

## Pandemic Remembrance



*picture of candle from*  
<https://www.freepik.com/vectors/memorial-candle>

This week marks 52 Sundays since the New York State PAUSE closure of everything. It has been a brutal year marked by losses of many kinds:

- + normal life routines and interactions supplanted by stay-at-home orders, social distancing, masks
- + many lost security of their jobs - some were let go altogether, some had reduced/changed hours, some dealing with the struggles of technology from home
- + stability of school schedules and other social structures, leaving many to wonder why bother getting up in the morning and a very different set of lessons for those struggling to learn or teach
- + the stress of all of those things, exacerbated by [a tense election, worry about (or worse, the loss of) loved ones, and the inability to comfort one another with touch], has taken a great toll even on those who did not contract covid-19
  - physically - sick, not exercising/eating right
  - emotionally - fear/worry, overwhelmed, depressed
  - mentally - loss of focus, unable to accomplish
- + most of all, we mourn the lives of those we have lost - both those who succumbed to the virus and

those to other causes, as we could not be with them or comforted with friends/family when we lost them.

*Yvonne Burpee	Kay Huntley
*John Cochran	Michael Knickerbocker
*Eleanor Enders	Fayeann Lawrence
*Estelle Evans	Frederick Lawrence Jr.
*Rudy Hershberger	Jim Manwarren
*Priscilla Johnston	Renee Marshall
*Genevieve MacDonald	Matthew Monroe
*Donna Mapes	Jim Mortenson
*Betty Perry	Paul O'Connor
*Sheila Predmore	Bev Peck
**David Simmons	Dominick Perry's aunt
*Charles Ray Williamson	Suzi Phillip's father
Irene Barnes	Ray Preston
Doug Beckwith Sr.	Fred Roodenburg
Deborah Chipston	Nick Russell
Elinor Curri	**David Simmons
Delphine DeLee	Bob Simpson
Jennie Demara	Marmie Tarbell
Ivan Downing	Leslie Thorton Jr.
Alice Franks	Doris Tracy
Joni Geiger	Gilbert Usher
Marjorie Graham	Harry White
Raymond Grewe	Connie Wright
Brenda Hatten	Jeramie Yacano

\*Georgetown only; \*\*both Georgetown & South Otselic

<Prayer> Almighty God, those of us who have come this far through the pandemic pray for You to keep those we have lost in joyous grace; to restore to us new health (physically, mentally, and emotionally); and to guide us [when we are once more able to interact freely] as a community growing in the love of Christ, with You and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The covid-19 pandemic, in reducing the physical health of so many people, affected the world in many, many negative ways. Sin, in reducing the spiritual health of all humanity, has devastated this earth.

Listen now as Jesus describes to Nicodemus how healing of the sin pandemic is to take place.

## Gospel lesson

Just as Moses lifted up the  
snake in the wilderness,  
so the Son of Man must  
be lifted up,  
that everyone who  
believes may have eternal  
life in him.  
-John 3:14,15



picture from <http://www.stfrancisofassisijohnstown.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/>

## John 3:14-21 (NRSV)

<sup>14</sup> And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up,

<sup>15</sup> that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

<sup>16</sup> "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

<sup>17</sup> "Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

<sup>18</sup> Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

<sup>19</sup> And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil.

<sup>20</sup> For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed.

<sup>21</sup> But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God."

*The word of God for the people of God*

The next hymn is based on an old African American spiritual, sung by those seeking relief from often terrible situations, those seeking healing for both body and soul.

In the biblical times, Gilead was a center for healing. The balm of Gilead was renowned as a sort of

panacea, able to cure a variety of physical ailments. Since in those days illnesses were often associated with evil spirits, curing the ailment was taken to mean the evil had left the person as well.

Because only Jesus cures the soul, Jesus has been called the “Balm of Gilead”, which is the basis for the wording used in our current hymnal. However, there is a fair bit of debate on the source of the lyrics. <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/history-of-hymns-there-is-a-balm-in-gilead>

Famed hymnist Charles Wesley wrote, “Savior of the sin-sick soul,/Give me faith to make me whole.”

In a couple of other sources, the phrase, “There’s a balm in Gilead” was replaced with “There’s power enough in Jesus” just before the phrase, “To cure the sin-sick soul.” I prefer that phrase substitution as it is clearer about just how our souls are healed, so let us sing the hymn with such a substitution today.

