ASH WEDNESDAY—FIRST DAY OF LENT
Psalm 51: 1, 6, 10, 16b, 17

When my heart ruptures with grief and loss,
When my spirit shrinks to pathetic size,
When my hopes are feeble and my faith forlorn,

Have mercy on me, O God, in keeping with Your steadfast love.

You have shown me the path to Life,
Life that is full and unbounded,
Dizzy with delight,
Saturated with significance.

You have pointed out to me time and time again,
That generosity and compassion are my guides,
On that journey.

And now I come to You,
Broken of spirit and heart,
Ready to huddle and cower
Before the howling unknown,
To disregard Your presence
In my past and in my future,
And in this turbulent time zone of NOW.

Yet You desire that I be true and reliable in my inward being;
Therefore sow in my secret heart
The wisdom to know my utter dependence on You.

Keep me focused, even in the gray fog of defeat,
On the steady beam of Your steadfast love,
On the me You have called and dreamed me to be,
On the blessed community through which You are revealed.

Let me act with the generosity and compassion
You have lavished on creation,
Lest I blight my life and my companions
With coldness and anxiety.

Create for me a new beginning,
And put an unshakeable spirit within me...
A supple spirit,
Open to God’s ways.

A heart that has broken, and that has broken its hold on conceit,
Is a heart You will not spurn, O God.

Psalm cited from Redemption Songs—A 21st Century Descant on the Psalms commentary in italic
THURSDAY, THE SECOND DAY OF LENT
Genesis 2: 15-17

You may freely eat of every tree of the garden;
But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil,
You shall not eat...

This tree is spiked
With divining rods
That will tug and pull you
Perilously and painfully
Close
To
An underground stream,
Heaving and insidious,
Hell-bent on cleaving a chasm through your heart,
Isolating good from evil.

...Eat freely,
Of every tree...
But the tree of the knowledge of good and evil,
Don't go there!

I created it ALL  good.
All the
Jangling,
Jarring,
Incongruent,
Elements of
Identity, trait, and spirit.

Till and keep the blessed contradictions,
Composted into
The wholeness and holiness
Of Eden,
The garden,
Where I have sown compassion
In the rich soil of variegation.

Let Me keep you from the grave and horrible perception
That humankind will be
Either or
Only
Evil or
Good.
FRIDAY, THE THIRD DAY OF LENT
Psalm 32: 1-2, 7
Romans 5: 14a

Joyful are those whose arrogance is forgiven, whose error is erased.
Joyful are those whom the Most High forgives and holds blameless,
And in whose spirit there is no denial of the truth.

No denial
Of the truth
Of the dominion of death
In the realm of my
Ramshackle, derelict
Spirit.

No denial of my arrogance
In claiming
To be
More
Than I am,
Or less
Than
The Creator has dreamed
Of me.

You are my shelter;
You protect me from woe.

Stars shining bright above me,
Night breezes seem to whisper You love me,
Birds singing in the sycamore trees,
Dream a timeless dream of me.
You surround me with songs of deliverance,
Redemption songs.

Psalm cited from Redemption Songs—A 21st Century Descant on the Psalms
"Dream a Little Dream of Me," by Louis Armstrong, adapted lyrics and other commentary in italic
SATURDAY, THE FOURTH DAY OF LENT
Matthew 4: 1-11

The voice of evil,
    the lure of self-aggrandizement,
    the call to self-centeredness,

That is,
The voice of evil,
Steals upon us
When we are fresh
From the freshet of the Holy,
Offering what is not-in-itself evil,
    not necessarily corrupt,
    not conspicuously consumptive.

The voice of evil
Carries an edge,
A sharpness that severs the bond of community,
A bitterness that taints goodwill,
A twang of alienation

From

All that is good and holy.

Gospel of Matthew cited from New Revised Standard Version of the Bible
commentary in italic
MONDAY, THE FIFTH DAY OF LENT

John 3: 17
Psalm 121: 5

Indeed, God did not send Jesus Christ into the world to condemn the world,
But in order that the world may be saved through him.

