

### LENTEN SERMON SERIES

#### *God in Plain Sight*

In *Lent*, we will focus our attention on our experience with God through some common objects that Jesus would have encountered on his journey to Jerusalem. May we deepen our experience on an extraordinary grace through reflecting on these ordinary things.

Ash Wednesday | Genesis 2:4-7 | “Dust and Dirt”

February 21 | Mark 7:24-30 | “Bread”

February 28 | Mark 8:31-38 | “Cross”

March 7 | John 2:13-22 | “Coins”

March 14 | Mark 6:6-13 | “Shoes”

March 21 | Matthew 25:1-31 | “Oil”

Palm Sunday | Mark 11:1-11 | “Coats”

Maundy Thursday | John 13 | “Towels”

Good Friday | John 18-19 | “Thorns”

Easter Sunday | Mark 16:1-8 | “Stones”

#### *Food Security Reaches Out*

Good food can feed more than stomachs. As Jefferson Avenue Presbyterian Church shares opportunities to receive or share food through the variety food ministries and partnerships at the church, some unexpected responses have returned to us. Gratitude for great produce and the delicious meals made by *Make Food Not Waste* has connected JAPC with neighbors in some wonderful ways. Many of the food ministries are communicated through social media apps like Facebook and NextDoor. Here are some of the comments and responses the church has received:



*“I was given a Thanksgiving and Christmas dinner by you. I just want to express my gratitude. At Thanksgiving, my grandchildren came and I was so grateful to have such nice food to offer them.”*

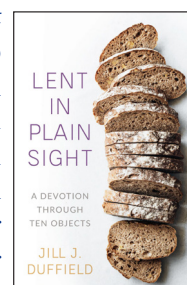
*“I am the owner of a senior daycare. Most of the seniors I serve have limited resources and live alone. I use your food to make meals for them.”*

*“This was a true blessing to those that needed it. God Bless you.”*

### LENTEN BOOK STUDY

#### *Lent in Plain Sight*

You are invited to join a *Lenten Book Group*. Please register for the book group by emailing Margie Uysal in the church office at [margie@japc.org](mailto:margie@japc.org) – we’ll send you Zoom details when you’ve signed up. We’ll be reading a book of daily devotions called *Lent in Plain Sight*. You can purchase your book from The Thoughtful Christian or Amazon. Groups will meet on Mondays at Noon facilitated by Pastor Matt Nickel or Mondays at 7:00 pm facilitated by Jessica Christy starting on March 1 through March 29. Join us as we make the journey through Lent together.



#### *Sanctuary Livestream Update*

The worship life of Jefferson Avenue Presbyterian Church has grown beyond the walls of the sanctuary as the church now provides access to worship online and recordings to watch after the service. While our system has been functional, it also has limitations and lacks the quality that the congregation has expressed a desire to have. In December, an invitation went to consider making a dedicated gift to the purchase of professional equipment and installation. The church has contracted with Tech Automation who has developed our new system and will install it during the *Lenten* season. The Worship Committee reviewed options and determined a fundraising goal of \$18,000, which was approved by Session. Right now the church is at 55% of its goal and will begin to install the new system in the next two weeks. A special thanks to Cam Ramsey who has been operating our livestream system and to Stephen Warner who has, with Cam, worked hard to accomplish this exciting new ministry for the church. JAPC can extend the ways we offer worship online, where in addition to our church members, we have had friends and members new and old participate in worship and music series events streams online from places as far as Canada, Florida, Kansas, and California, among other locations. Please consider making a gift to this meaningful ministry. You can give online at [www.japc.org/give](http://www.japc.org/give) or send a check to the church with “livestream” written on the memo line.



## FROM THE PASTOR'S STUDY

Dear Ones,

As **Lent** approaches, a book continues to return to my attention: “Quotidian Mysteries” by Kathleen Norris. In it she writes: *“The Bible is full of evidence that God’s attention is indeed fixed on the little things. But this is not because God is a great cosmic cop, eager to catch us in minor transgressions, but simply because God loves us—loves us so much that the divine presence is revealed even in the meaningless workings of daily life. It is in the ordinary, the here-and-now, that God asks us to recognize that the creation is indeed refreshed like dew-laden grass that is ‘renewed in the morning’ or, to put it in more personal and also theological terms, ‘our inner nature is being renewed everyday’.”*

While reflection on the pandemic year has been so exhaustive, it has focused on big things. Sometimes at the expense of the little ones. So many of the commonly held experiences of our city, nation, and world have been characterized through narratives that cover a vast expanse of peoples. Some days it feels like too much. Sometimes it feels like this kind of thinking has overshadowed the small graces, the little mercies, and the subtle loves that deeply affect our daily lives.