<Hymn “*There Is a Balm in Gilead*” UMH #375>

## Message: Look Up and Live



picture from <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/rend-your-hearts-claiming-the-promise/fourth-sunday-in-lent-year-b-lectionary-planning-notes/fourth-sunday-in-lent-year-b-graphics>

Please pray with me?

Glorious Healer of all, please

- speak Your words through my mouth,
- open our ears to hear Your message, and
- abide in our hearts,

that we may look up to You and live  
according to Your will. Amen.



### Rend Your Hearts: Claiming the Promise



- ♥ February 21 – This is the Sign
- ♥ February 28 – Walk Before Me
- ♥ March 7 – All These Words
- ♥ **March 14 – Look Up and Live**
- ♥ March 21 – Written on the Heart
- ♥ March 28 – The One Who Comes

The summary for this fourth week of Lent states:

“This is another occasion of Jesus predicting his death and the doorway that it opened for all of us. And by “another occasion,” we don’t mean how repetitive, but instead we mean we need to pay attention here. This is important. Worship, then, should be centered around the offering that Christ makes to all.”

Christ offers us healing for our sin-sick souls.

There are a lot of weird-sounding old folk remedies for healing this or that. [According to an article from Mental Floss](#), John Wesley tended to the poor and ill with many helpful remedies, but also with some

which I would not recommend nor ever apply to my patients on the ambulance (although I did enjoy one suggestion by a Dr. Sydenham to “Hold a live Puppy constantly on the Belly”).



The Christological Symbol (Brazen Serpent Sculpture), created by Italian artist, Giovanni Fantoni, stands atop Mount Nebo.

It is symbolic of the bronze serpent created by Moses in the wilderness (Numbers 21:4-9) and the cross upon which Jesus was crucified (John 3:14).

picture and statement by David Bjorgen, at [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Brazen\\_Serpent\\_Sculpture.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Brazen_Serpent_Sculpture.jpg)

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One of the more bizarre methods for healing in the Bible was described in our Old Testament reading for today. Having just been granted victory over the king of Arad, you would think the Israelites would be praising God. However, the people were all complainy, even contradicting themselves in saying both, “there is no food,” and “we detest this miserable food,” meaning manna.

So God sent among them a real reason for complaints, poisonous serpents. Suddenly, the people realized their sin and repented. Yet God did not simply have the serpents leave. Instead, God reinforced the people’s faith by having them, if bitten, look upon [the serpent on a pole that Moses made] to survive.

Why did it have to be a serpent? Serpents represented the utmost sin, from the garden of Eden tempting Eve to the serpents venerated as deities in other

(idolatrous) faiths. When the Israelites looked up at the serpent on the pole, with God in the heavens above, they were reminded of their sin against God, that God was above (i.e., greater than) sin, and so they were moved to repent and live.

They lived when they turned to God, because God has power over what sin (the serpent) does to people.

Just as the serpent was lifted up, Jesus (who took all of our sin unto Himself) was lifted up as a reminder of our sin, a reminder that God is greater than all our sin, and to move us to repentance.

We look up to the cross to live.

The Pauline letter to the Ephesians makes it clear that we cannot live without Christ. We are dead in sin, except for the love of God. We cannot save ourselves.



“[B]y grace you have been saved through faith,  
and this is **not your own doing**;  
it is the **gift of God** – not the result of works.”



So if we are to live, why? What does that look like? Again, from the letter to the Ephesians:

“[W]e are what he has made us,  
created in Christ Jesus for good works,  
which God prepared beforehand  
to be our way of life.”

We cannot save ourselves by good works, but we can respond to the gift of salvation that God has given us by living to the best that we can in faith.



The first flowers this year seem like they're tentatively poking out - reaching out towards promises made that this year will be a little bit more like things were before.

- Tiffany Miner  
(Simmons)

<https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=3735400373175378&set=a.169204309795020>

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My daughter-in-law posted this picture on Facebook with the comment, “The first flowers this year seem like they're tentatively poking out - reaching out towards promises made that this year will be a little bit more like things were before.” It is an expression of hope for a better future.

How much that reminds me of us coming through trials in life by putting our faith in God!

† Like the soil around the seeds, our lives in the coldest of times are warmed by the light of our Savior’s love.

