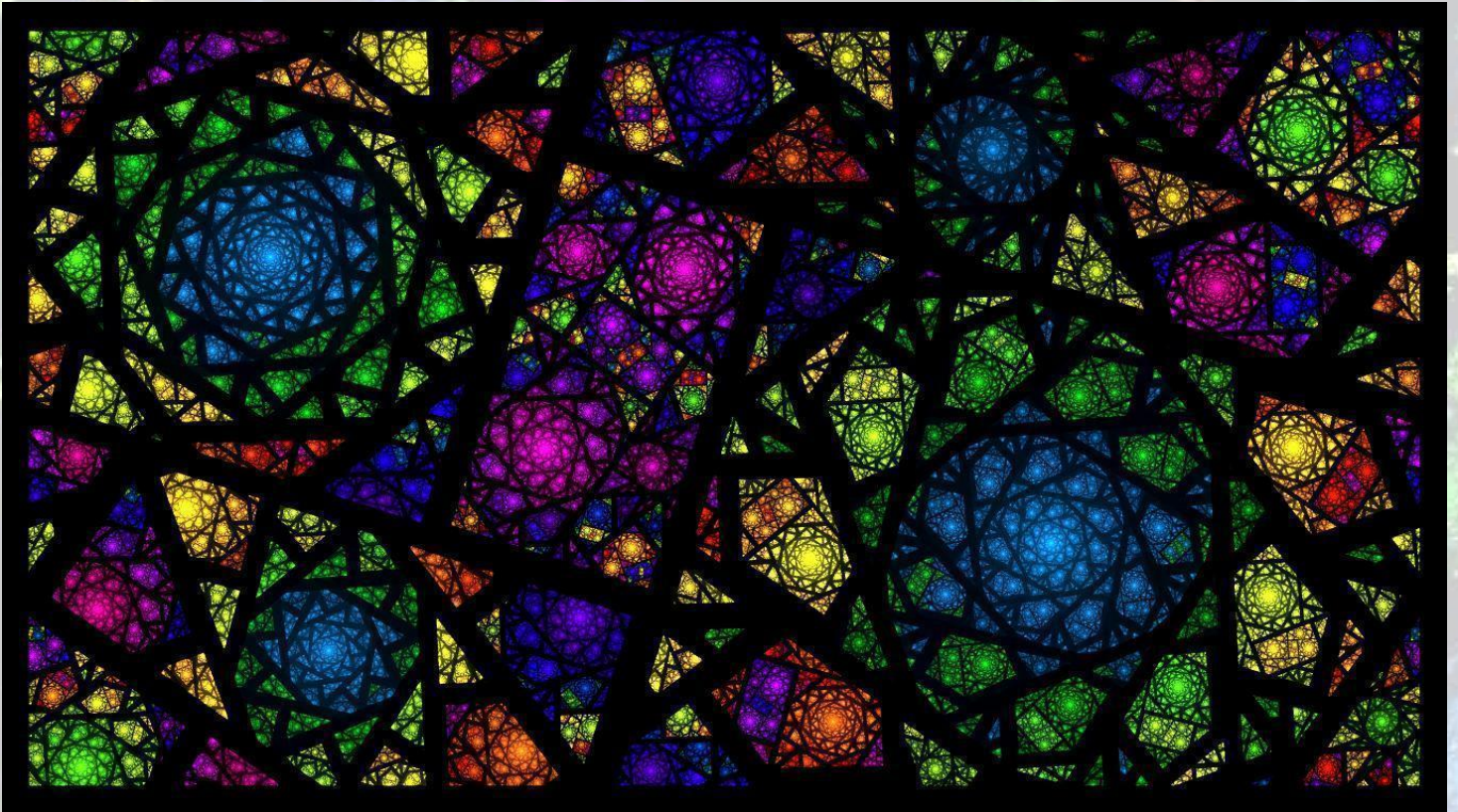




**District of Columbia Baptist Convention**

The Office of Empowering Congregations



# Coronavirus Sunday:

*Keeping the faith when you have to keep the distance*

*A worship service for one & all*

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# Welcome!

You wanted Bedside Baptist Church. Well, the doors of the church are open. I will be your liturgist for the foreseeable future. Welcome!