**Lent** is a season where, as Christians, we focus our attention on journey of our spiritual lives. We return to the roots of our faith, which is to say, we remember that we belong to God. We renew our trust in the promises of

new life in Christ in the face of signs that death, struggle, and fear hold power in the world. Traditionally, in **Lent**, we commit to practices of our faith. We pray. We read and reflect on scripture. We fast from indulgences. We offer acts of generosity and service. We come before God asking for forgiveness and work to reconcile our relationships. We pursue simplicity through intentional sabbath. In the church, we live these practices in order to focus our lives on following Jesus.

This **Lent**, in worship, we’ll be looking to the little moments, the ordinary graces, and the regular people who offer our faith and our lives deeper epiphanies, revelations, and extraordinary promise of God’s unending love. We’ll do so by thinking about some ordinary objects that help us to know that God is in plain sight. The series is based on a book that we will use as for our Lenten Book Study: *Lent in Plain Sight* by Jill Duffield. We’ll consider the little ways we meet God through some rather ordinary objects that Jesus would have encountered on his ways to Jerusalem. These objects are familiar to us too: bread, coins, shoes, and so on.

This **Lent**, I pray you meet God in the little moments, through some ordinary experiences, and the regular people in your life, who are, we know, more meaningful than we can express.

I look forward to sharing Lent with you, in Christ,

*Pastor Matt Nickel*

## JAPC is a Hunger Action Congregation

In November of 2020, Jefferson Avenue Presbyterian Church was certified as a **Hunger Action Congregation** of the Presbyterian Church (USA). The recognition adds JAPC to the company of about 180 churches committed to ministries of food security by either covenanting (doing ministry in at least one of six areas) or certified (doing in ministry in all six area). JAPC is certified. The Presbyterian Hunger Program says “The purpose of the **Hunger Action Congregation** process is to acknowledge the faithful work of Presbyterians around the country who are responding to the biblical call to help alleviate hunger and end its causes. Through stories and encouragement, we wish to be mutually inspired to pursue broader and more justice-oriented ministries.”

This recognition is a confirmation of meaning and impact of the variety of food outreach programs that JAPC leads in our community. Among these are longstanding ministries like **Every Kid Eats**, which provides Nichols School students with weekend food bags. Newer ministries have deepened JAPC’s impact on alleviating hunger, such as the **Friday Drive Through Food Pantry**. This weekly distribution



of food provides 50 boxes of fresh produce (about 35 lbs of food), as well as 15-20 bags of groceries provided by Harbortown Market, and 50 prepared meals that are offered weekly on Fridays by our mission partner **Make Food Not Waste**. And still there are other ministries the church does like the **Deacon Christmas Food Baskets**, **Deacon Food Bags**, the **Little Free Pantry**, and our ongoing commitment as a member church of **Every One Eats**, a hot meal ministry of the Presbytery of Detroit.

In September, JAPC received a grant of \$10,000 to strengthen and expand these food ministries during the pandemic. JAPC was recognized along with several other churches in the presbytery for these efforts at the January presbytery meeting. Many church members have contributed their time, energy, and financial gifts, to make these ministries so vital. Certification as a **Hunger Action Congregation** is a recognition of the faith and love of a church community that walks with neighbors in the face of the hard, difficult reality of



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Church School

by Kathy Chateau, Director of Children’s Ministries & Tutoring Tree

Family life is always busy and messy, and this past year, that has been multiplied by so many changes and new routines of life. Our homes are also the place we experience and grow in faith. Perhaps now, more than ever, it is a good time to discover and know God’s presence in our homes. God works through the ordinary, the everyday. We meet God during mealtimes, school times, in small acts of kindness and words of encouragement, in prayers, and daily routines. God is with us in stressful times, in our worries, and our failings—always offering strength, comfort, and a creative spirit.

Each month we send out blessing bags to families as a simple sign of support and encouragement, and as a way to let families know they are loved. Our *Lenten* bags focus on “One Thing.” We are asking families to try to find one way to deepen prayer or find a way to pray in what you already do. Maybe that means asking children to lead mealtime grace or learning a traditional prayer. Maybe that is adding a moment of silence in our daily routine or taking in the awesome beauty of nature. It might be sharing a simple blessing at bedtime or whispered, “Thank you.”

