

# Encountering God- Daily Devotional

## Why Should We Encounter God?

As followers of Christ, we believe that God is active and present in our world and we long to participate in God's loving actions. In order to do that, we need to consciously set aside time to be intentional about shedding our own agenda and schedule so that we can fully open ourselves to God's voice and hear God's wisdom.

There are many competing voices in our everyday living that often rise above God's voice. Advertisements, our friend's opinions, our devices and our packed schedules all can impede us from hearing the voice of God. Sometimes it can feel like being "busy" is considered a badge of honour. If we are not busy, it can feel like we are failing or being left behind in this fast-paced world. Sometimes, our own thoughts can limit us from encountering God when we have already decided that our thoughts and ideas are decidedly the right ones. Together, all of this can lead us to the point of exhaustion...and doesn't encourage us to seek the voice of God.

To encounter God is to open our mind, heart, and soul. It is taking notice of God's work in our world so that we can hear how God is calling us to participate the pouring out God's love in the world.

## Comfort Zones

In the time following Jesus' death and resurrection, followers of Jesus believed deeply that each person was a minister. While individuals all had different ministries, each had their own personal calling to share the news of Christ with others. One of the disciplines that all these individuals had in common was the capacity to experience God through prayer and other spiritual practices. Over the years, we lost that sense of us all being in ministry – we instead placed the majority of responsibilities onto the shoulders of those called to ordained ministry. In the last 50 years, however, there has been a resurgence of interest in reclaiming some of the ancient ways in which each person participated in listening for God's leading.

Encountering God by intentionally centering ourselves and allowing time for silence in God's presence can be uncomfortable for some. It can take us to the edge of our comfort zones and make us feel awkward or strange. In that way, it is similar to trying anything new. A new diet will also push us to the edge of our comfort zone. A new workout routine (or working out at all!) will twist our bodies in ways that push our boundaries. This is no different. The first few times we prepare ourselves for prayer, it will feel awkward and maybe even a little weird. However, the more consistently we do it, the less awkward it will feel, and the more opportunities we will have to bask in God's holy presence.

## You are Invited

You are cordially invited to join your brothers and sisters of First United Church as they seek God's guidance surrounding the following questions:

*Who is God calling us to be as a congregation?*

*Who is God calling us to be in our community?*

*Who is God calling us to be in our home life?*

With this invitation comes a request for you to spend some time basking in the presence of God as he prepares your heart to receive his words. The responses you will hear may not come directly during times of prayer. You might find God's responses during your daily tasks such as conversations with others, during your workday, or even washing the dishes. Taking time to spend time with God in daily prayer asking these questions will ready your heart and soul as God responds to you in a variety of ways.

### How to Use This Devotional

1. Set aside some regular quiet time during your week. Mark it in your calendar, pen it into your agenda. Ensuring that this time is realistic and doable will assist with making this time consistent. Like exercise...anything is better than nothing!
2. For some, utilizing a journal is incredibly useful. Writing down the scripture readings and the thoughts that flow into your mind can be a useful tool allowing you to reflect on your thoughts later. Studies have shown that using paper and a pen/pencil to take those notes can assist in deepening that learning, centering yourself more easily, and causes less distractions.
3. Open this devotional to the day's reading, ready your pen and paper, get comfortable, and then close your eyes and breathe deeply for a few minutes.
4. Begin your time with God with gratitude: "Thank you for another day Lord..." and name a few things that you are grateful for. Then set your intention: "Lord, help me to set aside my own ideas and plan so that you can open my ears, my eyes, my heart, and my mind to listen for You alone."
5. Read the Bible passage of the day. Take a moment of silence after you have finished reading it and then read it again, slowly. Notice what words, images, or ideas stand out for you. Where is the love and wisdom of God for you in these words? Jot down your thoughts.
6. Read the short meditation. Spend some time in silence reflecting on the words you read. Notice your thoughts. Where is the love and wisdom of God for you in these words? What do you sense the Spirit saying? Note your observations in your journal.
7. When you are finished, close your eyes, breathe deeply, and as you do, open your soul to God and read the parting blessing.

## Day One

*Close your eyes and take 3 deep breaths. Breathe in through your nostrils filling your stomach. Hold your breath for a moment. Breathe out through your nostrils as your stomach exhales the breath into your spine. Notice how your breath moves in and out of you.*

### **Prayer:**

Thank you for another day Lord, a day that I can receive your love. *Name a few of the things that you are grateful for today.*

### **Scripture Reading:**

Deuteronomy 31:8 (ESV)

It is the Lord who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed.

*Take a breath, then slowly read the scripture reading again as you enter into a time of silence. Spend a couple of minutes writing out your thoughts that come to mind.*

### **Meditation:**

“We sink eternally from letting go to letting go into God” ~ Meister Eckhart

Life is a series of letting go moments. From the departure of the womb to our final breath. Every new beginning we experience involves exercising our ability to let go of past experiences. Our first day of school, moving out on our own, starting a new job, getting married, and even having kids. Life is a never-ending cycle of starting and letting go. Through it all, God promises that he will not leave us nor forsake us. God will be with us every step of the way.

In this season of your life, where is God calling you to let go and place your trust in him?

*Take a breath as you enter into a time of silence with God. Notice the thoughts that God is placing on your heart. Write them down.*

**May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you: wherever he may send you; may he guide you through the wilderness: protect you through the storm; may he bring you home rejoicing: at the wonders he has shown you; may he bring you home rejoicing: once again into our doors.<sup>1</sup>**

Amen.

