



## What Remains: A Lenten Invitation

We begin with ashes, with what remains. The fire of our days burns bright, leaves us smoldering and small. Every Sunday we kneel to confess and rise absolved. And every week we return to our habits of flame and our "Hosannas" burn to ash.

Do you, too, feel desperation in your charred bones? The weariness of "almost," cresting the hill to discover there is another, larger one ahead? How ardently I desire to reach wherever it is I am going. How I wish to leave the wilderness behind. And how very much I want to receive the manna in my singed hands and first say, "Thank you" before I blurt, "What is it?"

Friend, does it matter what—exactly—it is?

You fell far and lost yourself before memory began. And you wonder: Does it matter that life does not look like you want it to? Yes, that pain—the riddle we cannot solve, the human enigma—matters. I know this because I saw him engulfed in the flame of our humanity. And I heard the people say, "Who does he think he is?" and, "He's just like the rest of them." I heard myself whisper: "Are you enough?"

And he didn't say anything. He just stayed there and refused to leave. He swallowed the enigma whole, and his body bled—wordless.

The cross is true wilderness: He endured our collective desert heart. Here provision is most real and the choice must be made: Is the Bread of Life come from heaven and broken—for me—enough?

Can the alchemy of God transform ash with blood? Can he take our fragile dust and make us whole? Can he give us breath again?

Is it true?

Beloved, you should ask him yourself. Bring the ashes of last year with the hope stuffed beneath your mattress. Bring the things you hid in the basement of your heart. Bring the sorrow that most assuredly matters.

He might not say anything, but he won't scowl when you set your burden baggage down. You've forgotten: His intimacy with grief (his, yours) lies beyond your knowing.

When he looks at you, show him the vulnerable palm of your hand. He might not say anything. But if you let him, he will give you the Bread of Life himself.

During this Lenten season, may you draw near to that sacred place where our desperate need encounters his unshakable provision. May you slow your entire self enough to unbury the basement of your heart. May you encounter the Manna Giver who breathes ash back to life. And may you learn to die with him that you may truly live.

*Kelly Ostergren*

Director of Operations  
Church of the Lamb

## Upcoming Events

**Women's Study** — Tuesdays  
beginning February 21  
10–11:30 a.m.

901 Oak Hill Drive, Harrisonburg  
contact: [zoe@chruchofthelamb.org](mailto:zoe@chruchofthelamb.org)

**Men's Ministry** — March 5  
5:30 p.m.

3217 River Road, Elkton  
contact: [dan@vacab.com](mailto:dan@vacab.com)

**Maundy Thursday** — April 6  
6:30 p.m.

Redeemer Classical School

**Good Friday** — April 7  
6:30 p.m.

Redeemer Classical School

**Easter Vigil** — April 8  
8 p.m.

The Barn at 362 Indian Trail Road

**Easter Sunday** — April 9  
10 a.m.

The Barn at 362 Indian Trail Road

*The three practices in Lent are those addressed by Jesus in Matthew 6.*

## Journeying Through Lent Together

### 1. Fasting

Consider setting aside Friday, the day of Jesus's crucifixion as a full fast (see our devotional, Keeping a Holy Lent, for more details on full fasts and partial fasts). Fasting can be abstaining from food entirely or paring down to simple meals. With young children, it can be formative to mark this season in some way like less TV and no sweets. As you fast, pray for the needs of others, the church, and yourself. Remember that Sundays are always feast days in which we celebrate our Lord's Resurrection.

### 2. Prayer

Use the Lenten Prayer guide provided and the Scriptures to focus your attention on God. Please make Church of the Lamb a focus in your prayer life this Lent—for increasing spiritual health and maturity and for God to provide for us in such a way that He receives credit and glory. The Vestry and staff are setting aside Wednesday lunch each week to fast and pray for our church. Will you pray as well? In the words of the prophet Joel, who knows what God could do in this?

### 3. Almsgiving

Almsgiving is a fast from greed and excess in our lives. You may give to a local organization, to our Rector's Discretionary Fund, or simply give time to a friend in need. We will take up an offering for the Rector's Discretionary Fund at our Maundy Thursday service on April 6.