We are also challenging families to practice one way of reaching out to others. The suggestion is to start with an empty box, and fill the boxes with items to be given away, cards to be mailed to those who are homebound or sick, or even notes of kindness and encouragement to be shared. The intent is not to add to our all ready too long to-do lists, but to encourage seeing what you are already doing in a more intentional way. Spring is often a time of cleaning, organizing, and getting rid of things in our homes no longer useful. *Lent* is our opportunity for spiritual spring cleaning and reorganizing to free us to be more faithful and intentional.

Family Blessing bags will be available Sunday, February 14. If you would like to receive one and cannot pick it up on Sunday, contact Kathy Chateau [kathy@japc.org](mailto:kathy@japc.org)

Tutoring Tree

by Kathy Chateau, Director of Children’s Ministries & Tutoring Tree

During this time that we have not been able to meet in person with Nichol’s students, we have continued our ministry to the students and their families. Once a month, each student receives a Learning Bag. Bags always include books, as well as supplies, learning materials, items like masks and hand sanitizer, crafts and snacks. There is also a group of students who meet on Zoom with their tutors. Tutors have remained compassionately committed. Families are very grateful, and the students love the connections.

As the school reopens, we will continue to partner with staff and families to find ways to support the students. Continue your prayers and support in whatever ways you are able.

Church Register

DEATHS

Gail Rusche (#4812) on March 15, 2020

Jerome Seaton (#2711) on December 30, 2020

Elaine Kuester (#4986) on January 17, 2021

WEDDING

Roland Austin and Barbara Jarvis (non-members)  
on December 12, 2020

MUSIC NOTES

Our Concert Opportunities  
Going Forward

by Stephen Warner, Director of Music

With worship now meeting in person again, we will also start to phase back in live performance opportunities at Jefferson Avenue. We will be rescheduling a few of the events from the cancelled 2020 season as well as a few other new ones for 2021.

In the short term, I will be presenting a Lenten organ recital on our organ in March. The program will feature several pieces I have played in worship over the years in Lent at Easter. It will include the formidable partita on *Jesu Meine Freude* or *Jesus my Joy* by Gottfried Walter. Walter’s variations on the choral tune will show off many of the lighter combinations on the Skinner and reveal how the more simple colors of the organ can be exploited in not-so-simple ways. The concert will also feature the tone poem, *Ascend the Mountain: A Walk with Dr. King* by my UofM classmate, Dr. James Lee III. The piece is a depiction of the emotional power surrounding Martin Luther King’s mountaintop speech and events surrounding the civil rights movement. It was written while Dr. Lee was an undergraduate student, but he is now a college professor himself and has had his works played by many majors symphony orchestras including the DSO. After a handful of other works, including a frivolous “*Spring Caprice*,” the concert will conclude with a work by Jean Langlais depicting Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem called “*Les Rameaux*” or “*The Palms*”. The piece is actually an exciting and powerful toccata on the Gregorian plainchant, “*Hosanna, hana filio David*,” which is the chant for the day for Palm Sunday.

We will continue the re-booted series in April with another round of the “*Sisters*” with Deborah Nero, Shahida Nerula and an all-ladies combo. In May we will bring back pianist Joseph Walters to provide a powerful solo piano program for us which will include at least one movement of Rachmaninov’s famed second piano concerto! We should be able to present “Stars of the Future” in June as usual.

In late summer or early fall we will be presenting an Organ-Plus program celebrating the centenary of Camille Saint-Saëns which includenot only solo organ works, but movements of the *Carnival of the Animals*, *Egyptian Piano Concerto* and *Samson and Delilah*. We will also look forward to hosting in the fall organist Nicholas Schmelter and pianist Tyler Kivel in the duet program planned for this last season.

Our programs in March and April will be on Wednesday evenings at 7:30 p.m. We will likely return to Sunday afternoons in May and June. Nearly all programs going forward will be live streamed on Facebook and available as recordings later on our Vimeo page. I hope you can enjoy and share live or virtually the still rare concert opportunities.

THE CALENDAR  
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hunger. It is also a recognition of how strong partnerships can be. Through relationships with *FoodRescue.us*, ***Make Food Not Waste***, the Presbytery of Detroit, other area churches, and of course, members of our own congregation, God has done and continues to bring life to the world. Thank you to so many who support the ways God is working through JAPC. Learn more about the certification at this website: — where you can read about the ***Hunger Action Certification*** and Presbyterian Hunger Program <http://bit.ly/japchungeraction>