Questions to ponder as you pray:

*Who is God calling us to be as a congregation?*

*Who is God calling us to be in our community?*

*Who is God calling us to be in our home life?*

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<sup>1</sup> This blessing is taken from the book, *Common Prayer: A liturgy for ordinary radicals* by Shane Clairbone, Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, and Enuma Okoko

## Day Two

*Close your eyes and take 3 deep breaths. Breathe in through your nostrils filling your stomach. Hold your breath for a moment. Breathe out through your nostrils as your stomach exhales the breath into your spine. Notice how your breath moves in and out of you.*

### **Prayer:**

Thank you for another day Lord, a day that I can receive your love. *Name a few of the things that you are grateful for today.*

### **Scripture Reading:**

Matthew 6:33-34a (NIV)

Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself.

*Take a breath, then slowly read the scripture reading again as you enter into a time of silence. Spend a couple of minutes writing out your thoughts that come to mind.*

### **Meditation:**

“Hope is about the possible; despair is about the impossible.” ~ Thomas Aquinas

It is easy for us to slip into the pit of despair; focus on the impossible, be trapped with no way out and surround ourselves in desolation. Despair is real, it is dark, and we are adept at dwelling on it. Those who maintain hope are always looking for what is possible. They are looking for another angle, a creative solution, a new path. They may travel through times of despair, but their mind is always focussed on seeing the good and the lessons. They are looking for the light that cuts through the dark.

What despairing thoughts do you need to let go of so that you can dwell in God’s hope?

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Amen.

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### **Prayer:**

Thank you for another day Lord, a day that I can receive your love. *Name a few of the things that you are grateful for today.*

### **Scripture Reading:**

Romans 10:17 (NIV)

So faith comes from hearing, that is, hearing the Good News about Christ.

*Take a breath, then slowly read the scripture reading again as you enter into a time of silence. Spend a couple of minutes writing out your thoughts that come to mind.*

### **Meditation:**

John O'Donohue:

"We live between the act of awakening and the act of surrender. Each morning we awaken to the light and the invitation to a new day in the word of time; each night we surrender to the dark to be taken to play in the world of dreams where time is no more. At birth we were awakened and emerged to become visible in the world. At death we will surrender again to the dark to become invisible. Awakening and surrender: they frame each day and each life; between them is the journey where anything can happen, the beauty and the frailty."

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Amen.

Questions to ponder as you pray:

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## Day Four

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### **Prayer:**

Thank you for another day Lord, a day that I can receive your love. *Name a few of the things that you are grateful for today.*

### **Scripture Reading:**

Psalms 139: 7-10 (ESV)

Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me.

*Take a breath, then slowly read the scripture reading again as you enter into a time of silence. Spend a couple of minutes writing out your thoughts that come to mind.*

### **Meditation:**

St. Patrick of Ireland:

Christ be with me, Christ before me,  
Christ behind me, Christ in the heart of everyone who thinks of me,  
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me,  
Christ in every eye that sees me,  
Christ in every ear that hears me.

*Take a breathe as you enter into a time of silence with God. Notice the thoughts that God is placing on your heart. Write them down.*

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Amen.

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## Day Five

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### **Prayer:**

Thank you for another day Lord, a day that I can receive your love. *Name a few of the things that you are grateful for today.*

### **Scripture Reading:**

Matthew 6:9-13 (NIV)

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

*Take a breath, then slowly read the scripture reading again as you enter into a time of silence. Spend a couple of minutes writing out your thoughts that come to mind.*

### **Meditation:**

“Prayer is as natural to [people] as speaking, sighing and seeing, as natural as the palpitation of a loving heart; and actually that is what prayer is: a murmur, a sigh, a glance, a heartbeat of love.” ~ Ernesto Cardenal

Any acknowledgement or expression of love is prayer. Prayer is found in the murmurs, the sighs, the glances, and the heartbeats of love. It is found all around us in our day-to-day lives. Where are you expressing your love for God today?

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Amen.

Questions to ponder as you pray:

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### **Prayer:**

Thank you for another day Lord, a day that I can receive your love. *Name a few of the things that you are grateful for today.*

### **Scripture Reading:**

John 3:16 (ESV)

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

*Take a breath, then slowly read the scripture reading again as you enter into a time of silence. Spend a couple of minutes writing out your thoughts that come to mind.*

### **Meditation:**

“How does God come to us? Like dew on the flowers. Like the song of the birds! Yes, God gives the Godself with all creatures wholly to me.” ~ Mechtild of Magdeburg

How do you expect God to speak to you? Is it through a booming voice? An astonishing vision? Or is it through the dew on flowers? God is all around us, speaking to us in multiple ways through his creation. Have you ever felt so submerged by God’s creation that you can’t help but bask in his glory?

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### **Prayer:**

Thank you for another day Lord, a day that I can receive your love. *Name a few of the things that you are grateful for today.*

### **Scripture Reading:**

Jeremiah 29: 12-14 (ESV)

Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you, declares the Lord, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, declares the Lord, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.

*Take a breath, then slowly read the scripture reading again as you enter into a time of silence. Spend a couple of minutes writing out your thoughts that come to mind.*

### **Meditation:**

“God you are the sun; I am your reflection. When God shines we must reflect.” ~ Mechtild of Magdeburg

We are created in the image of God. Imagine yourself sitting by a still lake in the cool of the morning. As the sun rises, you look over the calm waters and see a reflection of the trees and sky that surrounds it. It reflects. When we calm our inner selves, we cannot help but reflect God’s light in us to those around us. When have you felt God shining and were compelled to respond and reflect that light?

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Amen.

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### **Prayer:**

Thank you for another day Lord, a day that I can receive your love. *Name a few of the things that you are grateful for today.*

### **Scripture Reading:**

Proverbs 8:17 (NIV)

I love those who love me, and those who seek me find me.