Not to condemn,
But to save.
Somehow God wanted so desperately
To redeem every aspect of our lives,
To save every murky corner of our being,
To polish every jagged edge
Until it shone with brilliance,
To breathe meaning
Into each gasp that issues
From our declining bodies.
God wanted that so much
That the Almighty
Became vulnerable,
Through the person of Jesus,
Chose to walk with us,
Through the dangers and strife,
Of life on earth.
Not to condemn,
But to save.

The Eternal One is your keeper;
The Most High is your protection,
close by,
ready,
at hand.
Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John
And led them up a high mountain, by themselves.
And Jesus was transfigured before them,
And his face shone like the sun,

Archbishop Desmond Tutu says
That we are put here
To be
The transfiguration of the Almighty.

Through us
God intends to
Transfigure,
Re-form,
Re-cast,
Hate into love,
Inequity into justice,
Poverty into wealth,
Grief into joy,
Death into life.
Through us.

Through us,
Will come the
Transformation,
Permutation,
Transmogrification,
Of the heavenly
Into the earthly,
Of the spirit
Into flesh,
Of the cosmic Love
Into intimate compassion.

From the gravel-strewn paths
Of our down-to-earth lives,
From our dusty reluctant encampments
On craggy unreasonable heights,
We are summoned.

Go transfigure.
Now, Sarai was barren,
She had no child.
This was a fact,
Well-established.

Then came the walloping
Word
From the Most High.

I will make of you a great nation.

Well, yeah, if
You’re not
Barren.

So what is the meaning,
For you, Sarai,
Of this boisterous and intrusive promise?
Is the Almighty
Huffing and puffing outside your door to
Blow you from Haran
Windswept as an empty milk weed pod?

Or does this account as we receive it,
Contain some bias?
Does the newsfeed betray
Some inability to see beyond the
Preconceived?
Surely the Master
Of indirect discourse
Allowed for multiple points
Of reference,
And pointed right at you,
Along with Abram,
While saying, I will make of you a great nation.

This great nation
Wells up through
The invisible,
The unrecognized,
The unreported-upon,
Who forsake their supposed limitations
To respond to the
Call
To faithfulness.
Where there is no law,
Neither is there violation.
Here we are
Outlaws.
And dis-orderly.
But not desperados.

No longer
Frantic,
Anxious,
Distressed,
Distracted. Neither
Desperate.
Nor disparate,
But embraced.
One,
In character and
In community.

This rift between
Faith and Law
Is not so much
A celestial
Slugfest
As
A bridge
Of sighs
Spanning
The harsh gorge
Of triumphal judgment
With compassion’s
Graceful
Arc.

Letter to the Romans cited from New Revised Standard Version of the Bible
commentary in italic
FRIDAY, THE NINTH DAY OF LENT
Psalm 121: 6-8
Romans 4: 16

I lift up my eyes to the hills.
Where will my help come from?
My help comes from the Holy One,
The Maker of heaven and earth.

All of
The dazzle and reckless beauty of this planet,
All of
The wonder and bountiful love in our lives
Come from You.
And You care for us.

God will not let your foot slip;
The God who keeps watch over you will not slumber.
The God who keeps watch over the people will neither slumber nor sleep.
The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon disturb you by night.
The Almighty will keep you from all harm; God will keep safe your life.
The Holy One will keep watch over your going out and your coming in,
Now and forevermore.

It depends on faith,
Trusting in the Almighty,
And then simply embracing
The Holy One's
Ways
And
Means.

Letter to the Romans cited from New Revised Standard Version of the Bible
and The Message
Psalm cited from Redemption Songs—A 21st Century Descant on the Psalms
commentary in italic
SATURDAY, THE TENTH DAY OF LENT

John 3:7
Luke 5: 18-20

You must be born from above.
Maybe this is a stretch, but
It sounds kind of like that time when
Some men came, carrying a paralyzed man on a bed.
They were trying to bring him in and lay him before Jesus;
But finding no way to bring him in because of the crowd,
They went up on the roof and let him down with his bed
Through the tiles
Into the middle of the crowd
In front of Jesus.

When I was paralyzed,
My friends came through.
Through the roof.

