

## April 1 1 Corinthians 12:20-26

As it is, there are many members, yet one body.  
The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you,"  
nor the head to the feet, "I have no need of you."

\* Think how often one Christian says to another, in words, or actions, or with simply a look, "I have no need of you." How does Christ continue to remember the body when we disrespect, avoid, or dismiss one another?

The members of the body that seem  
to be weaker are indispensable,  
and those members of the body  
that we think less honorable  
we clothe with greater honor,  
and our less respectable members  
are treated with greater respect;  
God has so arranged the body  
giving greater honor to the lesser,  
that there may be no division within the body,  
that the members may have the same care for one another.  
If one member suffers, all suffer together;  
if one member is honored, all rejoice together.

\* Respect, honor! Think about a time when you have seen a faith community treat a member the world rejects with honor and respect. Are we not called always to do so?

\* Remember times when one member of the body suffered and all suffered together. Are we also able to all rejoice when one member is honored?

*How can we thank you, gracious God, for making us the body of Christ? No matter how difficult it is to be your church, may we believe that each person is indispensable. In the midst of division, help us to cherish each other in wisdom and love in Christ. Amen.*

## April 2 1 Corinthians 12:27-31

Now you are the body of Christ  
and individually members of it.  
God has appointed in the church  
first apostles, second prophets, third teachers;  
then deeds of power, then gifts of healing,  
forms of assistance, forms of leadership,  
various kinds of tongues.

\* First, second, third? How have hierarchical structures been harmful? How can the church use and honor various needed gifts? How can office and role clarity be helpful in living together in a congregation?

Are all apostles? Are all prophets?  
Are all teachers? Do all work miracles?  
Do all possess gifts of healing?  
Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret?  
But strive for the greater gifts.  
And I will show you a still more excellent way.

\* How are a whole range of gifts needed by the laity for their ministries in daily life? How can the church call forth and uphold the ministries of all the baptized?

\* In the church, how can we create safe, trustworthy, hospitable, healthy places for us to be different together? How can we create such places in the world for nations to be different together?

*God who creates people and gifts in such diversity, show us the more excellent way. Call forth in all the baptized gifts for ministries in daily life. As the body of Christ, may we respect each other's individuality and roles. And, together, fill us with the Spirit, to equip and encourage one another in mutuality and love. In Christ we pray, Amen.*

### **April 3** **1 Corinthians 13:1-7**

If I speak in the tongues of mortals and angels,  
but do not have love,  
I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.  
If I have prophetic powers,  
and understand all mysteries and knowledge,  
and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains,  
but do not have love, I am nothing.  
If I give away all my possessions,  
and if I hand over my body so that I may boast,  
but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient; love is kind;  
love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude.  
It does not insist on its own way;  
it is not irritable or resentful;  
It does not rejoice in wrongdoing,  
but rejoices in the truth.  
It bears all things, believes all things,  
hopes all things, endures all things.

\* Ponder your gifts, even great gifts, of proclamation, understanding, faith, sacrifice. How do we, at least at times, use them, but forget to love people through them?

\* Ponder how God's love for us can shake us out of rudeness and envy, boastfulness and resentment. How does the Spirit transform service into love?

*O God who loves beyond all love, may we know, and feel, and experience the love you have for us in Christ Jesus, that we may love you with heart and mind, and serve with joy and hope, faith and endurance. May we embody Christ's love as we live as the body of Christ. Amen.*

### **April 4** **1 Corinthians 13:8-13**

Love never ends.  
As for prophecies, they will come to an end;  
as for tongues, they will cease;  
as for knowledge, it will come to an end.  
For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part,  
but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end.

When I was a child, I spoke like a child,  
I thought like a child I reasoned like a child.  
When I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways.

For now we see in a mirror, dimly,  
but then we will see face to face.  
Now I know only in part; then I will know fully,  
even as I have been fully known.  
And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three;  
and the greatest of these is love.

\* How is Paul trying to help us see what we cannot yet possibly see, that knowing God face to face is beyond our present comprehension?

\* But for now we have faith, hope and love. How has love "been the greatest" in your own life and ministry, even as imperfect as it yet is here and now?