Blow the trumpet in Zion; consecrate a fast;  
call a solemn assembly; gather the people.  
Consecrate the congregation.  
Joel 2:15–16a

## Meet new Church of the Lamb members: Pam and Larry Ayers



Larry and I (Pam) live in Grottoes and we own and run a mini storage business called County Line Mini Storage. We have had this business for 20 years. We have 2 locations and our son, Reed, has recently joined us to help run the business. We have two other daughters who both live in Richmond, VA. We see them frequently. We also have 3 grandchildren and 1 great grandchild.

We came to Lamb during Covid when we learned from John Bennetch that the church was meeting outside with no masks! We enjoy the wonderful people and friendly atmosphere at Church of the Lamb and while Larry uses his giftings of building and construction at the barn/land I have found a place at the piano having enjoyed music all of my life. We also enjoy a good pickleball game and day trips to wineries/breweries. Most importantly, we hold God, family and church (in that order) as the most high on our agendas!

# Chasing the Fruit

by Joe Martin

About five years ago I planted a small orchard in my sideyard with about 18 trees. From this first-hand experience, I learned some things that work well and others that don't. I keep talking to people and learning and trying new things each year. Last year was my best year ever with enough peaches to can, cherries for a few pies, and pears to make fruit roll-ups. My plum tree went crazy so I experimented with dehydrating those. To my surprise they were excellent.

My experience with fruit goes back to my days as a youngster. My grandpa, who was a pastor, did seasonal work at a local orchard. On some Saturdays, I would find myself climbing ladders and picking apples. It's funny how I don't remember ever getting paid, but I'm sure a few baskets of apples found their way into our pantry. One hot autumn afternoon my water supply ran out. I was "dying" of thirst. So I took a Golden Delicious apple and pounded it on the side of a 20-bushel crate to make it juicy. I claim that's the day an apple saved my life.

After I was married, our family would travel to my York County, PA home for our annual Thanksgiving celebration. Both of my parents grew up in the Depression, so food was one of their love languages. We enjoyed good meals during our visit, but my favorite snack was dried apple chips that my mom would buy at a nearby fruit market.

Fast forward to our move to Virginia. I was unable to find apple chips in the local market that matched the flavor and crispiness of my memories. So, on a whim, I purchased a fruit dehydrator. After experimenting with many different varieties, I discovered that Pink Lady and Stayman apples make the best chips, especially with a touch of cinnamon. They remind me of my favorite dessert, apple dumplings. My kids encouraged me to trademark my apple chips as "Papa Joe's". I now make over 100 gallons of dried apples each year for family and friends.

Several years ago, I found an old apple cider press at a local auction. It was solidly constructed but the wood was rough. It made a good winter project to sand, stain, and seal the porous wood with polyurethane. Two years ago, we made a batch of cider with our parish group.

After hand-cranking a few bushels, I quickly decided to upgrade it to an electric motor. By increasing the RPMs and using a better shredder, we were able to increase the yield from 1.2 to 2.7 gallons per bushel.

At the COTL annual celebration last fall, we pressed 41 gallons of cider. Many people commented that the cider was the best they ever had. Let's hope our beginner's luck continues.

I am excited about the proposed orchard as part of the Church of the Lamb masterplan. There will be plenty of opportunities for people to help with nurturing, watering, and harvesting the fruit. Fifty trees should produce ample fruit to share with our congregation and perhaps the local food pantry. I envision nearby schools using some fruit for hands-on demonstrations of making jellies and dehydrated fruit. The broad variety of trees should provide a good mix of apples for cider in the fall. Cider apples don't have to be big or beautiful; and is a good way to finish out the season.

A recent answer to prayer was getting the holes dug. I was getting stressed because it's a big job and various solutions were not coming together. After praying about it with our parish group, I woke up the next morning with the impression that God could answer our prayer in a way I had not thought of. The weather was good, so I went down to the orchard to clear some rocks. While I was working, a man arrived with a skid loader and auger to prepare to "plant" some electric poles for the cowshed. I hurried down to greet him and ask if he would be willing to dig the holes for the trees. I was amazed that we were able to dig 50 holes in 40 minutes. The next day we were able to get 20 trees in the ground from a local nursery. We only selected trees that have a good track record for growing well in our area, as well as producing tasty fruit.

If all goes well, we can hope to enjoy some delicious fruit in four to five years. So stay tuned!