When I could not move,
When I was incontrovertibly
Stuck,
Inflexible,
Maybe not so much in body
As in soul,
Not yet in rigor mortis,
But definitely in rigor spiritus,
They came,
Huiling angels.

Crashing through clay,
Finding a way,
Delivering me,
Plopping me down,
In front of
Grace.

You must be born from above.

commentary in italic
MONDAY, THE ELEVENTH DAY OF LENT
John 4: 28a

Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city.

*The water jar stood.*
Empty?
Full?
*Lingering evidence*
*Of a conversation*
*Of revelation.*

*The water jar stood,*
*Worn and graceful,*
*Its function*
*Superseded*
*By*
*Direct contact*
*With the*
*Eternal*
*Aquifer.*

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*Gospel of John* cited from *New Revised Standard Version* of the Bible
*commentary in italic*
Pirated away
From slavery,
We’ve lost our grip
On identity.

Now we are wanderers
In inhospitable lands
Where only the lawless
And the mad
Seek refuge.

Loosed
From the stultifying clutch
Of subjugation,
We roam
The harsh topography
Of liberation.
These are not simply Winds of change That flare around us But soul-searing Sandblasts, Detonating Within and among Us.

Chiseling, Shaping, Re-forming Us. Rubbing out the grimy contours Of our servitude to False gods and their Hubris-laden avatars, Painstakingly etching Our new identity As the people of The Holy One.

Endurance produces character, And character produces Hope.

We stagger through The unholy mess of Wilderness, Where we can Neither Plant nor dwell, Hoping, But not yet Trusting, That the One Who has fed us with The bread of heaven Will not abandon us On this stony Windswept Ridge.

Exodus and Letter to the Romans cited from New Revised Standard Version of the Bible commentary in italic
THURSDAY, THE FOURTEENTH DAY OF LENT
Exodus 17: 3a
Psalm 95: 1, 6-7a

We thirst
For replenishment of spirit.
We seek
Hydration,
A balancing
Of our bodily
And corporate
Fluids.

Our throats are parched,
We cannot lift our voices.
Our hope is sere.

O come, let us sing to the Most High;
Let us make a joyful noise to our stronghold and our deliverance!

We’re not there yet,
Our memories still ensnared
In the at-least-predictable
Tangle of captivity,
Our imaginations not yet
Engaged
In or to
The plotline of our destiny.

Let us kneel before the Holy One, our Maker!
For this is our God, and we are the people God formed,
The sheep in God’s care.

Water us,
That our cellular structure
May be saturated with Your mercy.
Water us,
That we may fill out
And take on
The shape of Your dreams.

Exodus cited from New Revised Standard Version of the Bible
Psalm cited from Redemption Songs—A 21st Century Descant on the Psalms
commentary in italic

YEAR A
Mary Susan Gast
FRIDAY, THE FIFTEENTH DAY OF LENT
Psalm 95: 8, 10b

Do not be fainthearted like your ancestors in the wilderness...

Pharaoh pursued us
When first we fled.
Pursued us with
Predator drones
Intent
On recapturing
The workforce that
Erected and solidified
An empire of ego.

Pharaoh pursues us,
With predator drones,
Burrowed and buzzing
Deep in our psyches,
Intoning
The lure
To return to
The mire of mindlessness,
To trust
In tyranny.

They are a people whose hearts go astray,
And they do not commit themselves to My ways.

Psalm cited from Redemption Songs—A 21st Century Descant on the Psalms
commentary in italic
SATURDAY, THE SIXTEENTH DAY OF LENT
Psalm 95: 1-3, 6-7a

O come, let us sing to the Most High;
Let us make a joyful noise to our stronghold and our deliverance!
Let us come into God’s presence giving thanks;
Let us sing songs of joy to the Holy One!

Lift every voice and sing, till earth and heaven ring,
Ring with the harmonies of liberty;
Let our rejoicing rise, high as the listening skies,
Let it resound loud as the rolling sea.

For the Almighty is the great God,
The God above all gods.
O come, let us honor the Most High,
Let us kneel before the Holy One, our Maker!
For this is our God, and we are the people God formed,
The sheep in God’s care.