*Take a breathe, then slowly read the scripture reading again as you enter into a time of silence. Spend a couple of minutes writing out your thoughts that come to mind.*

### **Meditation:**

“The very sight of God causes delight. At the sight of God the mind can do nothing but delight.”  
~ Thomas Aquinas

Picture yourself as a child at a time you were getting a gift. You rip open the wrapping paper that conceals your anticipated gift and behold! There lies the very thing you had your sights on. An overwhelming feeling of delight overcomes your entire being. God’s presence induces delight. All doubt, skepticism, even thinking gives way to this overwhelming delight at the sight of God.

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Amen.

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## Day Nine

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### **Prayer:**

Thank you for another day Lord, a day that I can receive your love. *Name a few of the things that you are grateful for today.*

### **Scripture Reading:**

Exodus 3:2 (ESV)

And the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed.

*Take a breath, then slowly read the scripture reading again as you enter into a time of silence. Spend a couple of minutes writing out your thoughts that come to mind.*

### **Meditation:**

“Holy One, there is something I wanted to tell you but there have been errands to run, bills to pay, arrangements to make, meetings to attend, friends to entertain, washing to do...and I forget what it is I wanted to say to you, and mostly I forget what I’m about, or why. O God, don’t forget me, please, for the sake of Jesus Christ...

O Father in Heaven, perhaps you’ve already heard what I wanted to tell you. What I wanted to ask is forgive me, heal me, increase my courage, please. Renew in me a little of love and faith, and a sense of confidence, and a vision of what it might mean to live as though you were real, and I mattered, and everyone was sister and brother.

What I wanted to ask in my blundering way is don’t give up on me, don’t become too sad about me, but laugh with me, and try again with me, and I will with you, too. ~ Ted Loder *Guerrillas of Grace*

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Amen.

Questions to ponder as you pray:

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## Day Ten

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### **Prayer:**

Thank you for another day Lord, a day that I can receive your love. *Name a few of the things that you are grateful for today.*

### **Scripture Reading:**

Jeremiah 32:2-3 (MSG)

This is God's Message, the God who made earth, made it livable and lasting, known everywhere as God: Call to me and I will answer you. I'll tell you marvelous and wondrous things that you could never figure out on your own.

*Take a breath, then slowly read the scripture reading again as you enter into a time of silence. Spend a couple of minutes writing out your thoughts that come to mind.*

### **Meditation:**

"Love is an adventure and a conquest. It survives and develops like the universe itself only by perpetual discovery." ~ Teilhard de Chardin

Love is a process of self-discovery and adaption. We, or the world, are never "finished" when it comes to love. There is no bottom to love, the further we dive into it, the deeper it goes. Engaging with God from a place of perpetual discovery takes us to new depths wrapped in his love. How do you maintain an attitude of perpetual discovery and keep curiosity alive in everything you do?

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Amen.

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## Day Eleven

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### **Prayer:**

Thank you for another day Lord, a day that I can receive your love. *Name a few of the things that you are grateful for today.*

### **Scripture Reading:**

Acts 17: 25b-28a (NIV)

He himself gives everyone life and death and everything else. From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. For in him we live and move and have our being.

*Take a breath, then slowly read the scripture reading again as you enter into a time of silence. Spend a couple of minutes writing out your thoughts that come to mind.*

### **Meditation:**

“Jesus not only teaches us the Christian life, he creates it in our souls by the action of His Spirit. Our life in Him is not a matter of mere ethical goodwill. It is not a mere moral perfection. It is an entirely new spiritual reality, an inner transformation.” ~ Thomas Merton

God is our creator and he is continuously creating in us. Molding us, making us anew, transforming us “by the action of His Spirit.” In what areas of your being do you feel God transforming you by his spirit?

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Amen.

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## Day Twelve

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### **Prayer:**

Thank you for another day Lord, a day that I can receive your love. *Name a few of the things that you are grateful for today.*

### **Scripture Reading:**

Matthew 7:7-8 (NLT)

Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.

*Take a breath, then slowly read the scripture reading again as you enter into a time of silence. Spend a couple of minutes writing out your thoughts that come to mind.*

### **Meditation:**

No program accomplishes the Church's mission. No set of goals and objectives includes everything. That is what we are about. We plant the seeds that one day will grow. We water seeds already planted knowing they hold future promise. We lay foundations that will need further development. We provide yeast that affects far beyond our capabilities. We cannot do everything and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that. This enables us to do something, and to do it very, very well. It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest. We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the Master Builder and the worker. We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs. We are prophets of a future that is not our own."  
~Oscar Romero

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Amen.

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## Day Thirteen

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### **Prayer:**

Thank you for another day Lord, a day that I can receive your love. *Name a few of the things that you are grateful for today.*

### **Scripture Reading:**

Ephesians 5: 8-10 (MSG)

You groped your way through that murk once, but no longer. You're out in the open now. The bright light of Christ makes your way plain. So no more stumbling around. Get on with it! The good, the right, the true – these are the actions appropriate for daylight hours. Figure out what will please Christ, and then do it.

*Take a breath, then slowly read the scripture reading again as you enter into a time of silence. Spend a couple of minutes writing out your thoughts that come to mind.*

### **Meditation:**

“To understand the world, knowledge is not enough. You must see it, touch it, live in its presence and drink the vital heat of existence in the very heart of reality.” Teilhard de Chardin

Knowing is not enough. True wisdom invites us to “taste and see that the Lord is good” (Ps. 34:8). Wisdom invites us to use our knowledge, go out into the world, and “see it, touch it, live in its presence and drink the vital heat of existence” that is present in our world. In what ways are you going beyond your knowledge? In what ways would you like to?

