



THE FPC JOURNEY

Walking in Freedom,
Wholeness, and
Intimacy



April 2025

www.ReachingTheValley.org

Welcome

to: The FPC Journey.



Stay Connected with First Presbyterian Church of Santa Clara - Your Church Family in Santa Clara, CA- with The FPC Journey

Join us as we share the latest news, events, and inspirational updates in our newsletter. Our newsletter is your go-to source for staying connected with our vibrant community, spiritual growth opportunities, and upcoming programs. Whether you're a long-time member or visiting for the first time, our newsletter aims to keep you informed about everything happening in our church and our local Santa Clara community.

Each month, we will strive to offer insightful devotionals/articles, upcoming event details, volunteer opportunities, and ways to get involved with the church. Stay up to date with our weekly services, youth programs, mission projects, and much more. Be part of the First Presbyterian family and grow in faith, fellowship, and service.

Visit our website at www.reachingthevalley.org for more details.



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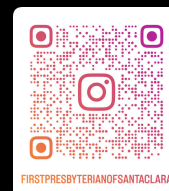
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FOLLOW US AT



**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH OF SANTA
CLARA**

OR



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Easter Hope

By: Karen Grether

The world is in turmoil, chaos, and bound.
People are suffering when sin is around.
Jesus came to let us know how much God
loves us.

He took the punishment so we could fear
less.

He restored, conquered death, and gave
us release.

He is our advocate the understanding
High Priest.

He extends this compassion to all lost and
the least.

He is making all things new by his power
and peace.

Eyes are opening, hearts and souls are
abiding.

Can you see the good work He does with
the Holy Spirit guiding?

The Gospel is the power of God that brings
salvation.

Forgiving, healing, relationship, its
transformation.

What is Holy Week?

By: Amy Gunaseelan

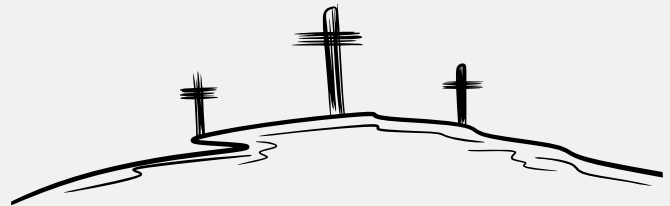
Holy Week, which is celebrated by Christians globally, occurs from April 13-April 20 this year.

However, many new Christians who have recently found their way to faith often find themselves asking, "Well, what exactly is Holy Week? Why is it special?" In fact, Christians who are more affiliated with the Bible and are stronger in their faith can also get caught up in the celebrations and forget why each and every day of the week is just as spiritually important as Easter Sunday.

EWTN Faith Journey says that "The days of Holy Week include Palm Sunday (Passion Sunday); Holy Monday, Holy Tuesday, Holy Wednesday (sometimes called Spy Wednesday, in reference to Judas' betrayal), Maundy Thursday (Holy Thursday), Good Friday (Holy Friday), and Holy Saturday - the days immediately preceding Easter Sunday."

Palm Sunday, the first day of the week, commemorates when Jesus rode into Jerusalem. Palm leaves are highly symbolic on this holiday, and it is celebrated today with the congregation waving the leaves. Sometimes, the leaves are collected and saved for ashes for the following year's Ash Wednesday.

John 12:12-13 explains why palm leaves are symbolic, "The next day the great crowd that had come for the festival heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting, "Hosanna!""Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Blessed is the king of Israel!""



HOLY MONDAY

On Holy Monday, Jesus drives out sellers and tainters of the temple.

Although this is a popular story in the Bible, **Matthew 21:12-13** offers a refresher, "And Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who sold and bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you make it a den of robbers.""

What is Holy Week? (cont)

Holy Tuesday & Spy Wednesday

Holy Tuesday is a relatively normal day for Jesus; he tells parables, gets repeatedly questioned by doubtful Pharisees, and curses an empty fig tree. On Holy Wednesday, also known as Spy Wednesday, Judas Iscariot betrays the Son of God for 30 measly pieces of silver.

"Then Satan entered Judas, called Iscariot, one of the Twelve. And Judas went to the chief priests and the officers of the temple guard and discussed with them how he might betray Jesus. They were delighted and agreed to give him money. He consented, and watched for an opportunity to hand Jesus over to them when no crowd was present," **Luke 22:3-6** reads.