God of our weary years, God of our silent tears,
Thou Who hast brought us thus far on the way;
Thou Who hast by Thy might, led us into the light,
Keep us forever in the path, we pray.

Psalm cited from Redemption Songs—A 21st Century Descant on the Psalms
commentary from “Lift Every Voice and Sing,” by James Weldon Johnson, in italic
How long will you grieve over Saul?
How long will you stay,
Wedged,
Your feet immobile
In the sludge
Of the past?

How long will you grieve over Saul?
How long will you allow
The tallow of
A burnt-out dream
To blunt
Your prophetic,
Whetted,
Truth-speaking
Edge?

How long will you grieve over Saul?
How long will you lament
The energy you squandered
In prolonged allegiance
To a shortsighted
Decision?

How long will you grieve over Saul?
Before you seek the Eternal One’s
Long,
Deep,
Penetrating vision?

For the Holy One
Does not see
As mortals
See.
They look on the outward appearance,
But the Holy One looks
On the heart.

I Samuel cited from New Revised Standard Version of the Bible
commentary in italic
Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?

We are spirited away
From the familiar,
With its petty reassurances.

We are called away,
From the customary,
With its daily debasements.

We are called to
Believe,
And not to beg the question;
To create a stir,
To simply and honestly
Give witness to
A Presence
That brings
Comfort
To the inconsolable,
Purging confusion
With fusion that forms
A new alloy,
Rendering us,
For all the world to see,
Into a substance that is
Blatantly precious,
And irrepressibly resilient,
Strengthened in all its properties.

Jesus, I believe.
WEDNESDAY, THE NINETEENTH DAY OF LENT
Psalm 23

The Almighty cares for me, I am never in want.
God shepherds me into green pastures, to eat,
And guides me beside quiet waters, where I can drink.
God renews my life.
The Holy One leads me along paths that are free from danger;
It is God’s very nature to keep me safe.

Even when I pass through death’s bleak landscape, I will not fear;
For You are with me;
The signs of Your authority bring me comfort.
You prepare a feast for me in full view of my enemies;
You anoint my head tenderly with fragrant oil;
You fill my cup to overflowing.

Surely God’s goodness and love shall follow me all the days of my life,
And I shall dwell in the household of the Most High my whole life long.

Psalm from Redemption Songs—A 21st Century Descant on the Psalms
THURSDAY, THE TWENTIETH DAY OF LENT  
I Samuel 16: 7b

The Holy One looks  
On the heart,  
On the intention,  
The character,  
The constitution, quality, mettle,  
And will,  
And sees,  
"Here is someone  
After  
My own  
Heart."

I Samuel cited from New Revised Standard Version of the Bible  
commentary in italic
See here now.
Our limited vision
Balks
At the panoramic
View.

The earth-encompassing
Embrace of grace
Is just
Too much
For us.

Our dinky perspective
Imposes an angle
On mega-dimensional
Reality,
Shrinking infinite intentions
To the infinitesimal thickness
Of a line,
A closed-eyed crowing
Unto blindness.

Oh, Light of the World,
Cast for us
The prospect of
Limitless love.

Let us
See
Here
Now.
SATURDAY, THE TWENTY-SECOND DAY OF LENT
I Samuel 7b
“Electrocardiogram”

Reading the EKG,
Interpreting the
Electrical activity,
The sparks of
Ignition and light,
From the
Core of our being,
Generated
Over time,
Captured,
From the surface
Of our thoroughly human flesh,
The Author of Life
Delights
To see
A healthy
Heart,
Uncompromised by
The fatal
Arrhythmia of greed,
Pulsing with
Waves of compassion,
That pass
Through
Intrinsic conduction pathways,
From and to
The Heart of Creation.

“Electrocardiogram” cited from Wikipedia
commentary in italic
MONDAY, THE TWENTY-THIRD DAY OF LENT
Ezekiel 37: 5b

Thus says the Sovereign One
To the bones strewn across the valley
Of chaos and carnage,
I will cause breath to enter you,
My breath,
My spirit,
The aspiration,
Inhalation,
Exaltation,
That imparts
Life.

