

Elemental

LENT 2023



A- Ashes Wi - Wilderness S- Spirit Wa- Water M- Mud B- Bones P- Palms

2023 Lenten Guide

Welcome Note from Pastor Jeremy



Are you ready?

We've got quite the trip ahead of us and it's important that we stick together so no one gets left behind.

Before we head out, I'm sure you're curious about where we're going. Well, lean in a little closer and I'll tell you everything you need to know.

The season of Lent is a journey. It is a journey inward to connect with our deepest and most authentic selves. It is a journey upward as we connect with God while praying for the renewal of our hearts. And it is a journey onward as we join all who share our faith on a spiritual pilgrimage to bear witness to the cross and resurrection of Christ.

Think of this booklet as both a travel guide and a companion. As you become familiar with it, you'll learn to use it as a map to help you navigate the wilderness and high waters of the season. As you open it day after day, you'll learn to see it as a partner to lean on when your spirits are low, and your bones are tired.

With the help of this guide, we will LEARN, LIVE, LOVE, and LEAD together to reach our destination. We've got a long way to go so let's get going!

~ Pastor Jeremy

Words are important. They offer us buoys with which to understand ourselves, our relationship with God, and deepen our faith. When we combine a word with an image, it can change the meaning or reflection of the word in an entirely new way.

We are going to assist you in a new experience of *Visio Divina*, “sacred seeing,” an ancient form of Christian prayer in which we allow our hearts and imaginations to enter into a sacred image, in silence, to see what God might have to say to us.

At the beginning of each week, you will be provided with four images to choose from to be the visual that helps guide you on your Lenten journey. Each image is a different interpretation of the word of the week and will offer us different ways to consider entering the word, which is a tool on our journey. You will have the opportunity to sit with that image as you reflect on our Scripture through the rhythm of Learn, Live, Love, and Lead. Then on Sundays, see if the image you chose on Monday is the same image you resonate with after a week of prayerful reflection.

Monday – Podcast and Prayer (LEARN)

On Mondays listen to our weekly podcast, “Your Week with St. Luke’s,” wherever you listen to podcasts, and observe a short prayer you can memorize to carry you through the week. Listening to the podcast will get you caught up on the Scripture for the week, and provide you with a solid understanding of the passage. Along with the podcast, every Monday a simple prayer will be provided. This prayer can be used for traditional prayer, meditation, or however you feel led to use the words.

Tuesday – Reflective Writing Prompt (LIVE)

Take time to read and respond to a brief writing prompt. Reflective writing creates space to reflect meaningfully on your life, hear God’s voice, and discern what God is saying to you in this season. Reflective writing is not intended for an audience; it is solely for you and God.

Wednesday – Conversation Starter / Discussion Questions (LIVE)

On Wednesdays, we will take time to reflect on what we’ve learned and share with others. Discussion questions will be provided to inspire conversation with your Life Together Groups, friends, or family.

Thursday – Audio or Lectio Divina (LOVE)

Lectio Divina is the practice of sacred reading. It is performed by reading a text and simply being open to what God reveals to you. You are not reading for practical understanding, but trying to notice what names, faces, ideas, phrases, places, experiences, and stories come up for you as you read. If you are listening to a song or music, we follow the same process and call it Audio Divina. Each Thursday you will be provided with the lyrics of a song that matches the week's theme to read and reflect upon. Listen to the song and/or read the lyrics, and jot down whatever comes to mind.

Friday – (LEAD) your Life

On Fridays, you'll find suggestions and opportunities for you to serve, give, and make a difference in your daily life having been shaped by the Scripture and God's story throughout the week. This is your chance to practice leading your life as the primary theologian who uses every opportunity to be a part of helping God's story come to life through your daily interactions.

Saturday – Invitation to Sabbath (LOVE)

Each Saturday you will be invited to observe Sabbath. Sabbath is a time of rest, and as such you are encouraged to abstain from work and strenuous activity in the interest of relaxing and connecting with God and neighbor.

