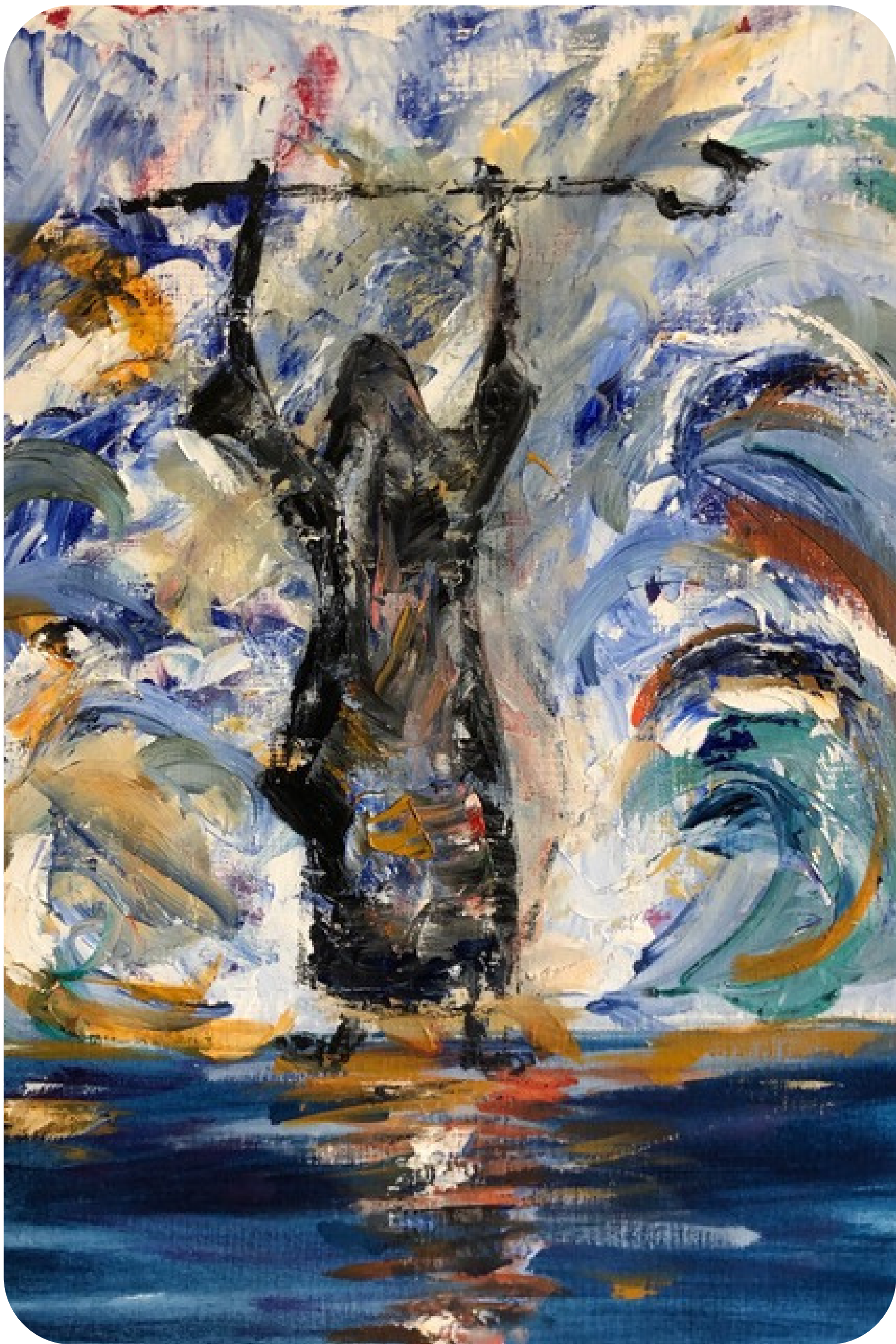


STORIES THAT MOVE US TO JUSTICE, KINDNESS, AND HUMILITY

— A Workbook —



For Trinity United Methodist Church

Introduction to the Workbook

This fall Trinity will enjoy its own season of renewal as we welcome guest pastors and preachers during Rev. Bonnie's Sabbatical. On the last Sunday of each month, Trinity members will be invited to tell their own stories of love, justice, and humility. This workbook will serve as a companion on this journey. You will be invited to reflect not only on Biblical stories but your own stories too. We invite you to include your whole family in this experience, there is something for everyone. We encourage you to engage your children in this experience as well. You can practice the Sabbath together (see below) and find a "Family Engagement" story with questions at the bottom of each week's reflection.