I will cause breath to enter you,
Purposefully,
Willfully,
With vision,
And benevolence aforethought,
Because I choose,
Beyond
The range of human control
Or impulse,
To do so.
And you shall live.

Don’t hold Your breath, God.
Please.
Don’t hold
Your breath.

Ezekiel cited from New Revised Standard Version of the Bible
commentary in italic
TUESDAY, THE TWENTY-FOURTH DAY OF LENT
Ezekiel 37: 1, 11b

Catastrophe
Beyond memory had
Swept into that valley
And dropped them where they stood,
With no human presence
To mark or mourn
Their sharp descent
From the land of the living.

Disconnected,
Disassembled,
Fatally isolated
From one another,
In deadly
Dis-location,
They lay,
Strewn,
Awry,
Out of shape,
Out of touch with
The pattern
Of life.

Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost.
We are cut off completely.

Ezekiel cited from New Revised Standard Version of the Bible
commentary in italic
Recomposed,
Reassembled,
Dry bones,
Still
Lack life.

Breathe upon these slain
That they may live.
And the Breath came into them,
Sweet and moist
Spirit force
And they lived,
And they stood on their feet.
And they came together
As God’s people,
Animated,
Inspired,
To be more than
A rattling resuscitation.

Incited by One Who is
Compassion and Faithfulness,
Reconciler and Saviour,
They lived,
They stood on their feet,
The congregation
Of the Most High.

Everything that rises must converge,
Moving upward,
Toward greater
Love.

Ezekiel cited from New Revised Standard Version of the Bible
“Everything that rises...” from The Omega Point, by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin
and other commentary in italic
THURSDAY, THE TWENTY-SIXTH DAY OF LENT
John 11: 39, 43

You gotta be a little shaky,
Tottering out of the tomb,
Stenchy and in obvious
Decomposition,
Still entangled with
The furnishings
Of death.

Shaky, but roused,
By that loud voice,
Summoning,
Shattering the
Crushing hush
Of death.

Come out!
Abandon the grave,
You are not yet
Ready for burial.

The stone is taken away.
The cement of imprisonment
In the rock-bound past,
The granite of regret,
The hard flint of disinterest,
Have all been
Dis-interred.

Time now
To enter
Again
The community
Of the faithful,
The land
Of the living.

Gospel of John cited from New Revised Standard Version of the Bible
commentary in italic
FRIDAY, THE TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY OF LENT
Psalm 130
Ezekiel 37: 12-13

Out of the depths I cry to You,
From my dead ends,
My terminal illnesses,
My incurable delusions,
I cry to You.

I wait for the Comforter,
My whole being waits,
Crying out,
From the depths
Of my discouragement
And sorrow,
Of my pain,
And regret,
My moaning
Echoes unsettlingly
In the surround-sound
Of the cave of isolation
That has sealed me in,
That has sealed my fate.

If You, O Blessed One, watch for wrongdoing,
God, who will survive?
But You forgive,
Astounding me with grace.

"I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people.
I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live,
Then you shall know that I, The Font of Life,
Have spoken and will act."

O people, put your hope in our Creator!
For with the Author of Life there is unfailing love,
And great power to free us.
It is the Holy One who will free us from all the malice we have rendered.
Free us,
Free us all,
As a people
Awed and captivated,
But never confined,
By the Wellspring of Generosity,
The Heart of Well-Wishing Joy,
From Which we have sprung,
By Whom we are
Sprung.
Free.

Ezekiel cited from New Revised Standard Version of the Bible
Psalm cited from Redemption Songs—A 21st Century Descant on the Psalms
commentary in italic

YEAR A
Mary Susan Gast
SATURDAY, THE TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY OF LENT
John 11:8, 9b
Confession of Faith of the Protestant Church of Timor

Are you going there again?
*There? Where they were,*
Just now,
*Trying to stone you?*

Are you going there again?
*To boogie on the borderline*
*Of destruction?*
*To wade into*
*The rivers of misery?*
*To daunt death itself?*

We believe in the God whom Jesus called Father
Who nurtures and cares for us like a Mother
God above us, who created the heavens and the earth,
Who created all things
To live in community and so to complete one another.
We believe in Jesus Christ, God among us
The light of the world, not only the light of the Church.