*God who knows us beyond our own understanding, give us this hope and faith and love. So fill us with your own love that we will abide in Christ and cherish your people. Amen.*

## April 5 1 Corinthians 14:1-12

Pursue love and strive for the spiritual gifts, especially prophesy.  
Those who speak in a tongue do not speak to other people but to God,  
for nobody understands them, since they are speaking mysteries in the Spirit.  
On the other hand, those who prophesy speak to other people  
for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation  
Those who speak in a tongue build up themselves,  
but those who prophesy build up the church

Brothers and sisters, if I come to you speaking in tongues,  
how will I benefit you unless I speak to you in some revelation  
or knowledge or prophecy or teaching?  
It is the same with lifeless instruments such as the flute or the harp.  
If they do not give distinct notes, how will anyone know what is being played?  
If in a tongue you utter speech that is not intelligible,  
how will anyone know what is being said?

If I do not know the meaning of a sound,  
I will be a foreigner to the speaker  
and the speaker a foreigner to me.

So with yourselves, since you are eager for spiritual gifts,  
strive to excel in them for building up the church.

- \* How can we help brothers and sisters in Christ not only discern their spiritual gifts but also use them to build up the body of Christ, the church?
- \* When are we lifeless instruments with no sound? When do we utter speech that people do not really understand?
- \* How can we help people understand the meaning of our words—and understand theirs—so that we are not foreigners to one another?

*God of prophecy and tongues, God of all knowledge and revelation, make us instruments of your Word so that people will know and understand your will and your grace. In Christ, Amen.*

## April 6 1 Corinthians 14:13-25

Anyone who speaks in a tongue should pray for the power to interpret.  
If I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unproductive.  
What should I do then?  
I will pray with the spirit, but I will pray with my mind also.  
I will sing praise with the spirit, but I will sing praise with my mind also.  
Otherwise, if you say a blessing with the spirit, how can anyone  
in the position of an outsider say the “Amen” to your thanksgiving?

I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you;  
but in church I would rather speak five words with my mind  
in order to instruct others also,  
than ten thousand words in a tongue.  
Brothers and sisters, do not be children in your thinking,  
but in thinking be adults.

If the whole church comes together and all speak in tongues,  
and outsiders or unbelievers enter,  
will they not say that you are out of your mind?  
But if all prophesy, an unbeliever or outsider  
who enters is reproved by all and called to account by all.  
After the secrets of the unbeliever’s heart are disclosed,  
that person will bow down before God and worship God,  
declaring, “God is really among you.”

- \* What do you think Paul means by “prophecy” in this chapter?
- \* How can we help people fully use their minds to pray, praise and instruct?
- \* How can we as a church increase our concern for “outsiders” and “unbelievers” so that we might listen carefully, proclaim, instruct, and help them open their hearts to God?

*O God, you have given us the power of speech. May we use it to proclaim your Word. Increase our love for those who yet stand outside the church and help us help them know you and your love. In Christ Jesus. Amen.*

## April 7 1 Corinthians 14: 26-40

What should be done then, my friends?  
When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson,  
a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation.  
Let all things be done for building up.

If anyone speaks in a tongue,  
let there be only two or three at most,  
each in turn; and let one interpret.  
If there is no one to interpret,  
let them be silent in church and speak to themselves and to God.  
If a revelation is made by someone else sitting nearby,  
let the first be silent.  
The spirits of prophets are subject to the prophets,  
for God is a God not of disorder but of peace.

(As in all churches of the saints, women should be silent in the churches.  
They are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as the law says.  
If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home.  
For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church.)

My friend, be eager to prophesy,  
and do not forbid speaking in tongues;  
But all things should be done decently and in order.

\* How can striving for decency, order, and peace be helpful? How might it look different in various contexts?

\* How have those words in parentheses that women should be silent been picked out and used to keep women from fully using their gifts and leadership in churches?

\* What might it mean to “take turns” speaking and being silent in our teaching and learning from one another today in a faith community?

*God who continues to create and recreate the church, may our life together use the gifts of all in concert with one another to build up the body of Christ. Amen.*

## April 8 1 Corinthians 15: 1-11

I remind you, brothers and sisters, of the good news that I proclaimed to you which you in turn received, in which you also stand, and are being saved, if you hold firmly to the message that I proclaimed to you—unless you have come to believe in vain. I handed on to you of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins, in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day.