It's "Coronavirus Sunday." The virus has changed our living conditions but the holy days remain. We are still in the season of Lent and giving up things we had not intended. Unloading our lives of self-imposed weights and burdens so that we can get closer to Jesus, at least three steps closer to Jesus—instead of taking two steps back. Chocolate was on the list of things we would deny ourselves but now we are filling up grocery carts with toiletries, baked goods and water.

Creature comforts, we will now need the chocolate to survive and don't forget caffeine. We had crossed it off the list; now, we cross our hearts that we will give up something—just not this. Not now!

Self-quarantined to contain the spread of this deadly virus, Christians struggle with the command and the compulsion to gather. We are a body with many members, mystically connected through the body of Christ. His is a corporeal religion. Thomas had his doubts until Jesus showed him his wounds (cf. John 20.24-29).

*But, how will we believe when we cannot even show our faces?*

And how can we hear the preacher if we cannot leave our homes? How will we hear the preacher if the church has no audio-visual team? How can we hear the preacher if we are without the Internet or the church does not offer livestream? This is getting deep.

But, this is the reason for Bedside Baptist Church and the program you hold in your hand. It is to aid in your having church all by yourself if you have to.





# Sabbath

“Our goal should be to live life in radical amazement. ... Get up in the morning and look at the world in a way that takes nothing for granted. Everything is phenomenal; everything is incredible; never treat life casually. To be spiritual is to be amazed.”

Abraham Joshua Heschel, *Sabbath*

## Opening Prayer |

Eternal One,  
Silence  
from whom my words come;  
Questioner  
from whom my questions arise;  
Lover  
of whom all my loves are hints;  
Disturber  
in whom alone I find my rest;  
Mystery  
in whose depths I find healing  
and myself;  
enfold me now in your presence;  
restore me to your peace;  
renew me through your power;  
and ground me in your grace.

Ted Loder, “Ground me in Your Grace,” *Guerrillas of Grace*

## Litany |

The early Church shared all things in common— a common purse, a common place, a common person in Christ Jesus. During this season of Lent and loss, I will give my undivided attention to his uncommon cross— his bridge and our way— an expression of God’s uncommon love for us all.



I will remember our common story that brought us all together and to the same conclusion, that we are here for each other and not ourselves. I will not look out and around for another. My eyes are on my sisters and brothers.

Nothing missing and no one left out, I am complete and completely open to receive others as kin. Because I cannot reach out to my neighbor and not hold the hand of my sister and brother. Nothing truly separates me from her or him.

No matter the hour or the issue, I will pray for the discernment and the discipline to side with the vulnerable, to speak up for the voiceless, to stand with the marginalized. Hand in hand, we are one people, one voice and all in one place. Following the leader, Jesus the Christ and hoping to step on his toes while keeping the faith and in so doing, keeping our sister and brother. Amen.

### Prayer Requests |

Pray for our world and its inhabitants, brought together through a global pandemic that calls for us to live apart. Quarantines and face masks, we cannot hold hands but we can still put out hands together and pray. Pray for our siblings, the state of our lives brought to a screeching and sobering halt and for us to move more peacefully and gracefully in the days ahead.

### Hymn |

“They will know we are Christians by our love”

We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord  
We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord  
And we pray that our unity will one day be restored  
And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love  
Yes, they'll know we are Christians by our love

We will work with each other, we will work side by side  
We will work with each other, we will work side by side  
And we'll guard each (one's) dignity and save each (one's) pride  
And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love  
Yes, they'll know we are Christians by our love.

Offering | Give cheerfully. Give happily. Give without grudge or force but as you feel led and from your place of abundance. Give freely and hold nothing back.



## Meditation | “Hitching a ride to Calvary: Going Jesus’ way?”

During this holy season of Lent, we are on a journey of lasts— last meal, last steps, last breath of Jesus the Christ. We read and are bound by his last will and New Testament. *His words are written in red; following him is a death sentence.* We are following a dead man walking. Stay with him. Jesus is going somewhere and it is going to bless you.