- † Our souls are watered and nurtured by the blessings God provides for us every day.
- † Like shoots coming out of the ground aiming for the sun, we look up to Son of God.
- † Inspired by His gift to us, we work in faith that through our efforts, God's blessing of us may blossom into something beautiful for the world to enjoy.
- † Just as flowers become germinated seeds that may grow into new plants, our efforts in the love of God may help others to grow and blossom into more beauty for the world as well.

It has been a hard year. But just as we know Spring is coming but not quite here yet, we know an end to the pandemic is coming, and even more immediately, Easter is coming too. Look up to the cross, repent, accept the grace of God, and live!

Now let us respond with

**A Statement of Faith of the Korean Methodist Church**

UMH #884

We believe in the one God,  
creator and sustainer of all things,  
Father of all nations,  
the source of all goodness and beauty,  
all truth and love.

We believe in Jesus Christ,  
God manifest in the flesh,  
our teacher, example, and Redeemer,  
the Savior of the world.

We believe in the Holy Spirit,  
God present with us for guidance, for comfort,  
and for strength.

We believe in the forgiveness of sins,  
in the life of love and prayer,  
and in grace equal to every need.

We believe in the Word of God  
contained in the Old and New Testaments  
as the sufficient rule both of faith and of  
practice.

We believe in the Church,  
those who are united in the living Lord  
for the purpose of worship and service.

We believe in the reign of God  
as the divine will realized in human society,  
and in the family of God,  
where we are all brothers and sisters.

We believe in the final triumph of righteousness,  
and in the life everlasting. Amen.

*<Doxology UMH #95>*

*<Prayer of Dedication and Pastoral Prayer>*

Let us pray:

Great and generous God, our lives are surrounded by  
things that steal our lives, inflict and destroy us.

The tithes and offering we share with you this day are a way of keeping us focused not on the things that would take life away but will renew our lives: hope, love, compassion, empathy.

As the Israelites looked to a serpent on a pole for healing, we look to a Savior on a cross to be brought back to life. In that holy name, Jesus the Messiah, we pray for Your wisdom and help us with these concerns on our hearts today:

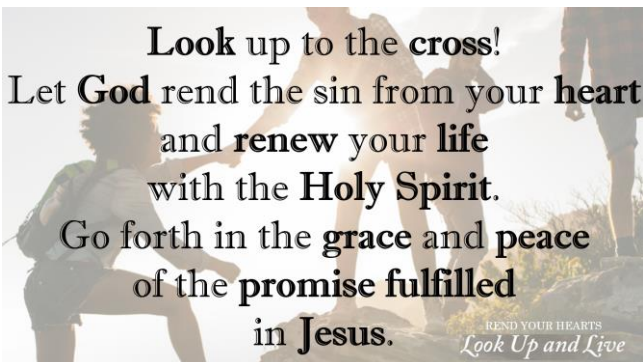
- Healing touch and comfort for all who are ailing.
  - Coronavirus victims - isolated; **school**; out-of-work; health care workers (especially: Marie Curri, Laura Davis, Nicole Marshall, Vince Marshall, Heidi Newton, Jennifer Tibbens-Scalzo) & those serving critical needs
    - -
    - -
    - -
    - -
    - -
  - **Continued healing for** - Curtis Walrod, due home 19<sup>th</sup>; Patti Lamandia; Bill (& wife Audrey) Jeffery - ICU w/antibiotics;
- Thanks for
  - -
  - -
- Hold those who cannot be with us in Your loving embrace until we see them again.
  - Travelers
  - Family far off

- Social unrest – dismantle racism and reform problem systems
- Guide our Leaders – local, state, federal, international, and especially of Your church.
- Help us to be fearless in talking about You as a normal part of daily living.
  - Guide each one of us this week to invite one person to come know You better.
  - Help us to encourage one another toward faith in You and toward living together in true Christian community.

All these things we pray as You taught us to pray,  
 <Lord's Prayer>

<Hymn "Lord I Lift Your Name on High" TFWS #2088>

<Benediction>



background from <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/rend-your-hearts-claiming-the-promise/fourth-sunday-in-lent-year-b-lectionary-planning-notes/fourth-sunday-in-lent-year-b-graphics>

Look up to the cross!  
 Let God rend the sin from your heart and renew your  
 life with the Holy Spirit.  
 Go forth in the grace and peace of the promise  
 fulfilled in Jesus.