*So this is the quality of the*
*Light of the World?*
*You generate the*
*Brightness*
*That makes it possible to see*
*Beyond our shadowy boundaries?*
*You illuminate*
*Our connections to one another*
*And the Great Current of energy and creativity?*
*You beam*
*Into this world,*
*The light of recognition*
*That there is*
*No foreign sorrow,*
*No alien joy.*

*I hope to God*
*You’re*
*Going there again.*

Gospel of John cited from *New Revised Standard Version of the Bible*
Confession of Faith of the Protestant Church of East Timor, adopted 31st General Synod, 2007
commentary in italic

YEAR A
Mary Susan Gast
MONDAY, THE TWENTY-NINTH DAY OF LENT
Matthew 21: 9

Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting, 
“Hosanna!  Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Most High.”

“Hosanna!”
A shout of praise,
Of adoration,
Yet rooted, stuck,
In a cry more primal,
More desperate,
“Save me!”
Deliver us from this hellacious state
We are in,
From these nasty and repellent
Times.

Those who went ahead,
And those who followed,
All turned to their focal point,
Their lodestar,
And roared,
“Save us!”

Gospel of Matthew cited from New Revised Standard Version of the Bible
commentary in italic
When he entered Jerusalem,
The whole city was in turmoil, asking,
"Who is this?"

Who IS this?
Who IS this?
Who can it be,
Coming to you,
Humble,
Astride oppression and discontent,
Straddling ancient promise
And present hope?

Who is this?
Who meets us where we are
And melts the stone of death away,
Who weeps with our sorrows,
And sweeps our fears into oblivion,
With the swish of palm branches?

Who is this?
Who comes to us
Humble,
 Redeeming
The daily desperation,
The discordant separation,
Of self
From community,
Of community
From God,
With the
Sweep
Of Divine
Vision?

Open to me the gates of goodwill,
That I may enter through them
And give thanks to God the Almighty.
O give thanks to the Most High, for God is good;
God’s steadfast love endures forever!

Gospel of Matthew cited from New Revised Standard Version of the Bible
Psalm cited from Redemption Songs—A 21st Century Descant on the Psalms commentary in italic
WEDNESDAY, THE THIRTY-FIRST DAY OF LENT
John 13: 21

Betrayal gnaws a hollow spot
Through the guts
Of friendship.

The closeness of companionship
Is looted.
Trust and affection
Sour,
Run rancid,
Corrupted into
Acid,
That debases
The fiber
Of the hallowed.
THURSDAY, THIRTY-SECOND DAY OF LENT
Psalm 118: 22-23
John 12: 32

The stone that the builders have rejected has become the chief cornerstone.

Spurned.
Rejected.
Judged to be fatally flawed,
Unfit for service,
Dangerous.

Upending all human concepts,
The Divine Architect picked up that stone,
And clarified the grand design.

Here is the cornerstone,
The first stone set in the foundation,
The stone that sets the frame of reference,
For all other stones.

Here, in the person of Jesus,
Are the qualities I seek:
Compassion that runs deep,
Love poured out for friends and for enemies,
Open arms to embrace and redeem the world,
Drawing all people
Closer to Me.

Here is life worth living,
Here is death worth dying,
Here is the rock,
The chip off the Old
[Very old, read “Eternal”]
Block.

The stone that the builders have rejected
Has become the chief cornerstone
In the blueprint for
The New Creation.

This is the Holy One’s doing;
It is marvelous in our eyes.

Psalm cited from Redemption Songs—A 21st Century Descant on the Psalms
commentary in italic
FRIDAY, THIRTY-THIRD DAY OF LENT
Psalm 118: 1b

God’s steadfast love endures forever.

Forever.