\* Of *first* importance: How is the death and resurrection central to everything we do in our life together in the church?

He appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died.  
He appeared to James and to all the apostles.  
Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.  
I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle because I persecuted the church of God.  
But by the grace of God I am what I am, and God’s grace toward me has not been in vain.

On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them— though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. Whether it was I or they, so we proclaim and so you have come to believe.

\* How are you, by the grace of God, what you are?  
\* What does it mean for us today to be “witnesses” of the resurrection?  
\* How are we called, each one of us, to “hand on” the Gospel?

*God of forgiveness and love, you have called each of us to be messengers of your Gospel, witnesses for Christ. Whatever our story, you call us to mission. Give us humility and zeal, strength and courage. Ground us in your grace in Christ Jesus. Amen.*

## April 9 1 Corinthians 15:12-19

Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead,  
how can some of you say  
there is no resurrection of the dead?  
If there is no resurrection of the dead,  
then Christ has not been raised;  
and if Christ has not been raised,  
then our proclamation has been in vain,  
and your faith has been in vain.  
We are even found to be misrepresenting God.

If the dead are not raised,  
then Christ has not been raised.  
If Christ has not been raised,  
your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.  
Then those also who have died in Christ have perished.  
If for this life only we have hoped in Christ,  
we are of all people most to be pitied.

\* What in the world are we doing if we proclaim Christ and do not talk about the resurrection of the dead? After an era of “heaven-only” preaching, we now rightly preach new life in Christ *now* with emphases on social justice and care for the earth and more. How can we continue these crucial emphases *and* talk about life after death?

\* Surely our faith and our proclamation are not in vain! However, how is Christ’s resurrection key to all that we believe, and hope, and say? If not Christ and him crucified and risen, then what in the world *are* we saying?

*O God who raised Jesus the Christ from the dead, we thank you that we do not still live in our sins but in the sure hope of the resurrection from the dead. O Holy Spirit, fill us with this resurrection life to proclaim the Gospel, to work for justice and to care for the earth. In Christ, the living One, our Savior, Amen.*

## April 10 1 Corinthians 15:20-28

In fact Christ has been raised from the dead,  
the first fruits of those who have died.  
Since death came through a human being,  
the resurrection of the dead  
has also come through a human being.  
As all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ.

\* How do we speak about sin and death coming through the first human? How do we speak about the resurrection coming through the Human One, Christ Jesus?

Each in order: Christ the first fruits,  
then at his coming those who belong to Christ.  
Then comes the end,  
when Christ hands over the kingdom to God the Father  
after he has destroyed every ruler and authority and power.  
For he must reign until he has put all enemies under his feet.

The last enemy to be destroyed is death  
so that God may be all in all.

\* How do we tell people that death has been destroyed? How do we live differently knowing that Christ has destroyed the power of all human authority and rule?

*Living Lord Jesus, strengthen us with the assurance that the power of death has been destroyed. All things are now subject to you, who bore the weight of human suffering and humiliation. By the power of the Spirit, transform our lives for powerful servanthood. Amen.*

## April 11 1 Corinthians 15:30-41

Why are we putting ourselves in danger every hour?  
I die every day! That is as certain, brothers and sisters,  
as my boasting of you—a boast that I make in Christ Jesus our Lord.

If the dead are not raised, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.”  
Do not be deceived: “Bad company ruins good morals.” [Is 22:13]  
Come to a sober and right mind, and sin no more;  
for some people have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame.

\* If the dead are not raised, why do we risk and sacrifice for the sake of the mission of Christ? If the dead are not raised, why do we live for Christ?

Someone will ask, “How are the dead raised?  
With what kind of body do they come?”  
Fool! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies.  
You do not sow the body that is to be, but a bare seed,  
perhaps of wheat or of some other grain.  
God gives it a body, to each kind of seed its own body.

Not all flesh is alike, but there is one flesh for human beings,  
another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish.  
There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon,  
and another of the stars: indeed star differs from star in glory.