Maundy Thursday

Maundy Thursday signified the last supper. However, some may wonder why it's called Maundy Thursday. After all, every other day had names that made more sense and are clearly related to the events that happened on that day.

Bible Study Tools defines the term perfectly, "The word "maundy" comes from Latin meaning "mandatum" which translates to "command". Jesus gave his disciples a command to love one another."



Good Friday and Holy Saturday

Although all the days in Holy Week are important, Good Friday is perhaps the saddest, as it is the day that Jesus was unjustly crucified, dead, and buried for you and I.

Isaiah 53:5 says that "He was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed."

He may have died because of Judas' sin, but in reality, Jesus sacrificed himself for all of us, so that our sins are forgiven. On Holy Saturday, the day was filled with mourning for our Savior, who was lying dead in a cave guarded by a boulder.

Matthew 12:40 explains the significance of the three days that Jesus was dead for, "For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."

What is Holy Week? (cont)

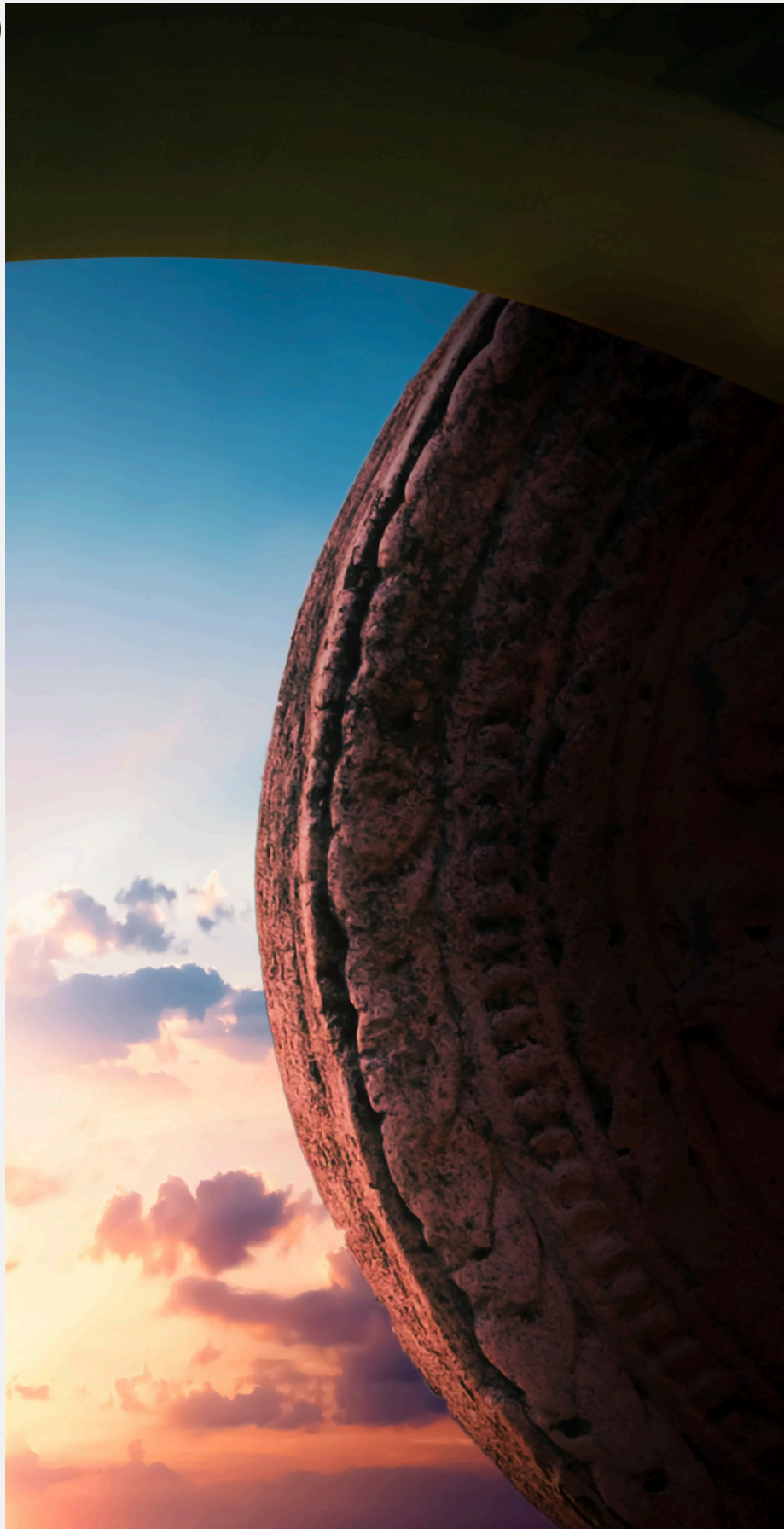
Easter Sunday

The final, and most joyous, day of Holy Week is Easter Sunday. It is on this sacred day that Jesus defeats death and is resurrected. Although he had told his disciples that he would rise again, seeing the Son of God alive and well was as frightening as it was joyous. God sent an angel to explain it to the three women who found his empty tomb: Mary Magdalene, Salome, and Mary the mother of James.

"The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you." So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples," according to Matthew 28:5-8.

Although Holy Week has its share of sad events, it is to be celebrated cheerfully and wholeheartedly, for it was the week that Jesus was crucified for you and I.

1 Peter 1:3 says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." AMEN.



The Season of Lent: A Call to Love as Christ Loved Us

By: Chrys Sahgal



As we journey through the season of Lent, a time traditionally marked by reflection, repentance, and renewal, we are reminded of the profound love Christ demonstrated in His life and ultimate sacrifice. Lent is not only a time to reflect on the suffering and death of Jesus, but also to examine how we live in response to His love. In John 13:34-35, Jesus commands His disciples: "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." How are we living according to this calling? How can we embody this love during this reflective season of Lent? After all, these words are not just a reminder of Jesus' love for us, but also a call to live that love out in our relationships with others.

In 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, the Apostle Paul gives us a blueprint for loving as we have been loved. As we reflect on Jesus' sacrifice this Lenten season, we are called not just to remember His love for us, but to actively reflect it in our own lives.

