!
I will bless the Lord at all times.
His praise shall continually be in my mouth.
Hallelujah!

Doris Haskins

Psalm No 2: Motherless Child. Fatherless, Too.

Lord, I'm three score and 14 years old and have learned to find joy in the midst of my sorrow.

I have learned to be content, despite having so many unanswered questions.

Who am I, Lord? Not knowing hurts a lot. What is my real name, Lord? Names mean so much. Who is my father, Lord? If I knew, I could claim his surname and be his abandoned child—but at least I'd have a last name.

That would be better, Lord, than using the name I was forced to borrow From a man who did not want me—or love me. I understand his indifference toward me, Lord, Because he had no part in my conception.

But, Lord, why was he so mean to me, a confused and helpless child?

Why did he lock me away in the attic when he and his real children went out for the evening?

I thank God for Poppa, Lord, my mother's father. He loved me and raised me with all of his other grandchildren, who preferred living with him rather than their own parents.

But my cousins had a choice, Lord. I had none. They could decide to stay with Poppa—or go home. I had no choice, Lord. I only had Poppa.

I thank You for Jesse Black Jr., Lord. But I would have preferred having my own mother—And my own father—to love me and raise me. Why did my mother have me by her man on the side, Lord, instead of with her husband? And why, when I was 3 years old, did Uncle Raymond Shoot and kill my mother on Christmas Day 1949, when he meant to kill Aunt Mildred, his wife?

Instead of reaching for gifts under the tree on a day that should have been filled with joy, I found myself seeking shelter under a table on a day filled with horror and void of peace on Earth. Every Christmas, I'm a motherless child, Lord. And every New Year, I'm fatherless, too. I know in You I have both mother and father, Lord. But I must admit, I long to see and hug and love on Margaret Bowie, who was only 22 when her life was ripped away in a moment of rage. What would I have called her, Lord? Would it have been momma? Or mommy? Or mother? That's something I will never know. And not knowing hurts, even to this day.

Nevertheless, Lord, I find joy in having A few, precious church friends to embrace me, to comfort me, to love me, and to invite me to dinner, every now and then. So many questions remain unanswered, Lord. And, at this stage of my life, I know the answers will never come.

Nonetheless, when I take time to think things over, I must confess that my good days truly outweigh my bad days. And I must thank and praise You, Father, That I am motherless and fatherless only in the physical realm.

In the spiritual realm, I have a family of believers who will never leave me nor forsake me. And I have You, the God of grace and God of mercy, Who will always be my Provider, Protector and Guiding Light.

Knowing this gives me peace and brings me unspeakable joy.
Hallelujah! Praise God! Hallelujah!

Lord, I Thank You For