\* Even amid this two-thousand-year-old understanding of biology and astronomy, what core meaning do you take from Paul’s words, about God’s creating and redeeming activity?

*Creating, Redeeming and Life-Giving God, we give you thanks for the resurrection of the dead. May we this day once again die with Christ and be raised to new life for the sake of sharing your Gospel. Amen.*

## April 12 1 Corinthians 15:42-50

So it is with the resurrection of the dead.  
What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable.  
It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory.  
It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power.  
It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body.  
If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body.

The first man was from earth, a man of dust;  
the second man is from heaven.  
As was the man of dust,  
so are those who are of the dust;  
and as is the man of heaven,  
so are those who are of heaven.  
Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust,  
we will also bear the image of the man of heaven.

What I am saying, brothers and sisters, is this:  
flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God,  
nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

\* With all our attempts to make things imperishable and our lives ever young, what does it mean to you to realize that we come from dust?

\* In an age of consumer dependence on planned obsolescence, what does it mean to you that in Christ Jesus we shall inherit the imperishable?

*O God who creates all that exists, bury our sinful selves with Christ, that we may be raised to new life and to be with you forever. In Christ, our Risen Lord. Amen.*

## April 13

### 1 Corinthians 15:51-58

#### Listen, I will tell you a mystery!

We will not all die, but we will all be changed,  
in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.

For the trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised imperishable,  
and we will be changed.

When this perishable body puts on imperishability,  
and this mortal body puts on immortality,  
then the saying that is written will be fulfilled:

“Death has been swallowed up in victory.”

“Where, O death, is your victory?  
Where, O death is your sting?” [Hosea 13:14]

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.  
But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory  
through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable,  
always excelling in the work of the Lord,  
because you know that in the Lord  
your labor is not in vain.

\* Paul believed that Christ would come again before some Christians living then would die. How have more recent attempts to predict Christ’s coming again been received?

\* Hear the words of Handel’s *Messiah*: “The trumpets will sound...” In the midst of the excruciating pain of loss through death, what does Christ’s victory mean to you?

\* How is the sure hope of the resurrection making you steadfast, immovable? Beloved, on the darkest days, know the excellence of your labor is not in vain!

*Christ of the cross, we cry out with you, “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?” And we cry out in joy: “Death, where is your victory?” We hope in you. Amen.*

## April 14

### 1 Corinthians 16:1-11

Concerning the collection for the saints:  
you should follow the directions

I gave to the churches of Galatia.

On the first day of every week,  
each of you is to put aside and save  
whatever extra you earn,

so that collections need not be taken when I come.

When I arrive I will send any whom you approve with letters  
to take your gift to Jerusalem. If advisable, I may go also.

\* How is the approach of “accompaniment” in churches, supporting one another globally, rooted in the New Testament Epistles?

I will visit you after passing through Macedonia,  
and perhaps stay with you or even spend the winter,  
so that you may send me on my way, wherever I go.

I do not want to see you not just in passing,  
for I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits.

\* How does the ministry of visitation and sustained care help the church grow in faith?

I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost,  
for a wide door for effective work has opened to me,  
and there are many adversaries.

If Timothy comes, see that he has nothing to fear among you,  
for he is doing the work of the Lord just as I am.

Let no one despise him. Send him on his way in peace.

I am expecting him with the brothers.

\* How have adversarial experiences hindered your own ministry?

*God, you accompany us as we travel to one another, as we minister among one another, and as we send each other forth to new mission. Grant us grace and peace in Christ. Amen.*

## April 15 1 Corinthians 16:13-24

Keep alert, stand firm in your faith, be courageous, be strong.  
Let all that you do be done in love.

You know that members of the household of Stephanas  
were the first converts in Achaia,  
and they have devoted themselves  
to the service of the saints.

I urge you to put yourselves at the service of such people,  
and of everyone who works and toils with them.

I rejoice at the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus,  
because they have made up for your absence;  
they refreshed my spirit as well as yours.  
So give recognition to such persons.

The churches of Asia send greetings.  
Aquila and Prisca, together with the church in their house,  
greet you warmly in the Lord.  
All the brothers and sisters send greetings.  
Greet one another with a holy kiss.

I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand.  
Let anyone be accursed who has no love for the Lord.  
**Our Lord, come!**

\* How might we increase the ways we tangibly keep in touch with sisters and brothers in the faith, with other congregations, and church bodies here and globally?

\* Think of ways to recognize and serve those people in the congregation who “refresh the spirit” and “serve the saints” within the church.

*May the grace of the Lord Jesus be with us all. And may our love be with all in Christ. Come, Lord Jesus. Amen.*

## April 16 2 Corinthians 1:1-11

To the Church of God that is in Corinth,  
including the saints throughout Achaia:  
grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.  
Blessed be the God of mercies and of all consolation  
who consoles us in our affliction,  
so that we will be able to console those  
who are in any affliction with the consolation  
with which we are consoled by God.  
Just as the sufferings of Christ are abundant for us,  
so also our consolation is abundant through Christ.

\* How can it be that "If we are being afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation?"

\* How can it be that "If we are being consoled, it is for your consolation, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we are also suffering?"

Our hope for you is unshaken;  
for we know that as you share in our sufferings,  
so also you share in our consolation.  
In Asia we were so utterly, unbearable crushed  
that we despaired of life itself.  
We felt we had received the sentence of death  
so that we would rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead.  
God who rescued us from so deadly a peril will continue to rescue us;  
on God we have set our hope that we will be rescued again,  
as you also join in blessing us by your prayers.

*God of all consolation: in the midst of peril and suffering, we pray for all those in danger, for all who despair, and especially those in fear for their very lives. And we give thanks for all who have received blessings and consolation and endurance, in Christ. Amen.*



**April 17**  
**2 Corinthians 1:12-22**

Indeed, this is our boast, the testimony of our conscience:  
we have behaved in the world with frankness and godly sincerity,  
not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God –  
and all the more toward you.

For we write you nothing other than  
what you can read and also understand;  
I hope you will understand until the end—  
as you have already understood us in part—  
that on the day of the Lord Jesus we are your boast  
even as you are our boast.

\* How is it that in Christ we “boast” of one another? Why?

Since I was sure of this, I wanted to come to you first;  
I wanted to visit you on my way back from Macedonia.  
Was I vacillating when I wanted to do this?  
Do I make my plans according to ordinary human standards,  
ready to say “Yes, yes” and “No, no” at the same time?  
As surely as God is faithful, our word to you has not been “Yes and No.”  
For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we proclaimed among you,  
was not “Yes and No”; but in him it is always “Yes.”  
In Christ every one of God's promises is a “Yes.”

\* When do you vacillate? In your plans? In your faith? How does God's “Yes”  
ground you?

*O God, you have established us, anointed us and put your seal on us, giving us  
the Spirit in our hearts. For this reason, it is through Christ that we say the  
“Amen,” to the glory of God.*

**April 18**  
**2 Corinthians 1:23-2:4**

I call on God as witness against me:  
it was to spare you that I did not come again to Corinth.  
I do not mean to imply that we lord it over your faith;  
rather, we are workers with you for your joy,  
because you stand firm in the faith.  
So I made up my mind not to make you another painful visit.  
For if I cause you pain, who is there to make me glad  
but the one whom I have pained?  
And I wrote as I did, so that when I came,  
I might not suffer pain from those who should have made me rejoice;  
for I am confident about all of you,  
that my joy would be the joy of all of you.

For I wrote you out of much distress and anguish of heart  
and with many tears, not to cause you pain,  
but to let you know the abundant love that I have for you.

\* In the midst of your faith community now, what pain do you experience? In  
what ways are you concerned that you may cause pain when you want the  
community to have joy?

\* In trying to build up the faith of the community, how do you both spare  
people pain and also speak the truth in love? How do you love with confidence  
and consistency?

*Lord God, who suffers with us: we do experience distress and anguish and  
shed many tears in the midst of Christian community. May we so rest in your  
abundant love in Christ Jesus that we may abundantly love one another.  
Amen.*

## April 19 2 Corinthians 2:5-11

If anyone has caused pain, that one has caused it not to me,  
but to some extent – not to exaggerate it – to all of you.  
This punishment by the majority is enough for such a person;  
so now instead you should forgive and console that one,  
so that no one may be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow.  
I urge you to reaffirm your love.