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Amen.

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## Day Fourteen

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### **Prayer:**

Thank you for another day Lord, a day that I can receive your love. *Name a few of the things that you are grateful for today.*

### **Scripture Reading:**

Ephesians 2:10 (NIV)

For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

*Take a breath, then slowly read the scripture reading again as you enter into a time of silence. Spend a couple of minutes writing out your thoughts that come to mind.*

### **Meditation:**

"To wash the feet of a brother or sister in Christ, to allow someone to wash our feet, is a sign that together we want to follow Jesus, to take the downward path, to find Jesus' presence in the poor and the weak. Is it not a sign that we too want to live a heart-to-heart relationship with others, to meet them as a person and a friend, and to live in communion with them? Is it not a sign that we yearn to be men and women of forgiveness, to be healed and cleansed and to heal and cleanse others and thus to live more fully in communion with Jesus?" ~ Jean Vanier

*Take a breath as you enter into a time of silence with God. Notice the thoughts that God is placing on your heart. Write them down.*

**May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you: wherever he may send you; may he guide you through the wilderness: protect you through the storm; may he bring you home rejoicing: at the wonders he has shown you; may he bring you home rejoicing: once again into our doors.**

Amen.

Questions to ponder as you pray:

*Who is God calling us to be as a congregation?*

*Who is God calling us to be in our community?*

*Who is God calling us to be in our home life?*

## Day Fifteen

*Close your eyes and take 3 deep breaths. Breathe in through your nostrils filling your stomach. Hold your breath for a moment. Breathe out through your nostrils as your stomach exhales the breath into your spine. Notice how your breath moves in and out of you.*

### **Prayer:**

Thank you for another day Lord, a day that I can receive your love. *Name a few of the things that you are grateful for today.*

### **Scripture Reading:**

Luke 12:35-37 (NIV)

Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, like servants waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him. It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. Truly I tell you, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them.

*Take a breath, then slowly read the scripture reading again as you enter into a time of silence. Spend a couple of minutes writing out your thoughts that come to mind.*

### **Meditation:**

Eckhart Tolle writes of “a qualitatively different kind of waiting.” It is a watchful waiting, one that is open and ready, knowing that “something could happen at any moment, and if you are not absolutely awake, absolutely still, you will miss it. This is the kind of waiting Jesus talks about. All your attention is in the Now. There is none left for daydreaming, thinking, remembering, anticipating. There is no tension in it, no fear, just alert presence. You are present with your whole Being, with every cell of your body.” Imagine yourself ready to receive God entering the moments of your day, alert to God’s graceful service to you.

*Take a breath as you enter into a time of silence with God. Notice the thoughts that God is placing on your heart. Write them down.*

**May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you; wherever he may send you; may he guide you through the wilderness; protect you through the storm; may he bring you home rejoicing; at the wonders he has shown you; may he bring you home rejoicing: once again into our doors.**

Amen.

Questions to ponder as you pray:

*Who is God calling us to be as a congregation?*

*Who is God calling us to be in our community?*

*Who is God calling us to be in our home life?*

## Day Sixteen

*Close your eyes and take 3 deep breaths. Breathe in through your nostrils filling your stomach. Hold your breath for a moment. Breathe out through your nostrils as your stomach exhales the breath into your spine. Notice how your breath moves in and out of you.*

### **Prayer:**

Thank you for another day Lord, a day that I can receive your love. *Name a few of the things that you are grateful for today.*

### **Scripture Reading:**

Luke 24: 13-15, 30-32 (NIV)

Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them...When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him.

*Take a breath, then slowly read the scripture reading again as you enter into a time of silence. Spend a couple of minutes writing out your thoughts that come to mind.*

### **Meditation:**

“For we can journey to distant places and get a different foreground of objects and events, but we cannot journey out of our time-now into a new historical location. The invading Love of the Eternal Now must break in through us into this time-now.” ~ Thomas R. Kelly

The Spirit of the risen Christ is often best shown and known through the compassionate care of a “listening ear” and in familiar acts of faithful hospitality in dark times. At times it is hard for us to see. Still, God *is* with us.

*Take a breath as you enter into a time of silence with God. Notice the thoughts that God is placing on your heart. Write them down.*

**May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you; wherever he may send you; may he guide you through the wilderness; protect you through the storm; may he bring you home rejoicing; at the wonders he has shown you; may he bring you home rejoicing: once again into our doors.**

Amen.

Questions to ponder as you pray:

*Who is God calling us to be as a congregation?*

*Who is God calling us to be in our community?*

*Who is God calling us to be in our home life?*

## Day Seventeen

*Close your eyes and take 3 deep breaths. Breathe in through your nostrils filling your stomach. Hold your breath for a moment. Breathe out through your nostrils as your stomach exhales the breath into your spine. Notice how your breath moves in and out of you.*

### **Prayer:**

Thank you for another day Lord, a day that I can receive your love. *Name a few of the things that you are grateful for today.*

### **Scripture Reading:**

Psalm 147: 10-11 (NRSV)

His delight is not in the strength of the horse, nor his pleasure in the speed of a runner, but the Lord takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his steadfast love.