Sunday – Worship (LOVE)

On Sundays we gather for worship. Having learned about and wrestled with the story throughout the week, worship will be the punctuation, the "so what" of the story you have learned, making it a practical application for your daily life. We hope you'll make it a spiritual discipline to join us for worship all of the Sundays of this Lenten season, as we take this journey together. In this booklet you'll find space for sermon notes and prayer requests, and anything else that comes to mind.

Wilderness



Visio Divina: Which of these images are you drawn to? Choose one of these four images and allow that to be the visual that helps guide you on your Lenten journey this week.

Thursday, February 23

“Wilderness” by Avery Doreen or
“Wandering” by Gungor
(scan the QR code to listen)



First, identify which words or phrases stand out to you from the song you choose. You may want to listen to the song or just read the lyrics. Then, let those words guide your prayer time throughout the day. Ask the Spirit what she might be revealing to you in those words.

How do those words help you make sense of this week’s theme, and your image for this week? What kind of actions or prayers do those words invite you into? How is God calling you through those words or phrases?

Friday, February 24

One of the traditions at St. Luke’s is to collect a Lenten Offering. The challenge this year is to do something with the number 23. Is it \$23 a month? \$23 a week? \$23 per family member?

This year’s Lenten Offering will go to Restoring Hope, to end food scarcity in the West Orange area. How can you and your family engage in a discipline of sacrificial giving during this Lenten season? Note that choosing to go into the wilderness, to walk toward Jerusalem with Jesus, leads you to see His life of sacrificial love.



Scan the QR code above or visit st.lukes.org/give and select “Lenten Offering” from the drop-down menu to give a special gift this Lent.

Saturday, February 25

Poet and philosopher Asher Ginsberg once said, "More than Israel kept Sabbath, the sabbath kept Israel."

And so, as you prepare to close this guide and enter your Sabbath rest, may the love of God keep you. May the love of your community hold and comfort you.

Sunday, February 26 **Notes & Prayer Requests**

Spirit



Visio Divina: Which of these images are you drawn to? Choose one of these four images and allow that to be the visual that helps guide you on your Lenten journey this week.

Prayerfully read the Scripture for the Week:
Genesis 12:1-4a; John 3:1-17

Monday, February 27



Scan the QR code to listen to this week's episode of **"Your Week with St. Luke's"** (available wherever you get your podcasts) featuring a lecture from Rev. Dr. Ebby Arnold

Prayer:

May I find freedom in turning to mystery when life's big questions go unanswered. May I find rest in trusting that the same spirit that raised Jesus from the dead is within me. Amen.

Tuesday, February 28

Read Genesis 12:1-4a.

Now, read the passage one more time and substitute your own name wherever you see "Abram." How does that make you feel? How would you react? Think about your home, job, family, and friends. If you felt God calling you to leave them all behind, would you do it? What might God be calling you to do or leave behind? Do you trust God enough to do what God calls you to do? Why or why not? Write in response to this passage and these questions. Remember, this is only between you and God.

Wednesday, March 1

Read John 3:1-17, then discuss the following with your Life Together Groups, family, and friends:

- How do you think you would have reacted if you'd had this encounter with Jesus?
- What does it mean to be born of the Spirit?
- What are some mysteries in the Bible that you don't fully understand?
- Recall yesterday's text: Genesis 12:1-4a. How do both of these texts require you to trust God?

Thursday, March 2

"Spirit" by Beyonce or
"Spirit Becomes Us" by Gungor
(scan the QR code to listen)



First, identify which words or phrases stand out to you from the song you choose. You may want to listen to the song or just read the lyrics. Then, let those words guide your prayer time throughout the day. Ask the Spirit what she might be revealing to you in those words.

How do those words help you make sense of this week's theme, and your image for this week? What kind of actions or prayers do those words invite you into? How is God calling you through those words or phrases?

Friday, March 3

Nicodemus was sure that he had kept such control over the rules that his place in life was indeed secure. Along comes Jesus with new things to say, and new rules by which to play, and he is suddenly unsure if he's doing things right. Surrendering to be born again in the Spirit? What does that even mean? It sounds like just the kind of loss of control and vulnerability most of us avoid.

