

Lenten Pilgrimage Guide

Jesus was born into a world similar in many ways to our own. He gazed up at the stars and moon and felt the sun on his face, the earth beneath his feet, the heat of the desert, the warmth of a fire, the waves rock his boat, and the rain soak his clothes. He saw the wind in the trees, the birds in the air, and experienced the smells of gardens and the sea. Experiencing these elements ourselves during weekly pilgrimages is a way to “ground” and connect us to Jesus’ time on this earth as a living, breathing man; teaching us the way to the Father; showing us the way of hope, peace, joy, love, and eternal life through his own life, death, and resurrection.

During this time of Lent, look for signs of God’s presence in nature and elements that Jesus also experienced. God is always seeking you. Be still and feel His presence. Psalm 46:10, “Be still, and know that I am God.” Set an intention to listen for God.

We live accelerated lives, and that gets us places. But we miss a lot along the way. A pilgrimage starts with slowing down, both the pace of your mind and the pace at which you move. The pace of your mind and movement become connected when you walk. And God adjusts His pace to match yours.

The steps you take during your pilgrimage begin with centering yourself. You may wish to begin with a centering prayer; a silent prayer in which you experience God’s presence within you. It may help to choose a sacred word that you can contemplate or silently repeat during your pilgrimage. The footsteps of your pilgrimage begin with releasing those things you need to get rid of; that separate you from God; then moving on to a receiving or center place where you meet God. The final steps of your journey are steps in trust and gratitude, leading back into the world in a new direction.

Six Weekly Pilgrimages

This Lenten pilgrimage guide contains information for six weekly pilgrimages. They are journeys you can take on your own, or take with others while observing safe COVID practices. These Lenten pilgrimages may take you to a physical place or you may wish to travel to a place in your memory or that you’ve created in your mind. If you have mobility issues, you may go choose a more accessible site than the one suggested, have someone take you on a drive, or use pictures you’ve taken or found on the internet. Each of the pilgrimages begin with centering yourself, followed by three phases: releasing, receiving, and returning, along with a concluding prayer, song, or other reading. The pilgrimages may be taken any day or time during the week, repeated as often as you like, or adjusted in any way that better meets your needs and helps you feel and observe God’s presence in the world.

Throughout Lent

You are invited anytime during Lent to tie a strip of cloth to the netting on the Cross at the Outdoor Chapel, located off the north side of the lower parking lot at Mountainside United Methodist Church. You may wish to write a message on the strip of cloth before tying it on the branch. Your message may be a sacred word of your choice; one that speaks to you during the time of Lent. Your message might be of something you wish to turn over to God...to leave behind. Or, your message might be a new covenant you make with God; a new direction you’d like to take.

A labyrinth is available in the lower parking lot beginning the second week in Lent (February 28th). Both the Outdoor Chapel and the Labyrinth are available for your use any day/time during Lent.

Week One, February 21, Theme: Rainbows and Covenants

Location: The pathway to the Outdoor Chapel or any other place of your choosing

Pilgrim journey

Take a walk down to the outdoor chapel or anywhere else of your choosing. Just walk, even aimlessly. Slow down your mind. Notice what comes, both without and within in your intentional slowing. Take a seat on one of the benches at the chapel and look for the rainbows created by the prisms in the tree. Or, if you are elsewhere, think of times when you have seen a rainbow. How does seeing the great mystery or rainbows make you feel? Can you feel God's presence in that wonder?

Centering

God is always seeking you. Be still and feel His presence. Psalm 46:10, "Be still, and know that I am God." Set an intention to listen for God.

Releasing

At the beginning of your pilgrimage, release yourself from those things you need to get rid of; that separate you from God; that keep you from feeling God's presence. You may write something that you'd like to leave behind on a strip of cloth and tie it to the netting on the Cross at the outdoor chapel.

Receiving

At the center of your journey, connect to a receiving place where you meet God. What is the deep covenant you have with God?

Returning

As you move back to your starting place, step out in trust and gratitude. How have you been changed by your journey, even in tiny ways? What will you take from your journey back into the world?

Prayer

Heavenly Father:

Thank You for the rainbow as symbol of hope and a promise of renewal which appears to me from time to time, unannounced, but happily and reassuringly. Let it be a reminder that You are there, in Your Majesty, far beyond my sight, beyond the margins of the universe but, there, within my heart and my soul, patiently understanding my every worry, every joy and every act.

May I stop each time I see this glorious sign of Yours written in light across the sky to thank You for all Your gifts, and to renew my faith, my hope, and my love for you and for all of Your creation. I look forward, to your heavenly kingdom of infinite skies, enchanted rainbows and golden glories.

*Please keep me reminded to stay on the path of righteousness, to persevere bravely through all storms, and to follow my rainbows undaunted, to the portals of eternity. **Amen***

Notes: