

# THE RULE OF LIFE



## SPIRITUAL FRIENDSHIP

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

—

Introduction . . . . .	1
Week of February 2 . . . . .	6
Week of February 9 . . . . .	8
Week of February 16 . . . . .	10
Week of 2/23 + Start of Lent . . . . .	12
A Liturgy for Evening Prayer . . . . .	14
End of Month Reflection & Notes . . . . .	16

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

*“No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main.”*

—*JOHN DONNE*

---

## **THE LITURGICAL YEAR — A DIFFERENT RHYTHM**

At Grace Pasadena, we are committed to forming habits and practices— a Rule of Life — that root us in the love of God in Jesus Christ. As part of our common Rule, we follow the liturgical, or church year. As we live into the different seasons of the church, the Holy Spirit invites us to order our lives with God and one another according to a different rhythm than our usual busy and frantic pace. So, what is the liturgical or church calendar?

The liturgical year was developed over centuries as a tool to help the people of God remember and celebrate the full mystery of the good news of Jesus Christ. The church year is divided into the following seasons of Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, Pentecost (some refer to the season after Pentecost as Ordinary Time). Each of these seasons call us to contemplate and examine different aspects of the life of Jesus, from God’s promise to send him as the light of the world, his life and ministry, death and resurrection and his coming again, as well as the way he lives in us, his church, through his Spirit in the here and now

Most of February lands in what many refer to as the Epiphany Season. It begins 12 days after Christmas Day on January 6 and lasts until the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday and the start of Lent. This year, Ash Wednesday falls on 2/26. Many Christian traditions spend the season of Epiphany re-examining the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. The color of the season is green, symbolizing the new life Jesus comes to give.

## **THE RULE OF LIFE - A REVIEW**

In the Holy Trinity we witness an eternal community of love. A great mystery of Christian faith is the Triune God’s desire and faithful work to welcome humanity (you and me in all our frailty) into his great love.

At the heart of the Rule of Life is an invitation to encounter and experience the Triune God and his great love. The root meaning of “rule” is pattern. We all have a “rule of life” whether we know it or not. We inhabit patterns — or habits and practices — that either move us towards God and his love or move us away. Following the rich discipleship and spiritual formation traditions of the Church, we at Grace Pasadena desire to call one another into habits and practices that cultivate a deeper and life-giving awareness and experience of God.

These are habits that we build slowly and return to over and over. In sense, there’s no such thing as “advanced spirituality” since the Rule of Life invites us to return to the basics and to grow more deeply in them. So, each month, we will offer a prayer guide, classes and gathers to help us explore the Rule of Life. Our intention is to become deep people of faith and love.

This month, the focus is Spiritual Friendship. We’ve been saying all along that God saves us both as individuals *and* as a people. The life we live with God must be lived with others. And so it’s appropriate to dwell on friendship as a spiritual practice. The very habits that draw us closer to God should also draw us together as a people.

## THE LOSS OF FRIENDSHIP - A MODERN EPIDEMIC

Loneliness is not a new experience. Yet, our contemporary experience of loneliness seems to be more prevalent and more deeply felt than before. This comes at a time when we are connected to one another in unprecedented ways through social media and electronic communication. Look at some of numbers and statistics from recent research and polling:

- Almost half of Americans always or sometimes feel alone or left out.
- 54% of Americans always or sometimes feel no one knows them well.
- Only 53% of Americans report having meaningful face-to-face interactions daily.
- 50% of Britons over 65 consider the television or pet their main companion.
- In Japan, more than half a million people under 40 have not left their house or interacted with anyone for at least six months.
- Loneliness is the number one fear among Millennials, ranking ahead of losing a job or a home.
- Studies indicate that Gen Z reports the highest levels of loneliness.

Researchers attribute this profound loneliness to a myriad of societal factors, including increased focus on work for meaning, loss of geographic proximity to family and friends, and the rise of social media interactions.

The emotional and physical toll of loneliness is heavy. It can lead to or exacerbate anxiety and depression. It has been tied to an increased risk of heart disease, stroke, and pre-mature death.

The response to increased loneliness has been myriad. One has been to make tech more “personal.” Companion robots and tablets enabled with special interactive avatars are becoming common in the care of the elderly who are isolated. The implication is that any connection is better than none. Among high income earners, there’s been a move away from screen time and towards experiences that promise deeper human interaction. Spending on speciality trips, tech-free schools and the like has been on the rise. There’s also the nostalgic reaction. Shows like *Friends* from the 90’s have found deeply loyal followings with younger generations. One writer notes that “*for new viewers...Friends harkens back to a simpler time—before apps, social media, and smart phones dominated our attention, time, and friendships.*”

All of these responses point to a fundamental truth about who we are as humans—we have a deep and unquenchable desire for connection because we were made for it. Loneliness is so awful because it runs counter to our very being. John Donne rightfully observes in Meditation 17: “*No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main.*”

**Made for One Another.** Our longings for connection are a reflection of God’s own nature. As St. Augustine and other theologians comment, if God is love (1 John 4:8), then God’s nature can not be monadic. Instead, as Margaret Shull writes, “*love resides both in God’s nature as a personal being and in*

---

“THE PRICE OF FREEDOM IS LONELINESS. TO BE HAPPY IS TO BE TIED.”

—C.S. LEWIS

“[FRIENDSHIP] IS THE MOST IMPORTANT, LEAST EXAMINED AREA OF HUMAN LIFE.”

—**ROBERT BELLAH**

---

*relationship to the beloved (Jesus Christ) by love (the Holy Spirit).*” God is Triune because of love. In Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we witness an eternal and perfect community. Since we are made in God’s image, our natural inclination is towards connection, not isolation or loneliness. We were made not only to live in deep intimacy with God, but also one another.

Our inclination towards community is affirmed in the story of Creation. In Genesis 2, after creating Adam, God declares that it is not good, or suitable or sufficient, for man to be alone. Alone, Adam’s humanity is incomplete. Unable to find a true friend among all the creatures of the world, God creates Eve. Only another human is suitable and sufficient for Adam. Created for one another, they live in each other’s presence without shame or competition; they enjoy God’s good creation together; they tend the garden of Eden together; though different, they find common purpose and delight. In their life together, they reflect the image of the God. Only together are Adam and Eve truly human.

We rightly hold up Adam and Eve as a paradigm for marriage. But we often wrongly leave it at that. In Christian theology, Adam and Eve are actually a paradigm for community life, for friendship, in general. In Adam and Eve we see how we are fully human only when together. In Adam and Eve, we see how differences are not a barrier to community, but good and necessary for mutual flourishing.

When Adam and Eve sinned, they not only turned away from God, but also from one another. Their sin introduced isolation,

competition, self-protection, jealousy, envy, and greed. Differences became a reason for division, tribalism and spite instead of delight. This is our legacy. Sin inclines us towards isolation. Yet, we still have deep desires for the life God intended.

In his life, death and resurrection, Jesus restores our life with God and with one another. As he speaks words of forgiveness to us and invites us to be reconciled with God, he makes it possible for us to speak forgiveness to one another and to be reconciled to one another. In his life and ministry, he constantly invites young and old, the powerless and powerful, Jew and Gentile, women and men all to be his friends.

The response of his friends is to befriend one another. This is the testimony of Acts. As the Good News of Jesus spreads throughout the world, Christian communities become the loci of reconciliation and friendships between unlikely people. Differences are not eradicated, but they cease being causes for division. As the Apostle Paul says in Ephesians 2:14, Jesus is our peace, who brings unity and breaks down the walls of hostility. In Jesus, we find our way back to the way life was meant to be.

**A New Culture of Friendship.** The implications of the Gospel for our friendships and the way we approach them are many. Here are a few to consider:

1. Moving towards one another in friendship requires critical contemplation and a re-wiring of our American and western love of individualism. In Christ, we are re-made and saved into a new people. It’s not a stretch to

say that in Christ, we are tied together in body, mind and spirit. So, to value individualism over our common life in Christ is arguably unchristian and dehumanizing. We must take time to confront the ways we've accepted individualism as normal and how it affects us. We must because individualism move us away from the life God intends for us.

2. Moving towards one another in friendship requires receiving the full value of friendship. It is a gift from God of the utmost significance. Although we value friendships, we tend to undervalue it in relation to romantic love and marriage. We talk about romantic love as ultimate. We have expressions that express our belief that wholeness only comes through romantic love and marriage. This language is in culture as well as in the Christian church.

Human marriage is wonderful, but it is not the ultimate. While Scripture upholds the goodness of marriage, Scripture does not make it the goal of human relationships. Again, Adam and Eve are not just paradigms for marriage, but for God's intention for his people in general. In the Old Testament, God's constant promise is to save a people for himself, not a collection of detached individuals.

We see this continue and become even more explicit in the New Testament. When asked about marriage in the resurrection, Jesus says marriage will cease (Luke 20). When asked if it's better not to marry, Jesus says both marriage and non-marriage are good (Matthew 19). The Apostle Paul continues this line of thinking in

his epistles, calling all who are in Christ to be content in their marriage or singleness while emphasizing our common life together as the church (1 Corinthians 7).

When we overvalue, or idolize, marriage, we fall into two terrible traps. One is that we place too much pressure on marriage to fulfill all our needs for connection and intimacy. No marriage can withstand that kind of pressure; it will fracture and crumble. Another trap is the implication that unmarried people are lacking an essential human experience, making them incomplete people. The truth is that Christ and his love makes us complete, and in Christ we can experience deeply humanizing and fulfilling relationships other than marriage. We were made for more than marriage. No matter our station, a robust community life is necessary and possible. Marriage and singleness are places of true flourishing because of friendship.

3. We have a tendency to make friends based on common interests. We think: "You like the Dodgers. I like the Dodgers. Let's be friends." Common interests are good for creating clubs, not deep friendships. Using common interest as the sole basis for friendship leads to tribalism and exclusion. This is antithetical to the Christian life because our common life and reason for unity is rooted in Jesus Christ.

This means the Church is not a club and we shouldn't approach it that way. Full of different kinds of people who shouldn't naturally come together but do so in Christ, the Church should be the place of surprising friendships. After all,

---

*"A SCHOOL IS A PLACE OF FORMATION, OF CULTIVATION. THAT'S WHAT SUCH FRIENDSHIPS CAN BE."*

— **SUSAN PHILLIPS**

*"YEARS AGO A FRIEND SAID TO ME, 'AFTER FORTY IT'S MAINTENANCE . . . AS WE DO WHAT WE CAN TO MAINTAIN OUR BODIES, SO WE MUST DO WITH OUR FRIENDSHIPS."*

— **MADELEINE L'ENGLE**

---

Christ's friendship with us is surprising! In Christ, we are opened to the possibility of surprising friendships. Our lives ought to reflect this reality and we should be quick recognize and lament any tendency towards tribalism.

4. To move towards one another in friendship is costly. To be friends with us cost Jesus his life. In John 15:13, he says: *"Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends."* Jesus immediately says that as his friends, we are to do the same. How does this look?

Laying our lives down for our friends will look very counter-cultural. If we are bound to one another in love, then we are *not* free to make decisions about jobs, where to live, education, and the like without input from our friends or considering how our decisions will affect them. Our friendships will demand stability when we want new adventures. Living together will require more patient listening than talking, as well as practising a generosity of heart and resources that clearly says our friends and their flourishing are a priority.

5. In Christ, we are not called to be best friends with everyone. That's impossible. Even among his twelve Apostles, Jesus seemed to relate to Peter, James and John in a unique way. With these three, Jesus practiced a unique vulnerability. Similarly, we see beautiful witnesses of unique friendships in David and Jonathan (1 Samuel 18, Ruth and Naomi (Book of Ruth), and Paul and Silas (Acts 15ff), to name a few.

These friends affirm our need for a few people who know us well, can be trusted with the deepest sadness and joys, speak truth to us, and affirm our identities and callings. Our best friends are more than those with whom we have the most in common. All friendships take work, and these kinds of spiritual friendships even more so.

**Worship & the Habits of Friendship.** Learning to be friends begins with weekly worship. Every Sunday, we hear God's call to us as individuals and as his people. In worship, we learn to pray, sing, confess, lament, rejoice, serve one another and feast together. In worship, we are equipped and sent as God's people into the world to proclaim the Gospel in all we do and say. In our gathering, we experience love and are compelled to love. As the author of Hebrews admonishes in 10:25, we cannot give up the habit of meeting together. Between Sundays, our task is to bring these habits of friendship into the places of loneliness.

At stake is Jesus's very Gospel and its power. Jesus says that the world will know us by our love, by the way we live as friends together (John 13:15). Only together can we be salt and light. Only by growing in friendship can we embody the good news that Jesus has broken down the walls of division and that all are welcomed into our congregation.

It is a great joy to be in community with you. Let's grow in love as we turn our hearts to God.

***With great love for you all,***

The Pastors and Staff of Grace Pasadena

---

---

## WEEK OF FEBRUARY 2

---

---

*God is near! Pray as you are able and enjoy intimacy with your God.*

### MORNING PRAYER

#### OPENING PRAYER

The friendship of the Lord is for those who fear him, and he makes known to them his covenant.  
— *Psalm 25:14*

*In silence, lift up your hands and receive God's presence and friendship.*

#### PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Lord, we confess our day-to-day failure to be human. We confess that we often fail to love with all we have and are, often because we do not fully understand what loving means, often because we are afraid of risking ourselves. We have cut ourselves off from each other and we erect barriers of division. We confess our selfishness and lack of sympathy. Holy Spirit, speak to us. Help us listen to your word of forgiveness, for we are very deaf. Come fill this moment and free us from our sin. **Amen.** *(from the Cathedral of St. George, Cape Town, South Africa)*

#### MORNING READINGS

Sunday	2/2	Galatians 5:13-25
Monday	2/3	Hebrews 11:1-12
Tuesday	2/4	Hebrews 11:13-22
Wednesday	2/5	Hebrews 11:23-31
Thursday	2/6	Hebrews 11:32-12:2
Friday	2/7	Hebrews 12:3-11
Saturday	2/8	Hebrews 12:12-29

#### FOR REFLECTION

- What do you notice in the passage? What gives you hope? What challenges you?
- What aspects of God's character does the passage invite you to contemplate and experience?
- How might today's word draw you closer to your friends, family and neighbors?

#### CLOSING PRAYERS

*Offer prayers for the day and its tasks, the world and its needs, the Church and her life. Conclude with the "The Lord's Prayer" or*

Almighty and everlasting God, you govern all things both in heaven and on earth: Mercifully hear the supplications of your people, and in your time grant us your peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

**LOOK AHEAD AND MAKE TIME FOR EVENING PRAYER (PG. 14)**

## QUESTIONS & PRACTICES FOR THE WEEK

- **Sunday to Tuesday** Take some time to consider your friendships.
  - Which friendships sustained you in your childhood, in high school, in college, in adulthood? How have these friends and friendships shaped you and your faith?
  - Who are your closest friends now? What sets these friendships apart from others?
  - How are you growing in faith together? What elements of the Rule of Life could you keep together or grow more deeply in together?
  
- **Wednesday and Thursday.** Look over the names of the friends you listed above.
  - Give thanks to God for them and pray over each name.
  - Which friendships need some attention? Ask the Holy Spirit how you might cultivate and nourish those friendships this weekend and coming weeks.
  
- **Friday and the Weekend.** Consider the friendships of Ruth and Naomi and Jonathan and David. In their friendships, they expressed a covenant promise of fidelity akin to marriage. Ruth tells Naomi: “Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God” (Ruth 1:16). Even though his father, Saul, was out to kill David, Jonathan “made a covenant with David, because he loved him as his own soul” (1 Samuel 18:3). These mothers and fathers of faith most certainly had other friends, but they committed themselves to one another in a unique way. In their faithfulness to one another, they embodied God’s own faithfulness.
  - What are your reactions? Do you think this kind of covenantal friendship is possible in this day and age? What would it look like?
  - If you’re a member of Grace Pasadena, call to mind the promises and vows you made to the congregation when you became members. How might formal church membership nurture a deeper covenantal understanding and experience of friendship at Grace?

---

---

## WEEK OF FEBRUARY 9

---

---

*God is near! Pray as you are able and enjoy intimacy with your God.*

### **MORNING PRAYER**

#### **OPENING PRAYER**

“Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.”  
— *John 15:13-15*

*Jesus, the King, calls you his friend! Do you hear it? How might you respond with all your being?*

#### **MORNING PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

My Lord and King, by your grace, you have welcomed me into your kingdom and call me friend. Yet, in thought, word and deed, I have failed to love you and my neighbor in return. Forgive me and restore me. Overwhelm me with your love that I may respond with love. **Amen.**

*Silence (sit quietly, or kneel, lay prostrate, or lift up your hands)*

#### **MORNING READINGS**

Sunday	2/9	2 Timothy 2:14-21
Monday	2/10	Hebrews 13:1-16
Tuesday	2/11	Hebrews 13:17-25
Wednesday	2/12	Romans 12:1-8
Thursday	2/13	Romans 12:9-21
Friday	2/14	Romans 13:1-14
Saturday	2/15	Romans 14:1-23

#### **FOR REFLECTION:**

- Does this passage touch on or bring to light anything in your heart and mind?
- What invitation do you hear the Holy Spirit giving to you through the passage?
- What words of hope, faith or challenge can you speak to bring to those around you?

#### **CLOSING PRAYERS**

*Offer prayers for the day and its tasks, the world and its needs, the Church and her life. Conclude with the “The Lord’s Prayer” or*

Weary, worn, and sorrow laden, Jesus I have come to Thee; Shield me from the darts of Satan; Set my fettered spirit free. Harken to my plea for guidance, as I kneel before Thy throne; Cheer me with Thy Holy Presence, when I feel all alone. **Amen.** (*Clara Ann Thompson*)

***LOOK AHEAD AND MAKE TIME FOR EVENING PRAYER (PG. 14)***

---

---

## QUESTIONS & PRACTICES FOR THE WEEK

---

---

- **Sunday to Tuesday.** Consider these words of Jesus Christ in John 15:13-17: *“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you...”*
  - Jesus calls you his *friend*. In silence, treasure these words.
  - Take note of your thoughts and feelings. Are you resisting these words? Are you able to receive them? Ask the Holy Spirit to let Jesus’s words sink deep and bring new joy and faith.
  
- **Tuesday - Wednesday.** Think back to the words of John 15:13-17.
  - How might Christ’s friendship with us shape our friendships with one another?
  - To be friends with us comes at a great cost to Jesus Christ. What keeps us from paying the cost in our friendships with others?
  
- **Thursday to the Weekend.** One of the main themes in Paul’s letters is the new humanity Jesus makes possible through his death and resurrection. In Jesus Christ, the walls dividing people disappear. As he writes in Galatians 3:28: *“There is neither Jew nor Greek [or Gentile], there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”* This means Christian friendships are surprising friendships. Christian friendships are not based on common interests or backgrounds, but solely on the love of Jesus Christ.
  - Take time to consider the ways your Christian friendships embody this surprising reality. Give thanks to God for this!
  - Ask the Holy Spirit to keep your hearts open to surprising new friendships — ones that transcend race, politics, economics, education, etc... at Grace Pasadena.

---

---

## WEEK OF FEBRUARY 16

---

---

*God is near! Pray as you are able and enjoy intimacy with your God.*

### **MORNING PRAYER**

#### **OPENING PRAYER**

“For you were called to freedom, [brothers and sisters]. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.” — *Galatians 5:13*

*Take a few moments to rejoice in the freedom God gives to you in Jesus Christ.*

#### **MORNING PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

God of true freedom, you have set me free from sin and death by your grace. In Jesus Christ, you have given me all that my soul longs for. Yet, I have used my freedom for my own selfishness. Forgive me. Turn my heart towards my neighbor and let me use my freedom for their flourishing.

***Amen.***

*Silence (sit quietly, or kneel, lay prostrate, or lift up your hands)*

#### **MORNING READINGS**

Sunday	2/16	1 Timothy 3:14-4:10
Monday	2/17	1 John 1:1-10
Tuesday	2/18	1 John 2:1-11
Wednesday	2/19	1 John 2:12-17
Thursday	2/20	1 John 2:18-29
Friday	2/21	1 John 3:1-10
Saturday	2/22	1 John 3:11-18

#### **FOR REFLECTION:**

- What surprises you in the text? What haven't you considered before?
- What invitation to experience God's new life do you hear? How can you receive it today?
- How might these words shape the words you speak and receive from your friends?

#### **CLOSING PRAYERS**

*Offer prayers for the day and its tasks, the world and its needs, the Church and her life. Conclude with the “The Lord’s Prayer” or*

O God, the strength of all who put their trust in you: Mercifully accept our prayers; and because in our weakness we can do nothing good without you, give us the help of your grace, that in keeping your commandments we may please you both in will and deed; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. ***Amen***

***LOOK AHEAD AND MAKE TIME FOR EVENING PRAYER (PG. 14)***

---

---

## QUESTIONS & PRACTICES FOR THE WEEK

---

---

- **Sunday to Tuesday.** Think back to the practices of silence and listening. (See the October 2019 prayer guide, available at [www.gracepasadena.org](http://www.gracepasadena.org).) These practices are crucial in our life with God and with one another. Silence and listening are gifts we can offer one another.
  - Make it a point to listen more than talk in your conversations with your friends these next few days. What changes in your friendship when you listen more than talk?
  
- **Wednesday and Thursday.** Consider how you connect with your friends. Texting and social media can be wonderful tools that foster connection, but they can also cause distance. Thinking back to last month, we cannot lose sight of the fact that we are embodied people. Our friendships and our interactions with one another must also be embodied. Susan Phillips writes: *“[When] placed on an electronic device, friendship is disembodied and may feel more like entertainment and, as is the case with both civic involvement and religious participation, becomes increasingly optional in our daily life.”*
  - What are your reactions?
  
- **Friday and the Weekend.** Think back to the idea of covenantal friendships from the first week of February. What are your thoughts about it now? Even if you think it’s too far fetched, what would life be like if you had one or two covenantal friendships? How would your decisions about jobs, money and where to live be affected? What would your family life gain?

## WEEK OF FEBRUARY 23/START OF LENT

*God is near! Pray as you are able and enjoy intimacy with your God.*

### **MORNING PRAYER**

#### **OPENING PRAYER**

Let me hear in the morning of your steadfast love, for in you I trust. Make me know the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul. — *Psalm 143:8*

*As you pray Psalm 143:8, take a few deep breaths and bring to mind the previous day. How did God show you his steadfast love to you through your friends? Give thanks.*

#### **MORNING PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

Gracious God, you have given us the law of Moses and the teachings of Jesus to direct us in the way of life. You offer us your Holy Spirit so that we can be born to new life as your children. Yet, O God, we confess that the ways of death have a strong attraction and that we often succumb to their lure. Give us the vision and courage to choose and nurture life, that we may receive your blessing. **Amen.**

*Silence (sit quietly, or kneel, lay prostrate, or lift up your hands)*

#### **MORNING READINGS**

Sunday	2/23	2 Corinthians 3:7-18
Monday	2/24	Philippians 2:1-13
Tuesday	2/25	Philippians 3:1-11
Wednesday	2/26	Hebrews 12:1-14 — Ash Wednesday & Start of Lent
Thursday	2/27	Philippians 3:12-21
Friday	2/28	Philippians 4:1-9

#### **FOR REFLECTION:**

- The Gospel of Jesus Christ is good news for our hearts, minds and bodies. It's also good news for us, our neighbors and all of creation. How does today passage help you see and experience the expansiveness of the Gospel?

#### **CLOSING PRAYERS**

*Offer prayers for the day and its tasks, the world and its needs, the Church and her life. Conclude with the "The Lord's Prayer" or*

Great God of justice, grace that the dark night of injustice will give way to the dawning of a brighter day. Give thy people respite from the heat of constant battle. But never let us give up until the victory is won...Help us to always protest against evil. But also give us the strength to produce good. In the Name of the Name above year name. **Amen.** (—*Dr. Mack King Carter*)

***LOOK AHEAD AND MAKE TIME FOR EVENING PRAYER (PG. 14)***

---

---

## QUESTIONS & PRACTICES FOR THE WEEK

---

---

- **Sunday-Tuesday.** Consider the following questions:
  - If you're married, do you have close single friends? If you're single, do you have close married friends? Why do you think it matters?
  - How diverse are your friends? In what ways do your friendships embody and reflect God's justice and reconciliation?
  - How are you taking advantage of the avenues of friendship that Grace Pasadena offers? For example, why are you involved in a City Group or not? What do you gain by attending a City Group, 4th Friday, or a Men's breakfast?
  
- With **Ash Wednesday** comes the start of Lent, a long season of preparation for the celebration of Easter, the resurrection of Jesus Christ. A Lenten practice shared by many Christian traditions is fasting. There are many ways to fast, but the purpose is always the same: we abstain from certain things and practices so that the Holy Spirit can make more room in our lives for God and his new life guaranteed for us in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This new life includes deeper communion with God's people.
  - What might you fast from during this Lent? In light of the topic of "spiritual friendship," what can you fast from in order to make more room for deeper friendship?
  - Consider inviting a roommate, your family, your City Group or a trusted friend to fast with you this Lent. What might you gain from a communal Lenten fast? How might God use fasting to draw you closer in friendship to those around you?