On the journey of faith, the tool to let go of doubt and fear is to trust. Trusting God's Spirit is as close to us as our very breath and will help us move through life. The Spirit moves around us like wind we cannot see, but if we settle our restlessness and worry, it shapes us, moves us, and can make us new.

Two areas of our lives that make us subconsciously want to hold the most control possible are our money and our relationships with new people. These are two obstacles that hold us back from Leading our lives with this story of trusting in God's Spirit.

Money is talked about more times by Jesus than any other topic because Jesus understands the power and control money can have over us. The discipline of tithing, regularly giving a percentage to God from our wages, is the antidote to control. Tithing makes us trust the Holy Spirit. With all we have been given, and all that we have, faithful stewardship lets the Spirit birth in us a new faith beyond rule-following and gives us the ability to surrender to a greater purpose.

As you Lead your life this week with this story of Nicodemus in mind, consider how you might practice the tithe even if just for the week or month. How could you set a goal of a percentage, maybe just 2.3% to give back to God? What would it mean to reprioritize? What would you lose, and what would the Kingdom gain?

Maybe we don't have an issue with control of finances as much as we do with our calendar. Sometimes the greater sacrifice is a tithe of your time. Stewardship is not just about money; it's the discipline of stewarding all your life and the gifts with which God has entrusted you. What if you can give 2-3 hours to serve another this week, and build relationships with a group of people who need your generosity of time and Spirit? *(continued on next page)*

(continued) Consider looking into our Circles ministry, where Leaders need Allies to support them in their goals. How could you give some time each week to help someone else be born into a new understanding of life because you supported them?



st.lukes.org/serve-2/circles

Saturday, March 4

In 1926 Pastor Daniel Iverson wrote this song. As you close this guide and unburden yourself from the work of this week, may its simple lines bless your Sabbath:

*Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.
Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.
Melt me, mold me, filmy, use me.
Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.*

Sunday, March 5 **Notes & Prayer Requests**

Water



Visio Divina: Which of these images are you drawn to? Choose one of these four images and allow that to be the visual that helps guide you on your Lenten journey this week.

Prayerfully read the Scripture for the Week:
Exodus 17:1-7; John 4:5-42

Monday, March 6



Scan the QR code to listen to this week's episode of **"Your Week with St. Luke's"** (available wherever you get your podcasts) featuring a lecture from Rev. Dr. Ebby Arnold

Prayer:

As I sense and acknowledge the want and thirst of my heart during this season, may I look only to you, the giver of living water, to be quenched and made whole. Amen.

Tuesday, March 7

Read Exodus 17:1-7.

Do you think God would have let the Israelites die of thirst in the wilderness? When have you complained to your leaders/pastors/teachers/group facilitators? Think about your life, your family, and your current situation. Do you trust that God is with you in this moment? Why or why not? Write in response to this passage and these questions.

Wednesday, March 8

Read John 4:5-42, then discuss the following with your Life Together Groups, family, and friends:

- What things surprise you about this passage?
- Do you think Jesus was actually thirsty?
- What does Jesus mean by “living water?”
- What are you thirsty for?
- Can this thirst be quenched by God?

Thursday, March 9

“Riverside” by Kirk Franklin
(scan the QR code to listen)



First, identify which words or phrases stand out to you from the song. You may want to listen to the song or just read the lyrics. Then, let those words guide your prayer time throughout the day. Ask the Spirit what she might be revealing to you in those words.

How do those words help you make sense of this week’s theme, and your image for this week? What kind of actions or prayers do those words invite you into? How is God calling you through those words or phrases?

Friday, March 10

Water – everyone needs it. It’s good for everyone – heart, mind, and even our spirit. Learn more about the need for clean water and the damaging effects not having access has on children and communities. Read about our mission partner, Agua Viva Serves, to see how we are supporting them in their efforts to offer clean, running water in Costa Rica.