I wrote for this reason: to test you and to know  
whether you are obedient in everything.  
Anyone whom you forgive, I also forgive.  
What I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything,  
has been for your sake in the presence of Christ.  
And we do this so that we may not be outwitted by Satan;  
for we are not ignorant of Satan's designs.

- \* How have you experienced the power of forgiveness in a congregation?
- \* Who, even now, needs forgiveness and consolation?
- \* Could it be that Satan works hardest where Christian community flourishes?  
How can the presence of Christ "outwit" demonic designs?

*Spirit of consolation, strengthen our community so that we can both  
acknowledge how the actions of one can hurt everyone, and wisely love one  
another in the midst of conflict. In Christ, Amen.*

## April 20 2 Corinthians 2: 12-17

When I came to Troas to proclaim the good news of Christ,  
a door was opened for me in the Lord;  
but my mind could not rest because  
I did not find my brother Titus there.  
So I went on to Macedonia.  
But thanks be to God, who in Christ  
always leads us in triumphal procession...

- \* In the context of this passage, what is a "triumphal procession"?

...and through us spreads the fragrance  
that comes from knowing Christ.  
We are the aroma of Christ to God  
among those who are being saved  
and among those who are perishing;  
to one a fragrance from death to death,  
to the other from life to life.  
Who is sufficient for these things?

- \* Consider memorable aromas in your life. How are we aromas of Christ?

We are not peddlers of God's word like so many;  
but in Christ we speak as persons of sincerity,  
as persons sent from God and standing in God's presence.

- \* When have you felt like a mere peddler of God's word? How are we not?

*God of truth, and covenant faithfulness, give us the power of the Holy Spirit  
that we might be persons of sincerity, sent from you, standing in your  
presence, with passion to seek direction for up-building the church and  
sharing Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.*

## April 21 2 Corinthians 3:1-6

Are we beginning to commend ourselves again?  
Surely we do not need, as some do, letters of recommendation  
to you or from you, do we?  
You are our letter, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all.  
And you show that you are a letter of Christ, prepared by us,  
written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God,  
not on tablets of stone, but on tablets of human hearts.

Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God.  
Not that we are competent of ourselves; our competence is from God,  
who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant,  
not of letter, but of spirit;  
For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

\* “Letter” is used in two intriguing ways here. How are we called to minister  
not by the letter of the law but in the Holy Spirit who gives life through the  
new covenant?

\* When we are doubtful of our own competence (or should be), how does  
knowing our competence is from God give us confidence to minister in Christ?

\* Take time to think about how others have “written on our hearts,” a letter of  
Christ. Whether prepared by ourselves, or together in Christian community,  
how are such letters of ministry open and read by anyone and everyone?

*We thank you, Christ Jesus, for calling us to minister in your name, and for  
commending us to those among whom we minister and giving us competence  
from God. Amen.*

## April 22 2 Corinthians 3:7-11

If the ministry of death,  
chiseled in letters on stone tablets, came in glory  
so that the people of Israel could not gaze on Moses’ face,  
because of the glory of his face,  
a glory now set aside,  
how much more will the ministry of the Spirit come in glory?

If there was glory in the ministry of condemnation,  
much more does the ministry of justification abound in glory!  
Indeed, what once had glory has lost its glory  
because of the greater glory.  
For if what was set aside came through glory,  
much more has the permanent come in glory!

\* How are the “letters” of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 34:29-35) both  
glorious and a ministry of death?

\* If the people of Israel could not look at Moses’ face because of the glory  
there, how does one view the cross of Jesus Christ?

\* How is the “ministry of condemnation” both necessary and also “set aside”?  
How is the “ministry of justification” through Jesus Christ a greater and  
permanent glory?

\* How, then, do we minister?

*God of the covenant, we praise and bless you for your holy Law. We glorify  
you for the gift of justification through Christ’s cross. May our lives and our  
ministry glorify your holy name. In Christ, Amen.*

## April 23 2 Corinthians 3:12-4:6

Since, then, we have such a hope, we act with great boldness,  
not like Moses, who put a veil over his face.  
In hearing the old covenant, that same veil is there,  
since only in Christ is it set aside.

Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.  
And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord,  
as being reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image,  
from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.

Therefore, since it is by God's mercy that we are engaged in this ministry,  
we do not lose heart. We have renounced the shameful things that one hides;  
we refuse to practice cunning or to falsify God's word;  
but by the open statement of the truth, we commend ourselves  
to the conscience of everyone in the sight of God.

If our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing.  
We do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord,  
and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake.  
For it is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness,"  
who has shone in our hearts to  
give the light of the knowledge  
of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

\* How and when is the gospel veiled today?

\* Reflect on the images of ministry in this text: freedom, mirror, truth,  
slavery/servanthood, light.

*Gracious, merciful God, we struggle with the words, "that the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." By the power of your Spirit, may our ministries unveil the gospel of truth that all may see you in Jesus the Christ. Amen.*

## April 24 2 Corinthians 4:7-12

We have this treasure in clay jars,  
so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power  
belongs to God and does not come from us.

We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed;  
perplexed, but not driven to despair;  
persecuted, but not forsaken;  
struck down, but not destroyed;  
always carrying in the body the death of Jesus,  
so that the life of Jesus may also be visible in our bodies.

For while we live, we are always being  
given up to death for Jesus' sake,  
so that the life of Jesus may be  
made visible in our mortal flesh.  
So death is at work in us, but life in you.

\* We are earthen vessels. How do you perceive this treasure, this life in Jesus Christ, this work of mission and ministry as God's powerful work in and through you?

\* Surely we did not experience the dangers Paul did; however suffering for the sake of the Gospel is not a competitive sport. What words would you use to describe your trials in ministry? Oppression, persecution, affliction are not to be justified. How does justification through grace strengthen you so that you are not crushed or destroyed?

*God, you are our only strength and courage. May all that we do and all that happens to us be put to death in Jesus the Christ so that in his resurrection those whom we are privileged to serve may experience new life. In his name we pray. Amen.*

**April 25**  
**2 Corinthians 4:13-18**

The scripture says, “I spoke because I believed.” (Psalm 116:10)  
In the same spirit of faith we also speak because we believe.  
We know that God, who raised the Lord Jesus to life,  
will also raise us up with Jesus,  
and will bring us with you into Christ’s presence.

Yes, everything is for your sake, so that grace,  
as it extends to more and more people,  
may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.

So we do not lose heart.  
Even though our outer nature is wasting away,  
our inner nature is being renewed day by day.  
This slight momentary affliction is preparing us  
for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure.  
We look not at what can be seen, but at what cannot be seen.  
What can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal.

\* So we do not lose heart. How can the faith community encourage one another when one is afflicted, one is weak, so that they—we—can focus on what cannot be now seen, on what is being renewed, on what is eternal?

\* Do you speak because you believe?

*O God, everything is for your sake, so that grace, as it extends to more and more people, may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God. Amen*

**April 26**  
**2 Corinthians 5:1-10**

We know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed,  
we have a building from God,  
a house not made with hands, eternal in heaven.  
In this tent we groan, longing to be clothed  
with our heavenly dwelling--  
When we have taken it off we will not be found naked.  
We groan under our burden,  
because we wish not to be unclothed, but to be further clothed,  
so what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.  
God has prepared us for this very thing,  
and given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

\* When have you groaned, or sat with someone groaning, because the earthly tent is being destroyed?

\* How can “not being unclothed,” but further clothed help us think about our eternal life in Christ – now and to come?

We walk by faith, not by sight.  
Yes, we do have confidence.  
We would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.  
Whether we are at home or away, we aim to please the Lord.  
We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ,  
so each may receive recompense for what has been done  
in the body, whether good or evil.

\* Wherein lies your confidence? So, how do you live now?

*O God, we make our home in you, now and when you finally call us home. Clothe us in Christ’s righteousness. We walk by faith! Amen.*

## April 27 2 Corinthians 5:11-17

**Therefore**, knowing the fear of the Lord, we try to persuade others;  
but we ourselves are well known to God,  
and I hope that we are also well known to your consciences.  
We are not commending ourselves to you again,  
but giving you an opportunity to boast about us,  
so that you may be able to answer those  
who boast in outward appearance and not in the heart.