*Take a breath, then slowly read the scripture reading again as you enter into a time of silence. Spend a couple of minutes writing out your thoughts that come to mind.*

### **Meditation:**

“What God does first and best and most is to trust his people with their moment in history. He trusts his people to do what must be done for the sake of his whole community.” ~ Walter Brueggemann

By nature, we are attracted to strength—the fastest runner, the strongest voice, the biggest following. We seek to be aligned with the winning position, or hold it ourselves. Seeking success, that is to be our best, is not wrong. Yet, ultimately we must ask ourselves, “Where does our hope lie?” God delights in our being rooted in God’s enduring love, which will always bind the wounds of the weak, sustain the humble and work for the good of God’s whole community (1 Corinthians 12-13).

*Take a breath as you enter into a time of silence with God. Notice the thoughts that God is placing on your heart. Write them down.*

**May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you; wherever he may send you; may he guide you through the wilderness: protect you through the storm; may he bring you home rejoicing: at the wonders he has shown you; may he bring you home rejoicing: once again into our doors.**

Amen.

Questions to ponder as you pray:

*Who is God calling us to be as a congregation?*

*Who is God calling us to be in our community?*

*Who is God calling us to be in our home life?*

## Day Eighteen

*Close your eyes and take 3 deep breaths. Breathe in through your nostrils filling your stomach. Hold your breath for a moment. Breathe out through your nostrils as your stomach exhales the breath into your spine. Notice how your breath moves in and out of you.*

### **Prayer:**

Thank you for another day Lord, a day that I can receive your love. *Name a few of the things that you are grateful for today.*

### **Scripture Reading:**

John 13: 33-34 (NLT)

Dear children, I will be with you only a little longer. And as I told the Jewish leaders, you will search for me, but you can't come where I am going. So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other.

*Take a breath, then slowly read the scripture reading again as you enter into a time of silence. Spend a couple of minutes writing out your thoughts that come to mind.*

### **Meditation:**

"It's not really what we do that matters; it's the energy with which we do it. To be in love is to be standing in a different space. Love is not what you do; it's how you do it...When you stand in the state of love that Jesus offers, you live inside a different energy...What might happen if we woke up each day with this intention: How can my existence on this earth increase the quality of life on this planet?" ~ Richard Rohr

*Take a breath as you enter into a time of silence with God. Notice the thoughts that God is placing on your heart. Write them down.*

**May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you; wherever he may send you; may he guide you through the wilderness; protect you through the storm; may he bring you home rejoicing; at the wonders he has shown you; may he bring you home rejoicing: once again into our doors.**

Amen.

Questions to ponder as you pray:

*Who is God calling us to be as a congregation?*

*Who is God calling us to be in our community?*

*Who is God calling us to be in our home life?*

## Day Nineteen

*Close your eyes and take 3 deep breaths. Breathe in through your nostrils filling your stomach. Hold your breath for a moment. Breathe out through your nostrils as your stomach exhales the breath into your spine. Notice how your breath moves in and out of you.*

### **Prayer:**

Thank you for another day Lord, a day that I can receive your love. *Name a few of the things that you are grateful for today.*

### **Scripture Reading:**

Psalm 139: 14-16 (ESV)

I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.

*Take a breath, then slowly read the scripture reading again as you enter into a time of silence. Spend a couple of minutes writing out your thoughts that come to mind.*

### **Meditation:**

“The more we let God take us over, the more truly ourselves we become – because He made us. He invented us. He invented all the different people that you and I were intended to be...It is when I turn to Christ, when I give up myself to His personality, that I first begin to have a real personality of my own.” ~ C.S. Lewis

*Take a breath as you enter into a time of silence with God. Notice the thoughts that God is placing on your heart. Write them down.*

**May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you: wherever he may send you; may he guide you through the wilderness: protect you through the storm; may he bring you home rejoicing: at the wonders he has shown you; may he bring you home rejoicing: once again into our doors.**

Amen.

Questions to ponder as you pray:

*Who is God calling us to be as a congregation?*

*Who is God calling us to be in our community?*

*Who is God calling us to be in our home life?*

## Day Twenty

*Close your eyes and take 3 deep breaths. Breathe in through your nostrils filling your stomach. Hold your breath for a moment. Breathe out through your nostrils as your stomach exhales the breath into your spine. Notice how your breath moves in and out of you.*

### **Prayer:**

Thank you for another day Lord, a day that I can receive your love. *Name a few of the things that you are grateful for today.*

### **Scripture Reading:**

John 12:24-25 (MSG)

Listen carefully: Unless a grain of wheat is buried in the ground, dead to the world, it is never any more than a grain of wheat. But if it is buried, it sprouts and reproduces itself many times over. In the same way, anyone who holds on to life just as it is destroys that life. But if you let it go, reckless in your love, you'll have it forever, real and eternal.

*Take a breath, then slowly read the scripture reading again as you enter into a time of silence. Spend a couple of minutes writing out your thoughts that come to mind.*

### **Meditation:**

"First the fall, and then the recovery from the fall, and both are the mercy of God." ~ Julian of Norwich

If we open ourselves to God and allow ourselves to let go of our desire for control, God can turn even the worst situations into blessings. God is with us whether we are in the season of summer or winter. What do you need to let go of to allow God to work in your life?

*Take a breath as you enter into a time of silence with God. Notice the thoughts that God is placing on your heart. Write them down.*

**May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you; wherever he may send you; may he guide you through the wilderness: protect you through the storm; may he bring you home rejoicing: at the wonders he has shown you; may he bring you home rejoicing: once again into our doors.**

Amen.