The Season of Lent: A Call to Love as Christ Loved Us (cont)

Love as a Reflection of Christ's Character

Paul's description of love in 1 Corinthians 13 paints a picture of love that is not simply a feeling but an active choice—a lifestyle that reflects the character of Christ. It begins with patience and kindness. Patience means enduring with others, just as Christ has shown incredible patience with us. Kindness is not just being nice—it's a deliberate act of grace that goes beyond surface-level politeness to reflect the heart of God. As our pastor likes to say, He cares about your heart, the root, not necessarily your actions, the symptom.

Reflection: During this season of Lent, we can ask ourselves, "are we patient with those around us, especially in trying circumstances?" Are we consistently kind, even when it feels difficult or inconvenient?

Next, Paul tells us that love does not envy, boast, or act in pride. Envy often leads to comparison and bitterness, stealing our joy, while boasting and pride seek to elevate ourselves at the expense of others. Christ humbled Himself, setting aside His glory to serve us. Love, therefore, humbles itself, seeking the good of others and lifting them up. "...For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Mark 10:45)

Reflection: As we reflect on our hearts during Lent, do we struggle with envy or pride? How can we practice humility and joy in others' successes, rather than comparing ourselves to them?

Love also does not dishonor others, is not self-seeking, and is not easily angered. These qualities highlight love's selflessness—refusing to dishonor others and choosing to forgive, rather than harboring anger or holding grudges. Lent offers us the perfect opportunity to examine where we may be self-seeking and where we can make changes in our relationships to reflect more of Christ's humility.

Reflection: Are there areas where we hold onto anger or resentment? During this season, how can we choose to forgive as Christ forgives us?

One of the most powerful aspects of love described by Paul is that it keeps no record of wrongs. In a world where grudges are so often held, love calls us to let go of past offenses and choose forgiveness. Lent, as a season of repentance, provides us a chance to ask for God's forgiveness and to extend it to others, reflecting the grace we've received.

Reflection: Are there any past hurts or grievances we've been holding on to? How can we let go of bitterness this Lent and experience the freedom that comes with forgiveness?



The Season of Lent: A Call to Love as Christ Loved Us (cont)

Paul continues, saying that love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. True love aligns itself with the truth, standing against injustice, deceit, and wrongdoing. In our own lives, love seeks the good and the right, even when it's difficult or unpopular.