*Samuel and Charlie Whitfield were on the scene helping out with the planting.*



**The Land Team** works with the Abide Project Director (Daniel Zimmerman) to create and implement a vision for the church property's beautification, production, and care. The Land Team stewards the vision for the Abide Project, researches development options, leads other parishioners in work days, and renovates our structures and geographic features.

Its members are Larry Ayers, Alec Bauserman, Linda Doherty, Gail Hayes, Thomas Hayes, Tim Holz, Joe Martin, Zoe Myers, Jed Pascarella, Kayla Schnarrs, Daniel Zimmerman.

"She looked up at me and said with a smile, 'What's your name? How can I pray for you?'"



## An Invitaton to Prayer

by Alec Bauserman

For most of my life I have viewed prayer with a mixture of hopefulness, confusion, helplessness and bitter resentment, all mixed together with a lot of skepticism. Although I would say I believed in the power of prayer, you would not know it based on the amount of time I actually spent praying. I would ask friends to pray for me yet I would not pray for myself and rarely for others. I always seemed to have the attitude of "God is going to do what God is going to do and a few half-hearted prayers on my part won't do much to change anything." And so I didn't pray. It was not until recently that my thoughts on prayer changed and my hope is that yours may too if you find yourself thinking the same things I had (and still often do).

It all started with Fran.

In the summer of 2010, I began meeting and worshipping with a group of lovely people in Harrisonburg who felt called to start a new church. One day they invited Aubrey Spears to come preach and after his sermon, just before Eucharist, he said "If anyone needs prayer, there is a wonderful woman named Fran out on the porch who would LOVE to pray for you." Intrigued, I went onto the porch and there she was. She looked up at me and said with a smile "What's your name? How can I pray for you?" I told her my wife was not a believer, and could she please pray that God would reveal himself to her. She immediately grabbed my hand and what followed was a pivotal moment in my life. She prayed not as one stranger for another but as though we were old friends. She praised God, set me before Him, and covered me with

blessings. She begged for his mercy, pleaded for his Spirit, and reminded Him of His promises to his people. She quoted scripture as though she had the whole book memorized. I was in awe. Never in my life had anyone prayed for me in such a way, much less someone I had only met a few minutes before. At that moment I realized God had called me to bind myself to this group of people and my life has been enriched beyond measure ever since. I began to think "maybe there was something to this prayer thing after all."

And yet, I still rarely prayed. I'm a doer. I foolishly believe that I can handle 99% of the challenges life throws at me on my own, and in those rare instances when I reach my wit's end I might send up a prayer as a last-ditch effort to sway God. And so I rarely prayed. In His mercy, God has slowly and painfully worked in my life to show me just how wrong I was. So how did my view of prayer change?

First, the prayers of a weekly small group taught me how to pray. Seeing people who had spent a lifetime in prayer showed me how to pray with boldness, humility, and persistence. I heard stories of answered prayers, and amazing examples of "God knows what you need before you ask for it." I began to copy my friends in their manner of prayer and it has become easier and more natural as time goes on. It no longer feels foreign or fake.

Secondly, I learned why we pray. Simply put, Jesus did, and therefore so should I. I had read and re-read the gospels and yet it took years for the message to sink in. Jesus repeatedly says, "WHEN you pray..." with no caveat for those of us who ignore prayer. Another big factor was serving on the prayer team at Church of the Lamb. This has blessed me in ways I could hardly believe. To meet someone in their need, to bring them and their petitions before God, to share their heartaches . . . it's an honor and a privilege and it has drawn me closer to you, my brothers and sisters in Christ, and has drawn me closer to the Lord. I am now convinced more than ever of the need and the utility of prayer.

The final and most recent thing to change my views was a simple book given to me called "Prayer: Does it Really Make a Difference?" by Phillip Yancey. I don't read much for pleasure anymore and to be honest it looked like something you would find in the Self-Help/Religion section of Barnes & Noble so it lay on my bedside table for months. I finally opened it one day and it has turned out to be an amazing book. The author shares his own struggles with prayer, his victories through prayer, and countless stories of others like us. I cannot recommend this enough.

From a prayer skeptic to a believer, it only took 40 years. Glory to God in the highest!

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Prayer Team members are available at the back of the sanctuary during Eucharist. They would LOVE to pray for you.