Followers not to be confused with fans as Jesus and his disciples are not the latest boy band. Save your screams and your reach to touch his hand. Healing in his garment’s hem, Jesus is deliverer from head to toe. Still, he moves without a red carpet and travels without a security detail—well, except for Peter who always keeps a sword.

Don’t scream his name; just call him Lord.

Soren Kierkegaard makes the distinction between followers and admirers saying,

“The admirer never makes any true sacrifices. He always plays it safe. Though in word, he is inexhaustible about how highly he prizes Christ, he renounces nothing, will not reconstruct his life, and will not let his life express what it is he supposedly admires.”<sup>1</sup>

With a towel in hand, the admirer is a watered- down version of a disciple. Kierkegaard calls the admirer “a cheaper edition of follower.”<sup>2</sup>

The admirers are the fly by night, Nicodemus type. They don’t want to suffer or have to stand by him when things don’t turn out right. They want Christ at the lowest possible price, that is no sacrifice. They don’t want to pack light, to carry a cross and wave goodbye to the world as they know it and themselves as they have been known.

They don’t want to live or die like Jesus. *They don’t want to be like him; they just like him.* They turn his words into mantras and Jesus becomes a motivational speaker. He makes our lives better but we don’t talk about how. We avoid talking about his death. So, we celebrate his life and say nothing about the night that everything was taken away from him.

Morbid, we change him into someone more palatable than the two common thieves he is hung between. The good news but a sad story, we turn it into something more profitable, more capitalistic, more prosperity- driven. Today’s



disciples say, “I’m too blessed to be stressed” while Jesus groans in the garden of Gethsemane, sweating it out and crying out to God. His disciples are squeezing in a power nap and Jesus is questioning his purpose on earth. It’s a toss- up, a tug-o- war: My will or Yours?

We clean Jesus up; we clean his blood up. His cross makes such a mess of things and our capitalistic dreams. Craig Hill reminds us in his book *Servant of All*, “Status is not a gift of the Spirit. Ambition is absent from lists of spiritual fruit in the New Testament.”<sup>3</sup> Bishop William Willimon says, “Status, honor and the drive to get ahead would be a worthy human endeavor *if it were not for Jesus.*”<sup>4</sup> Keeping up with the Jones’ and the Kardashians or Jesus, it just doesn’t add up.

More than two thousand years later, we still have not caught up to him. We are too busy climbing, clawing our way to the top instead of digging in our heels with those who are at the bottom. We are so determined to win that we are stabbing each other in the back. Disciples are not supposed to get ahead of each other; instead, we fall in line behind Christ. Christians still haven’t realized that the Church was not created to get ahead in the world.

No, we are called to go under, underground and “to turn the world upside down” (Acts 17.6).

God down below, Jesus is the lowest of the low. No rung, he is hung from a tree. This is what it means to go higher with Christ. And “he will not come down.”<sup>5</sup>

Eugene Peterson writes in *The Jesus Way: a conversation on the ways that Jesus is the way*, “To follow Jesus means that we can’t separate what Jesus is saying from what Jesus is doing and the way that he is doing it. To follow Jesus is as much, or maybe even more, about feet as it is about ears and eyes.”<sup>6</sup> Yes, to sit at his feet is to stand before his cross.

Caesar and the crowd think that they have gotten the last laugh. Beat half to death and a public humiliation to boot, no one will follow him here. We would have to thumb a ride to Calvary. Get in but most are passing by it. Go to church; they’ll try to get you close to it. But they aren’t traveling up that lonely road.

There is no traffic; there are no traffic signs there. You can get to the cross in no time. You won’t bump into many people no matter the time of day. Because no one is in a hurry to die with him.

*Nobody is going Jesus’ way.*



## Benediction |

“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all” (Second Corinthians 13.13, NRSV).

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<sup>1</sup> *Bread and Wine: Readings for Lent and Easter*, (Walden, NY: Plough Publishing House, 2003), 60.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 59

<sup>3</sup> Craig C. Hill, *Servant of All: Status, Ambition and the Way of Jesus*, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2016), 1.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* ix

<sup>5</sup> This is a song lyric taken from the song “He Decided to Die (He would not come down from the cross).”

<sup>6</sup> Eugene Peterson, *The Jesus Way: a conversation on the ways that Jesus is the way*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 2007), 22.