Reflection: Are there times we've tolerated wrong or turned a blind eye to injustice? How can we align more fully with God's truth and stand firm in love?

Finally, Paul speaks of love's enduring nature: it always protects, always trusts, always hopes, and always perseveres. These qualities highlight love's resilience. Love isn't a fleeting emotion but a steadfast commitment to those we care about. It means protecting those we love, trusting them even when trust is hard, hoping for the best, and persevering through trials.

Reflection: How can we practice protecting, trusting, hoping, and persevering in our relationships, especially during the challenging season of Lent?

A Personal Reflection: Replacing "Love" with Your Name

To take this passage even deeper, let's reflect on these qualities of love by replacing the word "love" with our own names. This exercise is not meant to be condemning but to help us assess how we measure up to the love of Christ:

"[Your Name] is patient, [Your Name] is kind. [Your Name] does not envy, [Your Name] does not boast, [Your Name] is not proud. [Your Name] does not dishonor others, [Your Name] is not self-seeking, [Your Name] is not easily angered, [Your Name] keeps no record of wrongs. [Your Name] does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. [Your Name] always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres."

Reflection: When you put your own name in place of "love," what stands out to you? Are there areas of growth? Are there qualities you feel proud of? This Lenten season, allow the Holy Spirit to work in your heart to transform areas where you may fall short and strengthen the areas where you are living in love.

Living Out the Lenten Call to Love

Lent is an invitation to examine our hearts, confess where we've fallen short, and seek transformation through Christ. Here are some practical steps to live out the love of Christ during this season:

- **Examine Your Heart:** Reflect on the qualities of love described in 1 Corinthians 13. Where do you need to grow? Take time this Lent to ask the Holy Spirit to reveal areas of your life where you can better reflect Christ's love.

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Living Out the Lenten Call to Love(cont)

- **Pray for Transformation:** Pray that the Holy Spirit will empower you to love as Christ has loved us—patiently, kindly, humbly, and sacrificially. Ask God to strengthen you in the areas where you struggle.
- **Act in Love:** Choose one area this Lent where you can intentionally practice love. Maybe it's forgiving someone who has wronged you, offering kindness when it's hard, or persevering through a difficult relationship.
- **Speak Love:** Use your words to encourage and uplift others. This Lent, make a commitment to speak words of truth, encouragement, and kindness that reflect Christ's love.

As we move through the season of Lent, let it be more than just a time of self-denial and reflection—it can also be a time of renewal in how we love one another. May we follow Christ's example of sacrificial love and, in doing so, draw closer to Him. Let the love of Christ transform us and be evident in all we do, especially as we prepare our hearts for the joy of Easter.



Call for Submissions: Share Your Stories with Us!

We'd love to hear from you! The FPC Journey is now accepting story submissions from members of our congregation. This is a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the lives, actions, and experiences of the people around us. However, please note that submissions should focus on stories about others — not about yourself. Think of it as an opportunity to highlight the good deeds, inspiring moments, and heartfelt connections that make our church community so special.

Please submit your stories to Chrys Sahgal : sahgalchrys@gmail.com . We can't wait to read your contributions and continue celebrating the amazing people in our congregation!

While we truly appreciate every submission, please understand that not all stories may be included in the newsletter due to space limitations. If your story isn't featured, please know it's not a reflection of its value — we simply strive to include a diverse range of voices and experiences in each issue. Thank you for your understanding and continued contributions!



APRIL UPCOMING EVENTS

HERE AT FPC

April 13-20th- HOLY WEEK

- Please look at your weekly bulletins this month to stay updated on events happening here at FPC during Holy Week which starts with Palm Sunday on April 13th; and be sure to join us Sunday April 20th for a special Easter Service featuring some guest musicians .

April 20th- Easter Egg Hunt

- Join us with your little ones for an Easter Egg Hunt organized by our Children's Ministry. For more info please see Sui

COMMUNITY AT LARGE

April 25, 2025

- Free Christian Singles Dinner @ First OPC
Sunnyvale 1210 Brookefield Ave, Sunnyvale
CA

April 26, 2025

- Phil Wickham will be performing at
Redemption Church located at 105 Nortech
Pkwy, San Jose, CA 95134.

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Please verify event details and times with the respective organizers, as schedules may change. For more information google "Christian Events in April Santa Clara CA".