What about the people all around you who are thirsty? Buy a case of water this week and watch for people who may need the gift of a bottle of water physically, but also to remind you to look at what people may need spiritually. *(continued on next page)*

(continued) Put that case of water in the front seat of your car and try to give it all away, and for every bottle you give, offer another act of living water through kindness.

Let that bottle of water remind you to make time and really “see” people, engage with people like Jesus did with the woman at the well. Maybe they need you to stop and listen, hear their need, and respond kindly. It might just be to offer living water of kindness, prayer, or a smile.



st.lukes.org/globalstories

Saturday, March 11

As you enter this Sabbath, may this 10th-century Celtic blessing bless you:

Deep peace of the running water to you,
Deep peace of the flowing air to you,
Deep peace of the quiet Earth to you,
Deep peace of the shining stars to you,
Deep peace of the Son of peace to you.

Sunday, March 12

Notes & Prayer Requests

Mud



Visio Divina: Which of these images are you drawn to? Choose one of these four images and allow that to be the visual that helps guide you on your Lenten journey this week.

Prayerfully read the Scripture for the Week:
1 Samuel 16:1-13; John 9:1-41

Monday, March 13



Scan the QR code to listen to this week's episode of **"Your Week with St. Luke's"** (available wherever you get your podcasts) featuring a lecture from Rev. Dr. Ebby Arnold

Prayer:

May my willingness to complain about how things are not as they should be, always be exceeded by my willingness to do the hard work of making things better. Amen.

Tuesday, March 14

Read 1 Samuel 16:1-13.

In what ways do Samuel's actions surprise you? When have you been surprised by God calling you to do something (even though there might have been others who more obviously fit the role)? What might God be calling you to do in this season? Write in response to this passage and these questions.

Wednesday, March 15

Read John 9:1-41, then discuss the following with your Life Together Groups, family, and friends:

- What do you think Jesus meant when he said we must do the work of God while it is still daytime?
- Why do you think Jesus chose to heal the man by mixing spit and dirt to create mud? How do you think you would have reacted if you were in the crowd or on the receiving end of this healing?
- In what new and unconventional ways do you feel called to do God's work in the world?
- Why do you think it was so hard for the Pharisees to accept what had happened?
- How do you understand Jesus' statement in verse 41, "If you were blind, you wouldn't have any sin, but now that you say, 'We see,' your sin remains."

Thursday, March 16

"Garden" by The Liturgists ft. Aaron Purdy or
"Crag and Clay" by Gungor
(scan the QR code to listen)



First, identify which words or phrases stand out to you from the song you choose. You may want to listen to the song or just read the lyrics. Then, let those words guide your prayer time throughout the day. Ask the Spirit what she might be revealing to you in those words.

How do those words help you make sense of this week's theme, and your image for this week? What kind of actions or prayers do those words invite you into? How is God calling you through those words or phrases?

Friday, March 17

Jesus broke the Sabbath rules and made mud to heal someone, to give someone new sight. He didn't have to, he could have just touched the blind man, but he broke the rules of engagement to push people past their blindness of what it is to embrace what could be.

Isn't that the power of what happens in the miracle of gardening? A small seed in the dirty ground, tended to by a system of water, sun, and nutrients becomes something that offers sustenance. Gardening can push us beyond our limited understanding of what should be, to trust God for what can be.

What would happen if you spent a few hours working in the mud and dirt? Even if you aren't gifted at gardening, to just do some work that got your hands dirty and trust the process of the Spirit to help you see something you haven't seen before? Perhaps you could visit the Farmer's Market at the Grow it Forward Farm at St. Luke's on Saturday to purchase fresh produce between 9:30 and 11:00 a.m. You could write a thank you note to our gardening team that shows up every week to get their hands dirty and help feed people in our community. You could even use your gift of generosity to purchase something for our five micro-farms from the Amazon Wish List.



Farmer's Market at St. Luke's
st.lukes.org/growitforward



Amazon Wish List
bit.ly/3YOO0Df

Saturday, March 18

Rev. Jan Richardson, former St. Luke's pastor, wrote this "Blessing of Mud." As you close this guide, may it be your Sabbath blessing:

Lest we think the blessing is not in the dirt.