*Read more about Lent and the practice of fasting in the March 2020 prayer guide. A digital PDF version will be available at the Grace Pasadena website by 2/28. The hardcopy will be available on 3/1 at the Sunday service.*

## ***A SHORT LITURGY FOR EVENING PRAYER***

### **OPENING VERSE & PRAYER -**

I bless the Lord who gives me counsel in the night also my heart instructs me. I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken. —*Psalm 16:7-8*

### **EVENING PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

Almighty God, our heavenly Father: We have sinned against you, through our own fault, in thought, and word, and deed, and in what we have left undone. For the sake of your Son our Lord Jesus Christ, forgive us all our offenses; and grant that we may serve you in newness of life, to the glory of your Name. *Amen.*

*Silence for reflection. (sit quietly, or kneel, lay prostrate, or lift up your hands)*

### **GOSPEL LESSON**

*See next page.*

### **FOR REFLECTION:**

- Re-read the passage. How does it speak to and help you find closure to the day behind you?
- How does it help you see Jesus in your day?

### **CLOSING PRAYERS**

*Offer prayers for the day ahead and its tasks, the world and its needs, the Church and her life. Consider kneeling as you pray. Finish with the “The Lord’s Prayer” and one of the the following:*

Lord Jesus, stay with us, for evening is at hand and the day is past; be our companion in the way, kindle our hearts, and awaken hope, that we may know you as you are revealed in Scripture and the breaking of bread. Grant this for the sake of your love. **Amen.**

### **OR**

Lord, you now have set your servant free to go in peace as you have promised; For these eyes of mine have seen the Savior, whom you have prepared for all the world to see: A Light to enlighten the nations, and the glory of your people Israel. **Amen** *(from Luke 2:29-32)*

### **OR**

The Lord Almighty grant us a peaceful night and a perfect end. **Amen.**

***LOOK AHEAD AND MAKE TIME FOR MORNING PRAYER***

## ***EVENING GOSPEL READINGS***

- 2/2 - Mark 8:22-30
- 2/3 - John 6:27-40
- 2/4 - John 6:41-51
- 2/5 - John 6:52-59
- 2/6 - John 6:60-71
- 2/7 - John 7:1-13
- 2/8 - John 7:14-36
- 2/9 - Mark 10:13-22
- 2/10 - John 7:37-52
- 2/11 - John 7:53-8:11
- 2/12 - John 8:12-20
- 2/13 - John 8:21-32
- 2/14 - John 8:33-47
- 2/15 - John 8:47-59
- 2/16 - Mark 10:23-31
- 2/17 - John 9:1-17
- 2/18 - John 9:18-41
- 2/19 - John 10:1-8
- 2/20 - John 10:9-30
- 2/21 - John 10:31-42
- 2/22 - John 11:1-16
- 2/23 - Luke 9:18-22
- 2/24 - John 18:15-18; 25-27
- 2/25 - John 18:28-38
- 2/26 - Luke 18:9-14 / Ash Wednesday
- 2/27 - John 17:1-8
- 2/28 - John 17:9-19

## REVIEW & LOOKING FORWARD

What has been most encouraging this month? Most challenging? In what ways have you experienced fellowship with God through your friendships?

What simple daily and weekly practices are you growing in? How do you see them working together to root you more deeply in the life of Jesus Christ?

## ***OTHER RESOURCES***

For further exploration:

- *Spiritual Friendship* by Wes Hill
- *Cultivated Life, chapters 10 &11*, by Susan Phillips
- *Friendship on the Margins* by Christopher Heuertz and Christine Pohl
- *Becoming Friends* by Paul Wadell
- *The Four Loves* by C.S. Lewis

### ***The Rule of Life -- Looking Ahead***

*March – Fasting & Hospitality*

*April – Stability of Heart & Place*

*May – Work & Creating*

*June – Balance: Putting it All Together*

*February 2020*  
*Grace Pasadena*  
[www.gracepasadena.org](http://www.gracepasadena.org)