Questions to ponder as you pray:

*Who is God calling us to be as a congregation?*

*Who is God calling us to be in our community?*

*Who is God calling us to be in our home life?*

## Day Twenty-one

*Close your eyes and take 3 deep breaths. Breathe in through your nostrils filling your stomach. Hold your breath for a moment. Breathe out through your nostrils as your stomach exhales the breath into your spine. Notice how your breath moves in and out of you.*

### **Prayer:**

Thank you for another day Lord, a day that I can receive your love. *Name a few of the things that you are grateful for today.*

### **Scripture Reading:**

2 Corinthians 3: 17-18 (NIV)

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

*Take a breath, then slowly read the scripture reading again as you enter into a time of silence. Spend a couple of minutes writing out your thoughts that come to mind.*

### **Meditation:**

"If change and growth are not programmed into your spirituality, if there are not serious warnings about the blinding nature of fear and fanaticism, your religion will always end up worshiping the status quo and protecting your present ego position and personal advantage as if it were God." ~ Richard Rohr

*Take a breath as you enter into a time of silence with God. Notice the thoughts that God is placing on your heart. Write them down.*

**May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you: wherever he may send you; may he guide you through the wilderness: protect you through the storm; may he bring you home rejoicing: at the wonders he has shown you; may he bring you home rejoicing: once again into our doors.**

Amen.

Questions to ponder as you pray:

*Who is God calling us to be as a congregation?*

*Who is God calling us to be in our community?*

*Who is God calling us to be in our home life?*

## Day Twenty-two

*Close your eyes and take 3 deep breaths. Breathe in through your nostrils filling your stomach. Hold your breath for a moment. Breathe out through your nostrils as your stomach exhales the breath into your spine. Notice how your breath moves in and out of you.*

### **Prayer:**

Thank you for another day Lord, a day that I can receive your love. *Name a few of the things that you are grateful for today.*

### **Scripture Reading:**

1 Corinthians 13: 3-7 (MSG)

If I give everything I own to the poor and even go to the stake to be burned as a martyr, but I don't love, I've gotten nowhere. So, no matter what I say, what I believe, and what I do, I'm bankrupt without love. Love never gives up. Love cares more for others than for self. Love doesn't want what it doesn't have. Love doesn't strut, doesn't have a swelled head, doesn't force itself on others, isn't always "me first," doesn't fly off the handle, doesn't keep score of the sins of others, doesn't revel when others grovel, takes pleasure in the flowering of truth, puts up with anything, trusts God always, always looks for the best, never looks back, but keeps going to the end.

*Take a breath, then slowly read the scripture reading again as you enter into a time of silence. Spend a couple of minutes writing out your thoughts that come to mind.*

### **Meditation:**

"What will make a difference to the future is awakening to a faith that fully communicates God's love – a love that transforms how we believe, what we do, and who we are in the world."  
~ Diana Butler Bass

*Take a breath as you enter into a time of silence with God. Notice the thoughts that God is placing on your heart. Write them down.*

**May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you: wherever he may send you; may he guide you through the wilderness: protect you through the storm; may he bring you home rejoicing: at the wonders he has shown you; may he bring you home rejoicing: once again into our doors.**

Amen.

Questions to ponder as you pray:

*Who is God calling us to be as a congregation?*

*Who is God calling us to be in our community?*

*Who is God calling us to be in our home life?*

## Day Twenty-three

*Close your eyes and take 3 deep breaths. Breathe in through your nostrils filling your stomach. Hold your breath for a moment. Breathe out through your nostrils as your stomach exhales the breath into your spine. Notice how your breath moves in and out of you.*

### **Prayer:**

Thank you for another day Lord, a day that I can receive your love. *Name a few of the things that you are grateful for today.*

### **Scripture Reading:**

2 Corinthians 3: 17-18 (NIV)

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

*Take a breath, then slowly read the scripture reading again as you enter into a time of silence. Spend a couple of minutes writing out your thoughts that come to mind.*

### **Meditation:**

"Imagine yourself as a living house. God comes in to rebuild that house. At first, perhaps, you can understand what He is doing. He is getting the drains right and stopping the leaks in the roof and so on; you knew that those jobs needed doing and so you are not surprised. But presently He starts knocking the house about in a way that hurts abominably and does not seem to make any sense. What on earth is He up to? The explanation is that He is building quite a different house from the one you thought of – throwing out a new wing here, putting on an extra floor there, running up towers, making courtyards. You thought you were being made into a decent little cottage: but He is building a palace. He intends to come and live in it Himself." ~ C.S. Lewis

*Take a breath as you enter into a time of silence with God. Notice the thoughts that God is placing on your heart. Write them down.*

**May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you; wherever he may send you; may he guide you through the wilderness; protect you through the storm; may he bring you home rejoicing; at the wonders he has shown you; may he bring you home rejoicing: once again into our doors.**

Amen.

Questions to ponder as you pray:

*Who is God calling us to be as a congregation?*

*Who is God calling us to be in our community?*

*Who is God calling us to be in our home life?*

## Day Twenty-four

*Close your eyes and take 3 deep breaths. Breathe in through your nostrils filling your stomach. Hold your breath for a moment. Breathe out through your nostrils as your stomach exhales the breath into your spine. Notice how your breath moves in and out of you.*

### **Prayer:**

Thank you for another day Lord, a day that I can receive your love. *Name a few of the things that you are grateful for today.*

### **Scripture Reading:**

Matthew 2:11-12 (ESV)

And going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

*Take a breath, then slowly read the scripture reading again as you enter into a time of silence. Spend a couple of minutes writing out your thoughts that come to mind.*

### **Meditation:**

“A good journey begins with knowing where you are and being willing to go somewhere else.” ~ Richard Rohr

“These wise ones were probably more comfortable living and leading from their heads, but to be overwhelmed by joy...to have a visceral experience of worship...to receive God’s guidance through a dream (of all things!)...*this* was a new kind of journey. Eventually they would return home (by a different way) but the would be changed.”<sup>2</sup> Open and trusting hearts are essential to the journey of renewal. Moving beyond the familiar and comfortable takes courage. God, grant us the courage to step into the unknown, to find you there, and to be transformed.