An Invitation to Practice the Sabbath

"On the Sabbath try and make no noise that goes beyond your house. Cries of passion between lovers are exempt."

- Thomas Aquinas

In Jewish practice, Sabbath (Shabbat, in Hebrew) begins on Friday at sunset, and continues throughout the day on Saturday. Saturday is the 7th day of the week, and aligns with the final day of Creation in the Genesis Creation Story. After Jesus' resurrection from the dead, early Christians came to observe Sabbath or "The Lord's Day" on Sundays, aligned with the day of Resurrection.

In homage to the Jewish practice of welcoming the Sabbath at nightfall, we invite you to light a candle in the evening (on Saturday nights) to welcome the Sabbath into your home. Shabbat candles are usually left lit until they burn out on their own. You can pray the prayer below, and share about how you plan to enjoy Sabbath this week.

You can practice the Sabbath by finding ways to restore your relationships that get fragmented during the week.

Relationship with God – set aside time to pray, read scripture, walk the labyrinth at Trinity

Relationship with the Earth – take a walk, cycle, birdwatch, play soccer, swim, sit in a garden, volunteer with a conservation group, clean a stream

Relationship with People – go to church, share a meal, spend time with your family in a special way, write a letter to someone who is lonely or sick

Relationship with Yourself– do something that makes you feel like “you!,” take a nap, journal, reflect on your life with God

Practicing the Sabbath

First, light Shabbat Candles and then pray the following prayer together:

Lord of Creation, create in us a new rhythm of life composed of hours that sustain rather than stress, of days that deliver rather than destroy, of time that tickles rather than tackles.

Lord of Liberation, by the rhythm of your truth, set us free from the bondage and baggage that breaks us, from the Pharaohs and fellows who fail us, from the plans and pursuits that prey upon us.

Lord of Resurrection, may we be raised into rhythms of your new life, dead to deceitful calendars, dead to fleeting friend requests, dead to the empty peace of our accomplishments.

To our packed-full planners, we bid, "Peace!"

To our over-caffeinated consciences, we say, "Cease!"

To our suffocating selves, Lord, grant us release.

Drowning in a sea of deadlines and death chimes, we rest in you, our lifeline.

By your ever-restful grace, allow us to enter your Sabbath rest as your Sabbath rest enters into us.

In the name of our Creator, our Liberator, our Resurrection and Life, we pray. Amen

TO DO JUSTICE

During the month of September we will be exploring stories of justice with Rev. George Hackey. Rev. George Hackey is a retired UMC minister who worships at our sister Methodist Church here in Germantown, Asbury UMC. He is a lifetime resident of Montgomery County. He served as a police officer here for 29 years before following the call of God to become a pastor. Be sure to ask him to tell you stories about being the first African American inducted into Montgomery College's Athletic Hall of Fame and about the backpack ministry he began, the City of Jerusalem Project, and the ways he is helping Asbury UMC serve the Germantown Community.

We invite you to reflect on your own story throughout this month. Here is a story from Trinity member, Sarah Utz.

A Story of Justice by Sarah Utz

One summer when I was visiting my family in Tennessee, my brother complained that he couldn't convince our 80 some odd year-old father to stop putting out a very large garden (about an acre). Later that same visit, my father took me to his garden to pick some greens. I said "Daddy, why on earth do you need such a large garden? There is no way you can eat all of this?" He said "Well, you know, I tell people that don't have as much as I do that they can stop by and pick from my garden any time. And I take some of the food to neighbors... gives me a reason to stop by. For example, Mrs. S., just down the road. She is a widow and her children don't visit very often. She is lonely and I know she loves lima beans. So once in a while I pick a mess and take it to her. I tell her that I have more than I need. Then we sit on her front porch and talk while we shell the beans." Then he told me, "Your brother thinks I hang out with the wrong people. But you just never know when something you say will make a big difference in their lives. The boys that I go fishing with have a drinking problem. I tell them they can't get in my boat when they've been drinking. I can't pull them out if they fall in. While we're fishing, we talk. Recently, one of them decided to stop drinking, because he said I was making a lot of sense."