Lest we think the blessing is not in the earth beneath our feet.

Lest we think the blessing is not in the dust, like the dust that God scooped up at the beginning and formed with God's two hands and breathed into with God's own breath.

Lest we think the blessing is not in the spit.

Lest we think the blessing is not in the mud.

Lest we think the blessing is not in the mire, the grime, the muck.

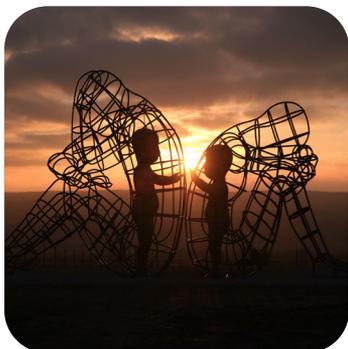
Lest we think God cannot reach deep into the things of earth, cannot bring forth the blessing

that shimmers within the sludge, cannot anoint us with a tender and grimy grace.

—Jan Richardson, from "Circle of Grace: A Book of Blessings for the Seasons"

Sunday, March 19 **Notes & Prayer Requests**

Bones



Visio Divina: Which of these images are you drawn to? Choose one of these four images and allow that to be the visual that helps guide you on your Lenten journey this week.

Prayerfully read the Scripture for the Week:
Ezekiel 37:1-14; John 11:1-45

Monday, March 20



Scan the QR code to listen to this week's episode of **"Your Week with St. Luke's"** (available wherever you get your podcasts) featuring a lecture from Rev. Dr. Ebby Arnold

Prayer:

May I always remember that life's constant rhythm of death and life means that every winter leads to spring, and dry bones can live again. Amen.

Tuesday, March 21

Read Ezekiel 37:1-14.

What areas of your life feel hopeless or dead, like dry bones? How can you breathe life into them? Write in response to this passage and these questions. Remember, this is only for you and for God.

Wednesday, March 22

Read John 11:1-45, then discuss the following with your Life Together Groups, family, and friends:

- Why did Jesus wait to travel to Bethany?
- Even knowing that he could raise Lazarus from the dead, why did Jesus begin to weep?
- Are there things that you've lost and find it hard to believe that they can live again?
- How do you most need to experience resurrection in your life right now?

Thursday, March 23

"Dry Bones" by Gungor
(scan the QR code to listen)



First, identify which words or phrases stand out to you from the song. You may want to listen to the song or just read the lyrics. Then, let those words guide your prayer time throughout the day. Ask the Spirit what she might be revealing to you in those words.

How do those words help you make sense of this week's theme, and your image for this week? What kind of actions or prayers do those words invite you into? How is God calling you through those words or phrases?

Friday, March 24

Leading your life with God's story is recognizing the world around you and adding the value of God's story wherever you can. Over the last few weeks, you have had the chance to see the value of living water, help someone be seen and know they matter, get your hands dirty, and see how proximity can be healing. The element of Spirit and breath reminds us we are never alone and can have new life. *(continued on next page)*

(continued) This week as we have sought to rest our own bones and allow Christ to bring us back to life, consider the people in your life who may need hope. Who are the people you have been able to truly “see” who might need a little living water, or for you to get your hands dirty and serve their hearts? What could they use from you to help them feel a little hope, maybe even joy this week? Could it be a note, flowers, or a gift card? Maybe it’s to just invite them to have tea or coffee to simply let them speak, or even just sit in silence with a trusted friend. Notice someone this week who may be asking if dry bones can find life again and give them a little respite. Perhaps you will be the one, through your generosity of time, who can help Jesus “untie them and let them go,” as the story says.

Saturday, March 25

4th-century priest John Cassian wrote this prayer. May it lead you to and through your Sabbath rest:

O God, be all my love, all my hope, all my striving; let me thoughts and words flow from you, my daily life be in you, and every breath I take be for you. Amen.