If we are beside ourselves, it is for God;  
if we are in our right mind, it is for you.  
The love of Christ urges us on,  
because we are convinced that one has died for all;  
therefore all have died.  
Christ died for all, so that those who live,  
might live no longer for themselves,  
but for him who died and was raised for them.

From now on, **therefore**, we regard no one from a human point of view;  
even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view.  
So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation,  
everything old has passed away.  
See, everything has become new!

\* Do you sometimes wrestle inwardly, (or outwardly, as Paul does here) about how others receive you and your work? How would you describe how you are convinced, persuaded, urged on, for the sake of mission?

\* How does Christ's death for you and for all empower us to live not for ourselves but for Christ who died and was raised for all?

*Christ Jesus, who rose from the dead that all might have life, we live our lives in the "therefore." Transform us in heart, mind and body that by the power of your Spirit, **therefore**, we might persuade others the old has passed away and the new has come! Amen.*

## April 28 2 Corinthians 5:18-21

All this is from God who reconciled us to Godself through Christ  
and has given us the ministry of reconciliation;  
in Christ God was reconciling the world to Godself,  
not counting their trespasses against them,  
and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us.

\* The ministry of reconciliation! What a powerful gift. What a daunting challenge. Think about the many needs for reconciliation in the world, in homes, in the congregation, within and among nations. Envision God's reconciling the world to Godself and us to one another.

So we are ambassadors for Christ,  
since God is making this appeal through us.  
We entreat you on behalf of Christ,  
be reconciled to God.

For our sake God made him to be sin who knew no sin,  
so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

\* We all will "appear before the judgment seat of Christ" (5:10). How do these words speak to that? How do we become the righteousness of God through the one who knew no sin?

\* How do you see yourself as an ambassador for Christ? How does God make an appeal to the world through you?

*Reconciling God, may we be your ambassadors. Give us vision, wisdom, zeal and understanding that we may indeed be ministers of reconciliation in the world in Christ Jesus. Amen.*

**April 29**  
**2 Corinthians 6:1-13**

As we work together with Christ, we urge you also  
not to accept the grace of God in vain.

See now is the acceptable time;  
see, now is the day of salvation.

We are putting no obstacle in anyone's way,  
so that no fault may be found with our ministry.

As servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way:  
through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities,  
beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger,  
by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit,  
genuine love, truthful speech, and the power of God;  
with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left;  
in honor and dishonor, in ill repute and good repute.

\* What do you hear in Paul's lists about what he has gone through for the sake  
of mission and ministry? How do you relate, both to the list of sufferings  
endured and to the list of love expressed?

We are treated as impostors, and yet are true;  
as unknown, and yet are well known.  
as dying, and see -- we are alive;  
as punished, and yet not killed;  
as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing;  
as poor, yet making many rich;  
as having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

We have spoken frankly to you Corinthians; our heart is wide open to you.  
There is no restriction in our affections, but only in yours.  
Open your hearts wide also.

*As we minister in your name, Christ Jesus, give us the faith, courage and  
boldness of Spirit to serve with zeal in such confidence. Amen.*

**April 30**  
**2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1**

Do not be mismatched with unbelievers.

\* There are so many ways this verse has been used – misused -- to keep  
Christians from interrelating with those outside their faith. In the context of  
Paul's trying to convince the Corinthians to accept his ministry, what might  
his questions mean to them? To us?

What partnership is there between righteousness and lawlessness?  
What fellowship is there between light and darkness?  
What agreement does Christ have with Beliar?  
What does a believer share with an unbeliever?  
What agreement has the temple of God with idols?

For we are the temple of the living God; as God said,  
"I will live in them and walk among them,  
and I will be their God,  
and they shall be my people.

Therefore come out from them, and be separate from them,  
and touch nothing unclean;  
then I will welcome you, and I will be your father  
and you shall be my sons and daughters."  
(Lev 26:12; Ezek 37:27; Isa 52:11; 2 Sam. 7:14)

*Since we have these promises, as your beloved, Almighty God, let us cleanse  
ourselves from every defilement of body and of spirit, making holiness perfect  
In Christ's holiness we pray. Amen.*