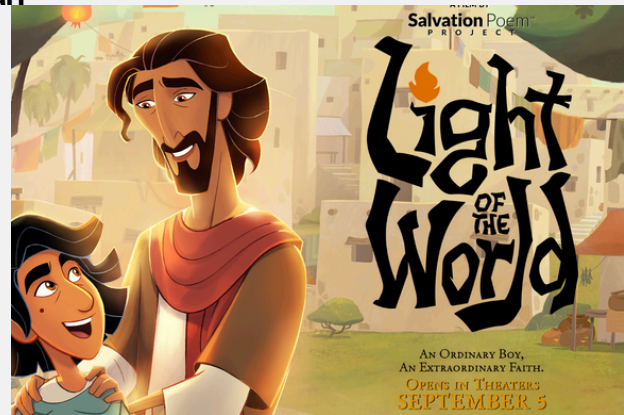
Editor's Picks



The King of Kings: Animated Film in theatres April 11, 2025
Starring Pierce Brosnan, Oscar Isaac, And Uma Thurman



The Chosen: Last Supper Season 5 in Theaters starting March 28



Light of the World: 2D Animated film opening in September 2025

APPS:



The Verse By Verse Ministry (VBVM)
International study app, featuring the Bible teaching of Pastor Stephen Armstrong. Access hundreds of hours of verse-by-verse Bible teaching through entire books of the Bible for free. Listen to recorded teaching, read the accompanying full-length notes, print lessons for use in small groups or for teaching from the pulpit. Watch videos, read answers to hundreds of Bible questions, and more.



Haven isn't just an app—it's your personal guide to draw closer to God and discover unshakable peace. With hand-picked daily verses, thoughtful devotionals, and heartfelt prayers right in your pocket, every moment becomes an opportunity to grow in faith.

CLOSING LETTER

By: Reverend Dennis Woodsmall

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Congregation,

As spring comes and the days get warmer and new birth is felt, the old dark days of winter and the season of barrenness gives way to new life, new growth and transformation.

As we journey through the sacred season of Lent, we are invited into a time of reflection, repentance, and spiritual renewal. If you remember Ash Wednesday, we talked about not just giving up for Lent, but what can we cut out of lives and fill it with newness. Maybe a too busy schedule, or too many commitments and so we draw back to add meditation, prayer and silence our lives. Lent, spanning forty days (excluding Sundays) from Ash Wednesday to Holy Saturday, mirrors Jesus' forty days of fasting in the wilderness. It is a season marked by prayer, drawing us closer to God and preparing our hearts for the joyous celebration of Easter. It is a path of Lent calling us to:

- **Prayer:** Strengthening our relationship with God through daily devotion, Scripture reading, and meditation.
- **Fasting:** Offering sacrifices, whether by abstaining from certain foods or habits, to cultivate self-discipline and dependence on God.
- **Almsgiving:** Extending charity and kindness to those in need, embodying Christ's love in tangible ways.

So many times we have talked about what you do so much as who you are and are becoming. This is a time to extend that heart of compassion, graciousness and love to those you cross in life. And as we get closer to Holy Week is about

Holy Week: From Suffering to Glory

- **Palm Sunday** We remember Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem.
- **Maundy Thursday** commemorates the Last Supper and Jesus' commandment to love one another. Shown by his example of foot washing
- **Good Friday** We reflect on Christ's suffering and sacrificial death on the cross. The price paid by God the Father and his Son that went to the cross joyfully for us.
- **Holy Saturday** A time of silence and waiting as we anticipate the resurrection. That doubt and storm before the brightness of the most glorious dawn ever witnessed by humanity

And finally the unspeakable The Joy of Resurrection

On Easter Sunday, we celebrate the victory of Christ over sin and death. Resurrection is the cornerstone of our faith, filling our hearts with hope and renewal.



Reverend Dennis Woodsmall

Through Christ's triumph, we are reminded that darkness never has the final word—light and life prevail.

Easter is not merely a day but a season of rejoicing and a way of living. As we emerge from the solemnity of Lent, let us carry forward the transformation it has inspired. May the joy of Christ's resurrection renew our spirits and lead us to share His love with the world. We have become New Creation; Free, whole and intimate with the Holy Trinity for all of Eternity.

Let us Rejoice and be Glad, for He has Risen, Risen indeed!!