Sunday, March 26 **Notes & Prayer Requests**

Palms



Visio Divina: Which of these images are you drawn to? Choose one of these four images and allow that to be the visual that helps guide you on your Lenten journey this week.

Prayerfully read the Scripture for the Week:
Matthew 21:1-11

Monday, March 27



Scan the QR code to listen to this week's episode of **"Your Week with St. Luke's"** (available wherever you get your podcasts) featuring a lecture from Rev. Dr. Ebby Arnold

Prayer:

May I remember that a holy life sometimes requires me to fight. May I also remember that the required arms for this battle are hope, love, and faith. Amen.

Tuesday, March 28

Read Matthew 21:1-11.

Imagine yourself in this narrative, as one of the disciples sent to find the donkey. How would you have reacted? Would you have done as you were told? How do you think you would react seeing the crowd's response to Jesus? What things might God be calling or sending you to do as you prepare for Easter? Write in response to this passage and to these questions.

Wednesday, March 29

Read Matthew 21:1-11 (again), then discuss the following with your Life Together Groups, family, and friends:

- John the Baptist was known as the one who went ahead, preparing the way for the Lord. How are you preparing your heart to receive Christ as Easter quickly approaches?
- How are you preparing your family, community, and world?

Thursday, March 30

"Hosanna (Be Lifted Higher)" by Israel Houghton
(scan the QR code to listen)



First, identify which words or phrases stand out to you from the song. You may want to listen to the song or just read the lyrics. Then, let those words guide your prayer time throughout the day. Ask the Spirit what she might be revealing to you in those words.

How do those words help you make sense of this week's theme, and your image for this week? What kind of actions or prayers do those words invite you into? How is God calling you through those words or phrases?

Friday, March 31

Palms don't just absorb water and light, they grow fruit such as dates and coconuts. What are you feeling called to give? What has been given to you that you can now use to create something?

As you reflect on how you might Lead your Life with God's story this week, consider the stewardship of your time. Next week is Holy Week, and we'll offer different services and activities throughout the week to complete the journey to the cross, and to prepare you for the resurrection. Which services will you attend? Who will you invite? In what ways will you be open to the voice of the Spirit as she guides you?



st.lukes.org/glean

Saturday, April 1

May this prayer guide you as you step into this Sabbath:

God of all power and glory, thank you that Jesus Christ came to Jerusalem not with a sword to challenge the power of this world, but with love. Enable us to choose your ways, to be like Palms who bend but do not break. Empower us to wave our palms and celebrate your entrance into Jerusalem and our lives. Amen.

Sunday, April 2 **Notes & Prayer Requests**



Holy Week **April 3 - 9**

Use this week to reflect on your Lenten journey thus far. Go back through this Lenten Guide and fill in or complete any areas you might have missed. Look through the images and see if the one you chose each week still resonates with you and, if not, reflect upon why that might be.

As you move throughout this week, remember not to rush to Easter. Be sure to spend time in silence and reflection, using the spiritual disciplines you have practiced throughout the last few weeks, to grieve and die to whatever it is you need to die to, so that Jesus can be resurrected in your life. How will you continue to Lead your Life with this story now that this season is over?

Holy Week at St. Luke's

Palm Sunday, April 2 **9:30 a.m.**

Traditional in the Sanctuary
Contemporary in Founder's Hall

11:15 a.m.

Blended Worship in the Sanctuary

*Worship streamed live on Facebook at 9:30
(Contemporary) and 11:15 a.m. (Traditional)*

Holy Thursday, April 6

Walk-through Experience

Come for this self-guided experience
with prayer stations and more in
Founder's Hall

Good Friday, April 7

7:30 p.m. in the Sanctuary and
streamed live on Facebook

Easter, April 9 **9:30 a.m.**

Traditional in the Sanctuary
Contemporary in Founder's Hall

11:15 a.m.

Traditional in the Sanctuary
Contemporary in Founder's Hall

*Worship streamed live on Facebook at 9:30 (Contemporary)
and 11:15 a.m. (Traditional)*

For the most updated information on the services listed above visit st.lukes.org/lent.