September 5th-11th

We invite you to begin by reading and reflecting on this week's scripture:
Deuteronomy 16:18-20

"Never forget that justice is what love looks like in public."

- Cornell West

In the space below you are invited to reflect on both the scripture and quote above:

- How does this scripture remind you of a part of your own story?
- What does this quote mean to you?
- What are you learning about the theme of justice?
- Where do you see it in our world today?

Family Engagement - engage all family members in a conversation about justice. This week read the book of Philemon to hear the story of Paul and Philemon.

Challenge: Paul encouraged his friend Philemon to do the right thing. Think of someone you could tell about the importance of standing up for others. Write them a letter and ask them to think about how they can stand up for others.

September 12th-18th

We invite you to begin by reading and reflecting on this week's scripture:
Luke 18:1-8

"The opposite of poverty is not wealth. The opposite of poverty is injustice."
- Bryan Stevenson, Equal Justice Initiative

In the space below you are invited to reflect on both the scripture and quote above:

- How does this scripture remind you of a part of your own story?
- What does this quote mean to you?
- What are you learning about the theme of justice?
- Where do you see it in our world today?

Family Engagement - engage all family members in a conversation about justice. This week read Luke 18:1-8 to hear the story of the persistent widow.

Challenge: The widow never gave up waiting for justice. Think of someone you know that is always fighting for justice like her. Call them this week and tell them how much their persistence matters.

September 19th-25th

We invite you to begin by reading and reflecting on this week's scripture:
Matthew 25:31-40

"Justice delayed is justice denied"

-William E. Gladstone

In the space below you are invited to reflect on both the scripture and quote above:

- How does this scripture remind you of a part of your own story?
- What does this quote mean to you?
- What are you learning about the theme of justice?
- Where do you see it in our world today?

Family Engagement - engage all family members in a conversation about justice. This week read Esther 1-10 to learn about the story of Queen Esther.

Challenge: Esther fought for her people even though she was scared. What is something you believe is unjust but is hard to stand up for? Think about how you could take one small step in standing up for it this week.

Sept. 25th-Oct. 2nd

We invite you to begin by reading and reflecting on this week's scripture:
Micah 6:8

"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly"

-Martin Luther King, Jr.

In the space below you are invited to reflect on both the scripture and quote above:

- How does this scripture remind you of a part of your own story?
- What does this quote mean to you?
- What are you learning about the theme of justice?
- Where do you see it in our world today?

Family Engagement - engage all family members in a conversation about justice. This week read Luke 17:11-19 or your other favorite story of Jesus caring for others.

Challenge: Jesus was a champion of justice. Make a list of all the people you know that Jesus helped. Now, make a list of the people you think need justice and brainstorm ways you can help.

TO LOVE KINDNESS

During the month of October we will be exploring stories of kindness with Rev. Joye Jones. Rev. Joye Jones is a retired ministry who has served churches in Washington, DC, Baltimore, and Silver Spring. She has been a Methodist all her life and is the daughter of missionaries to Burma, and granddaughter of a UMC pastor. She now lives in Gaithersburg with her dog, Dixie. She loves to read, sail and travel when given the opportunity. Make sure to ask her to tell you stories about all the places she's traveled and especially about her plans for her hopeful next trip to Antarctica. We invite you to reflect on your own story throughout this month. Here is a story from Trinity member, Diane Vellandurai.

