

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 Five, March 21, Theme: Wind

Location: Inside the front door entrance at Mountainside United Methodist or any doorway

Pilgrim Journey

Step out of the doorway to stand outside. Did you feel the slight stirring of the breeze as you stepped into nature? Listen to the sounds of the outdoors that are carried on the wind, birds chirping, children laughing, and tinkling wind chimes. Notice the air currents around you. Is your hair blowing, do you feel the breeze on your face? Think of how you can't see the wind but you feel its effects.

Centering

God's Spirit is within you and around you. Quiet yourself and hear the sound of your breathing. Feel the air move in and out of your lungs. Consider John 3:8. "The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."

Releasing

At the beginning of your meditation exhale deeply. Let go of the burdens and weight of things troubling you and keeping you from feeling God's Spirit.

Receiving

In your meditative journey close your eyes and inhale deeply. Feel the Spirit of Life move within your being. Listen for the stirring of the breath of God deep within you as he daily renews the covenant he has written on your heart.

Returning

When you return indoors think of the breeze and breath you felt outside, the wind you couldn't see, but could hear and feel. Contemplate Acts 2:1-4 "On the day of Pentecost all the believers were meeting together in one place. Suddenly there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm and it filled the house where they were sitting. Then what looked like flames appeared and settled on each of them. And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other languages as the Holy Spirit gave the ability." Invite God to cause the mighty windstorm of His Spirit to fill you both inside and out.

Song

Blow, Wind of the Spirit
Blow, Wind of the Holy One
Blow, Wind of the Spirit on me

Burn, Fire of the Spirit
Burn, Fire of the Holy One

Burn, Fire of the Spirit in me
That we might be a testimony
in the world to the light of God
That we might be a testimony
in the world to the love of God
To the power of God
To the glory of the risen Lord

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