*Take a breath as you enter into a time of silence with God. Notice the thoughts that God is placing on your heart. Write them down.*

**May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you: wherever he may send you; may he guide you through the wilderness: protect you through the storm; may he bring you home rejoicing: at the wonders he has shown you; may he bring you home rejoicing: once again into our doors.**

Amen.

Questions to ponder as you pray:

*Who is God calling us to be as a congregation?*

*Who is God calling us to be in our community?*

*Who is God calling us to be in our home life?*

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<sup>2</sup> Taken from the book *Epiphany: Celebration of the Journey* by Ruth Haley Barton

## Day Twenty-five

*Close your eyes and take 3 deep breaths. Breathe in through your nostrils filling your stomach. Hold your breath for a moment. Breathe out through your nostrils as your stomach exhales the breath into your spine. Notice how your breath moves in and out of you.*

### **Prayer:**

Thank you for another day Lord, a day that I can receive your love. *Name a few of the things that you are grateful for today.*

### **Scripture Reading:**

Deuteronomy 30:19 (NLT)

Today I have given you the choice between life and death, between blessings and curses. Now I call on heaven and earth to witness the choice you make. Oh, that you would choose life, so that you and your descendants might live!

*Take a breath, then slowly read the scripture reading again as you enter into a time of silence. Spend a couple of minutes writing out your thoughts that come to mind.*

### **Meditation:**

“Deep within us is an inner sanctuary of the soul, a holy place, a divine centre, as speaking Voice, to which we may continuously return.” ~ Thomas Kelly

St. Ignatius of Loyola introduced the spiritual exercises of consolation and desolation as a way of deepening connection with God, self, and others. Consolation is a deep sense of connection with God, others, and our true selves which channels feelings of joy and inner peace – even in the face of challenges. Desolation is the sense of loss of God’s presence whereby we feel out of touch with God, others and our true selves which channels feelings of unease, frustration and even confusion. What are the areas in your church, community, and personal life for which you channel feelings of gratitude, joy, and inner peace? What are the areas that you experience desolation? If you were to “choose life,” where would your focus be?

*Take a breath as you enter into a time of silence with God. Notice the thoughts that God is placing on your heart. Write them down.*

**May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you; wherever he may send you; may he guide you through the wilderness: protect you through the storm; may he bring you home rejoicing: at the wonders he has shown you; may he bring you home rejoicing: once again into our doors.**

Amen.

Questions to ponder as you pray:

*Who is God calling us to be as a congregation?*

*Who is God calling us to be in our community?*

*Who is God calling us to be in our home life?*

## Day Twenty-six

*Close your eyes and take 3 deep breaths. Breathe in through your nostrils filling your stomach. Hold your breath for a moment. Breathe out through your nostrils as your stomach exhales the breath into your spine. Notice how your breath moves in and out of you.*

### **Prayer:**

Thank you for another day Lord, a day that I can receive your love. *Name a few of the things that you are grateful for today.*

### **Scripture Reading:**

1 Corinthians 12:12-13 (NLT)

The human body has many parts, but the many parts make up one whole body. So it is with the body of Christ. Some of us are Jews, some are Gentiles, some are slaves, and some are free. But we have all been baptized into one body by one Spirit, and we all share the same Spirit.

*Take a breath, then slowly read the scripture reading again as you enter into a time of silence. Spend a couple of minutes writing out your thoughts that come to mind.*

### **Meditation:**

“Most of us are under pressure, external and internal, to do everything, be good at everything, be accountable to everyone for everything! It is not so. In the divine economy each of us has a particular grace, gift and devotion. Finding out what that is, and learning how to be guilt-free about not doing everything else, may be part of what our Lenten journey is for.” ~ Malcolm Guite

*Take a breath as you enter into a time of silence with God. Notice the thoughts that God is placing on your heart. Write them down.*

**May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you: wherever he may send you; may he guide you through the wilderness: protect you through the storm; may he bring you home rejoicing: at the wonders he has shown you; may he bring you home rejoicing: once again into our doors.**

Amen.

Questions to ponder as you pray:

*Who is God calling us to be as a congregation?*

*Who is God calling us to be in our community?*

*Who is God calling us to be in our home life?*

## Day Twenty-seven

*Close your eyes and take 3 deep breaths. Breathe in through your nostrils filling your stomach. Hold your breath for a moment. Breathe out through your nostrils as your stomach exhales the breath into your spine. Notice how your breath moves in and out of you.*

### **Prayer:**

Thank you for another day Lord, a day that I can receive your love. *Name a few of the things that you are grateful for today.*

### **Scripture Reading:**

Jeremiah 29: 11-13 (NIV)

For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

*Take a breath, then slowly read the scripture reading again as you enter into a time of silence. Spend a couple of minutes writing out your thoughts that come to mind.*

### **Meditation:**

"Above all, trust in the slow work of God. We are quite naturally impatient in everything to reach the end without delay. We should like to skip the intermediate stages. We are impatient of being on the way to something unknown, something new. And yet it is the law of all progress that it is made by passing through some stages of instability – and that it may take a very long time. And so I think it is with you; your ideas mature gradually – let them grow, let them shape themselves, without undue haste. Don't try to force them on, as though you should be today what time (that is to say, grace and circumstances acting on your own good will) will make of you tomorrow. Only God could say what this new spirit gradually forming within you will be. Give Our Lord the benefit of believing that his hand is leading you, and accept the anxiety of feeling yourself in suspense and incomplete." ~ Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

*Take a breath as you enter into a time of silence with God. Notice the thoughts that God is placing on your heart. Write them down.*

**May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you; wherever he may send you; may he guide you through the wilderness: protect you through the storm; may he bring you home rejoicing: at the wonders he has shown you; may he bring you home rejoicing: once again into our doors.**

Amen.

Questions to ponder as you pray:

*Who is God calling us to be as a congregation?*

*Who is God calling us to be in our community?*

*Who is God calling us to be in our home life?*

## Day Twenty-eight

*Close your eyes and take 3 deep breaths. Breathe in through your nostrils filling your stomach. Hold your breath for a moment. Breathe out through your nostrils as your stomach exhales the breath into your spine. Notice how your breath moves in and out of you.*

### **Prayer:**

Thank you for another day Lord, a day that I can receive your love. *Name a few of the things that you are grateful for today.*

### **Scripture Reading:**

1 Timothy 6:11-12 (ESV)

But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

*Take a breath, then slowly read the scripture reading again as you enter into a time of silence. Spend a couple of minutes writing out your thoughts that come to mind.*

### **Meditation:**

“In a remarkable account from her years spent in Africa, Isak Dinesen tells the story of how one day out in the bush she was fascinated by a beautiful snake, its skin glistening with subtle, variegated colours. She raved so much about the snakeskin that one of her servants killed the snake, skinned it and made it into a belt for her. To her great dismay that once glistening skin was now dull and gray. For all along, the beauty had lain not in the beautiful skin but in the quality of its aliveness.” ~ Cynthia Bourgeault

*Take a breath as you enter into a time of silence with God. Notice the thoughts that God is placing on your heart. Write them down.*

**May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you; wherever he may send you; may he guide you through the wilderness: protect you through the storm; may he bring you home rejoicing: at the wonders he has shown you; may he bring you home rejoicing: once again into our doors.**

Amen.

Questions to ponder as you pray:

*Who is God calling us to be as a congregation?*

*Who is God calling us to be in our community?*

*Who is God calling us to be in our home life?*

## Day Twenty-nine

*Close your eyes and take 3 deep breaths. Breathe in through your nostrils filling your stomach. Hold your breath for a moment. Breathe out through your nostrils as your stomach exhales the breath into your spine. Notice how your breath moves in and out of you.*

### **Prayer:**

Thank you for another day Lord, a day that I can receive your love. *Name a few of the things that you are grateful for today.*

### **Scripture Reading:**

1 Kings 19:11-13 (NLT)

“Go out and stand before me on the mountain,” the Lord told him. And as Elijah stood there, the Lord passed by, and a mighty windstorm hit the mountain. It was such a terrible blast that the rocks were torn loose, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake there was a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire there was the sound of a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave.

*Take a breath, then slowly read the scripture reading again as you enter into a time of silence. Spend a couple of minutes writing out your thoughts that come to mind.*

### **Meditation:**

Spiritual reading, discursive meditation, and prayer prepare our hearts for contemplation. Contemplation is a state of realized oneness with God. When engaged in contemplation, we rest in God resting in us. We are at home in God at home in us. Our role in contemplation is essentially receptive, in that when we are engaged in contemplation we receive a gift of diving awareness.” ~ James Finley

How are you preparing yourself to sort through the wind, earthquakes, and fires to hear the gentle whisper of God?

*Take a breath as you enter into a time of silence with God. Notice the thoughts that God is placing on your heart. Write them down.*

**May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you: wherever he may send you; may he guide you through the wilderness: protect you through the storm; may he bring you home rejoicing: at the wonders he has shown you; may he bring you home rejoicing: once again into our doors.**

Amen.

Questions to ponder as you pray:

*Who is God calling us to be as a congregation?*

*Who is God calling us to be in our community?*

*Who is God calling us to be in our home life?*

## Day Thirty

*Close your eyes and take 3 deep breaths. Breathe in through your nostrils filling your stomach. Hold your breath for a moment. Breathe out through your nostrils as your stomach exhales the breath into your spine. Notice how your breath moves in and out of you.*

### **Prayer:**

Thank you for another day Lord, a day that I can receive your love. *Name a few of the things that you are grateful for today.*

### **Scripture Reading:**

John 14:19-21 (NIV)

Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them.

*Take a breath, then slowly read the scripture reading again as you enter into a time of silence. Spend a couple of minutes writing out your thoughts that come to mind.*

### **Meditation:**

“Transformation is something we all crave. This is what we are looking for under the guises of the many things we do. We seek fulfillment through security, pleasure, power, personal relationships, artistic creativity, intellectual insight, and mystical experiences. We are intimately familiar with ourselves as beings available for mutation. And yet we also put obstacles in the way of the very transformation we most deeply desire. We really want to lose ourselves, and yet we cling to ourselves. We continue to try to define ourselves, piling up adjectives by which we – and, we hope, *we alone* – can be described; but at the same time we know, on some secret level, that we are indefinable.” ~ Beatrice Bruteau

*Take a breath as you enter into a time of silence with God. Notice the thoughts that God is placing on your heart. Write them down.*

**May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you; wherever he may send you; may he guide you through the wilderness; protect you through the storm; may he bring you home rejoicing: at the wonders he has shown you; may he bring you home rejoicing: once again into our doors.**

Amen.

Questions to ponder as you pray:

*Who is God calling us to be as a congregation?*

*Who is God calling us to be in our community?*

*Who is God calling us to be in our home life?<sup>3</sup>*

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<sup>3</sup> This document has been prepared by L3 Group in hopes that these daily devotionals will inspire you to empty yourself so that God may fill you up.