Fire and Kindness by Diane Vellandurai

One day when I was 12 years old, it was only 3 days before Christmas, and I was very happy. My 3 brothers, 1 sister and I were home since there was no school that week, and our Mom was working as a waitress. I think my sister had just washed her cheerleader outfit and was probably cooking for us. As usual, I was being a bit lazy and decided to take a nap. As I lay curled up in a chair, I was trying not to pay attention to our dog Roberta (we had first named her after Roberto Clemente and then we found out "he" was a girl, so we changed her name to Roberta). But Roberta would not let me sleep! She kept running back and forth from one of the bedrooms to the living room, where I was trying to nap, barking. I got up to see what the fuss was all about and when I got to the doorway of the bedroom, I saw it: flames were dancing along the window and along the floor, and the curtains were burning. I screamed, "The house is on fire!" My sister made sure we got out of the house...and we ran screaming toward Grandma's next door, in our bare feet, in the snow. My brother Danny came running out of Grandma's house and ran into our burning house to try to save Roberta's puppies. It was too late, sadly. We lost everything that day: our house, our clothes, our school books, pictures of our Dad and brother and sisters who had died years ago, and worst of all, the puppies. We were very heartbroken. But something amazing happened that year. Within 2 days, our little community, led by the Salvation Army, had come together and not only collected clothes for all 6 of us, but toys and gifts for Christmas, too. I was given a brand-new electric organ. We stayed with grandparents, aunts, and uncles who lived nearby, and other aunts and uncles and cousins from out of town came to see us. Believe it or not, it was one of my most treasured Christmases ever. We were so loved by so many kind and generous people, we eventually moved into a new mobile home. The people who gave so much to my family were all doing with so little to begin with, it amazes me to this day to think of how generous and kind they were.

October 3rd-9th

We invite you to begin by reading and reflecting on this week's scripture: 1 Peter 2:9-10

"All worldly joys are less than that one joy of doing kindnesses."

- John Wesley

In the space below you are invited to reflect on both the scripture and quote above:

- How does this scripture remind you of a part of your own story?
- What does this quote mean to you?
- What are you learning about the theme of kindness?
- Where do you see it in our world today?

Family Engagement - engage all family members in a conversation about kindness. This week read Acts 9:36-40 to hear the story of Tabitha.

Challenge: The widow never gave up waiting for justice. Think of someone you know that is always fighting for justice like her. Call them this week and tell them how much their persistence matters.

October 10th-16th

We invite you to begin by reading and reflecting on this week's scripture: 1 John 4:7-10, 19

"Mercy is radical kindness. Mercy means offering or being offered aid in desperate straits. Mercy is not deserved. It involves absolving the unabsolvable, forgiving the unforgivable. Mercy brings us to the miracle of apology, given and accepted, to unashamed humility when we have erred or forgotten."

- Anne Lamott

In the space below you are invited to reflect on both the scripture and quote above:

- How does this scripture remind you of a part of your own story?
- What does this quote mean to you?
- What are you learning about the theme of kindness?
- Where do you see it in our world today?

Family Engagement - engage all family members in a conversation about kindness. This week read the book of Ruth to hear all about Ruth's story.

Challenge: The story of Ruth is not just about Ruth but also about Naomi and how they stayed together even when things got hard. Make a list of all the reasons you are grateful for the ways your family takes care of each other even when things are hard.

October 17th-23rd

We invite you to begin by reading and reflecting on this week's scriptures:
Psalm 85:8-13; Philipians 1:27-30

"The real trouble is that 'kindness' is a quality fatally easy to attribute to ourselves on quite inadequate grounds. Everyone feels benevolent if nothing happens to be annoying him at the moment. Thus a man easily comes to console himself for all his other vices by a conviction that 'his heart's in the right place' and 'he wouldn't hurt a fly,' though in fact he has never made the slightest sacrifice for a fellow creature. We think we are kind when we are only happy: it is not so easy, on the same grounds, to imagine oneself temperate, chaste, or humble."

- CS Lewis

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- How does this scripture remind you of a part of your own story?
- What does this quote mean to you?
- What are you learning about the theme of kindness?
- Where do you see it in our world today?

Family Engagement - engage all family members in a conversation about kindness. This week read the Exodus 2:5-10 to learn about how Pharaoh's daughter showed kindness to baby Moses.

Challenge: Pharaoh's daughter showed kindness to a stranger baby. Think about the people in your community who might feel like strangers. How could you show them kindness?

October 24th-30th

We invite you to begin by reading and reflecting on this week's scriptures:
Joshua 2:1-6, 8-91; Luke 10:25-37

"Do your little bit of good where you are; it's those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world."

-Desmond Tutu

In the space below you are invited to reflect on both the scripture and quote above:

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- What does this quote mean to you?
- What are you learning about the theme of kindness?
- Where do you see it in our world today?

Family Engagement - engage all family members in a conversation about kindness. This week read Luke 10:25-37 to hear the story of the Good Samaritan.

Challenge: The Good Samaritan did something unexpected by helping someone others thought he would never help. Think about someone you have seen in your neighborhood that needs help that is often forgotten?

Oct. 31st - Nov. 6th

We invite you to begin by reading and reflecting on this week's scripture:
Genesis 18:1-15

"A single act of kindness throws out roots in all directions, and the roots spring up and make new trees."

-Amelia Earhart

In the space below you are invited to reflect on both the scripture and quote above:

- How does this scripture remind you of a part of your own story?
- What does this quote mean to you?
- What are you learning about the theme of kindness?
- Where do you see it in our world today?

Family Engagement - engage all family members in a conversation about kindness. This week read Genesis 18:1-15 to hear about how Abraham and Sarah showed kindness to strangers.

Challenge: Abraham and Sarah showed hospitality to strangers. Decide on something you can do for a stranger with your family. Some ideas are: donate clothes or toys, pick out food items to donate to Germantown Help's food closet.

TO WALK HUMBLY WITH GOD

During the month of November we will be exploring stories of walking with God with Phillip Harris. Phillip Harris joined Trinity in early 2021, coming to us from the Midwest where he served as a licensed local Pastor. He is now a doctoral student at Wesley Theological Seminary and the father of baby boy. He has served Trinity as Pastor Bonnie's co-teacher throughout the Acts series and during The Cross and the Lynching Tree Study. Make sure to ask him to share stories about living in Texas, and about his interest in justice and diverse ministry experiences around the country. We invite you to reflect on your own story throughout this month. Here is a story from our own Rev. Bonnie.

A Story About Walking With God by Rev. Bonnie Scott

Years ago, I took a group of Confirmation students to Hap and Sharon's home to camp and enjoy the rolling fields. It was relatively early in my time at Trinity, and I was just getting to know everyone. We called the students together to get ready for a short hike, and Hap picked up a great big stick to serve as a walking stick. Then he helped all the youth find a walking stick of their own. He gathered them together and in his characteristic wisdom and delight, said:

"Look kids, you all are young and fit, and you don't need a walking stick. But a hike is better with a walking stick! The same goes for life with God. You can go through life "without" God. But life is better with God."

And with that, we took off on our hike, walking sticks in hand, and I knew we had all just learned a lesson about how to walk humbly with God.

November 7th-13th

We invite you to begin by reading and reflecting on this week's scriptures:
Psalm 146; 1 Kings 17:8-16

"If you are humble nothing will touch you, neither praise nor disgrace, because you know what you are."

— *Mother Teresa*

In the space below you are invited to reflect on both the scripture and quote above:

- How does this scripture remind you of a part of your own story?
- What does this quote mean to you?
- What are you learning about the theme of kindness?
- Where do you see it in our world today?

Family Engagement - engage all family members in a conversation about humility and walking with God. This week read Matthew 14:22-23 and hear the story of Peter and Jesus walking on water.

Challenge: It was difficult for Peter to believe he could walk on water. Think about something that is difficult for you that you can ask Jesus to help you with.

November 14th-20th

We invite you to begin by reading and reflecting on this week's scriptures:
Psalm 119; Ruth 1:1-22

"The gospel call invites us to apprentice ourselves to Jesus, become pilgrims along the compassionate way, and journey deeper together into the heart and life of God. In our contemporary setting, however, Christians often look more like bustling tourists than faithful pilgrims patiently engaged upon an eternal pilgrimage into Divine Love. Countless people today make periodic excursions into the spiritual supermarket in pursuit of a novel offer, but few seem willing to sign up as pilgrims in the lifelong adventure of discipleship.

-Trevor Hudson, A Mile in My Shoes: Cultivating Compassion

In the space below you are invited to reflect on both the scripture and quote above:

- How does this scripture remind you of a part of your own story?
- What does this quote mean to you?
- What are you learning about the theme of kindness?
- Where do you see it in our world today?

Family Engagement - engage all family members in a conversation about humility and walking with God. This week read Exodus 13:17-22 to read about Moses and the Israelites escaping from Egypt.

Challenge: Find a creek or a lake to walk next to with your family. When you arrive, retell the story of Moses and the Israelites leaving Egypt. Try to imagine what they felt like when they were free and dance together like they did on the other side of the sea.

November 21st-27th

We invite you to begin by reading and reflecting on this week's scripture:
Ruth 2:1-23

"In humility is the greatest freedom. As long as you have to defend the imaginary self that you think is important, you lose your peace of heart. As soon as you compare that shadow with the shadows of other people, you lose all joy because you have begun to trade in unrealities and there is no joy in things that do not exist."

- Thomas Merton

In the space below you are invited to reflect on both the scripture and quote above:

- How does this scripture remind you of a part of your own story?
- What does this quote mean to you?
- What are you learning about the theme of kindness?
- Where do you see it in our world today?

Family Engagement - engage all family members in a conversation about humility and walking with God. This week read the book of Jonah to learn about Jonah's story of humility.

Challenge: Jonah messed up when he did not follow God's command. When he realized his mistake, he knew he had to ask for God's help. Share a time you made a mistake and had to learn and ask for God's help.

Nov. 28th-Dec. 4th

We invite you to begin by reading and reflecting on this week's scripture:
Psalm 25:1-10; Matthew 1:18-25

*I go by a field where once
I cultivated a few poor crops.
It is now covered with young trees,
for the forest that belongs here
has come back and reclaimed its own.
And I think of all the effort
I have wasted and all the time,
and of how much joy I took
in that failed work and how much
it taught me. For in so failing
I learned something of my place,
something of myself, and now
I welcome back the trees.*

-Wendell Berry

In the space below you are invited to reflect on both the scripture and quote above:

- How does this scripture remind you of a part of your own story?
- What does this quote mean to you?
- What are you learning about the theme of kindness?
- Where do you see it in our world today?

Family Engagement - engage all family members in a conversation about humility and walking with God. This week read Matthew 3:1-12 to hear the message of John the Baptist.

Challenge: John the Baptist made a way for Jesus. What are some things you can do with your family to make a way for Jesus this Advent?

Prayers for our Time Together

Opening Prayer First and Last Sundays

Holy Spirit, giving life to all life, moving all creatures, root of all things, washing them clean, wiping out their wounds, you are our true life, luminous, wonderful, awakening the heart from its ancient sleep. Amen.

Hildegard of Bingen

Prayer of Confession - First and Last Sundays

Holy God,

We confess to you that we are easily moved by the stories of this world. We love stories of rags-to-riches, of self-help, of fairy-tale-endings, of health-and-wealth. We confess that these are not your stories. Gather us in to hear your stories.

Teach us how the meek will inherit the earth;

How those who mourn will be comforted;

How a light shines in our darkness;

and how the darkness will never overcome us.

Teach us to live the story of your grace. (Silence)

Hear the good news... in the name of Jesus Christ we are forgiven.

Thanks be to God!

Opening Prayer - Middle Sundays

Breath of Christ's loving, Holy Spirit, within each person you sow faith, faith which can only be a very simple trust, so simple that everyone can receive it. Known or unknown, in our darkest night, you kindle a fire that never dies away. Amen.

Brother Roger

Prayer of Confession - Middle Sundays

Holy God, you have taught us to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with you. We confess that we prefer to remain apathetic. We love to love comfort. And we often walk in the pride of our own egos.

Re-write our selfish stories and let our lives sing of your love and generosity for the world. Teach us to tell a better story, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. (Silence)

Hear the good news... in the name of Jesus Christ we are forgiven.

Thanks be to God!