*God’s love endures,*
*Carries on,*
*Over time and changing circumstance,*
*Persists,*
*Despite wimpiness and whining,*
*Keeps on going,*
*Beyond disillusionment or discouragement,*
*God’s love endures,*
*Forever.*

Unwavering,
Unfaltering,
Supporting the hesitant headway of humankind,
Remaining firm beneath the erosion of our faithfulness,
Unswerving in pursuit of our well-being,
Unyielding flame of compassion,
Never stifled by our iciest aloofness.
Never quelled by the blanket of blanket indifference.

God’s love endures,
Love endures,
Forever.

Psalm cited from *Redemption Songs—A 21st Century Descant on the Psalms* commentary in italic
SATURDAY, THIRTY-FOURTH DAY OF LENT
Psalm 31: 9-10, 12

Be gracious to me, O God,
For I am in torment;
My eyes dissolve with grief,
My soul and body also.
My life is spend with sorrow,
And my years with sighing;
My strength fails
Because of my misery,
And my bones waste away.
I have passed out of memory like one who is dead;
I have become shattered clay.

Shattered.
Back to dust.
Disintegrating, imploding,
Sapped by tears,
Vitality fatally diluted,
Out of the solution.

Now there is no solution,
No mixture of the substance
Of misery with courage,
Of sorrow with hope.
Only torment.

I have passed out of memory like one who is dead;
I have become shattered clay.

Restore my solubility, I pray,
Mix together Your deliverance
With my frailty,
Dissolve my despair
In Your compassion.

Be gracious to me, O God,
Yours is the Solution I seek.

Psalm cited from Redemption Songs—A 21st Century Descant on the Psalms commentary in italic
Let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, 
Not neglecting to meet together...but encouraging one another.

*Encourage,*
*Enhearten,*
*Take heart,*
*Oh brothers and sisters,*
*Whenever we gather,*
*Proffer sips of restoration,*
*Tastes of reconciliation,*
*Dollops of joy,*
*A sampling of what is to come,*
*When at last justice holds sway,*
*Compassion reigns.*

*Encourage,*
*Enhearten,*
*And relentlessly provoke, taunt,*
*Incite, wheedle, and aggravate*
*One another,*
*To greater and greater*
*Expressions of love,*
*Strewn wildly on the winds of freedom,*
*Smeared with a toddler’s exuberance,*
*Over the face of the earth.*

*Great swallows of restoration,*
*Feasts of reconciliation,*
*Heaps of joy.*
*Now and forever*
*More.*

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Letter to the Hebrews cited from *New Revised Standard Version of the Bible*
commentary in italic
TUESDAY, THIRTY-SIXTH DAY OF LENT
Hebrews 4: 16
Psalm 22: 1a, 3

Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness,
So that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?
Yet You are honored as the Holy One, enthroned by the reverence of Your people.

So where, exactly,
Is grace instated?
Where is the lyrical expression of benevolence
Positioned in power?
How do I get there from here?
Here, where the landscape is so utterly godforsaken,
Where, inside and out, all is stagnant and stingy.

My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?
I stagger in my weakness,
I wander in my bewilderment,
I glance around and snag no hint of hope,
Amid the briars of despondency.

Yet You are honored as the Holy One,
Enthroned.....

So might it be that You have not abandoned me?
But that I have spiraled
In awkward circumnavigation,
Running around the unmistakable,
Missing the obvious,
That You, Who are mercy and grace,
Are present in mercy and grace,
That Your throne is the heart of
Steadfast love,
That Your heart is the throne of
Steadfast love?

Letter to the Hebrews cited from New Revised Standard Version of the Bible
Psalm cited from Redemption Songs—A 21st Century Descant on the Psalms
commentary in italic
WEDNESDAY, THIRTY-SEVENTH DAY OF LENT

Job 14: 10-12
Lamentations: 3: 21-23

But mortals die, and are laid low; humans expire, and where are they?
As waters fail from a lake, and a river wastes away and dries up,
So mortals lie down and do not rise again;
Until the heavens are no more, they will not awake or be roused out of their sleep.

But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope:
Great is Your faithfulness.

Mortals die,
My mother was neither startled nor discomfited
   by her life’s final lightning flash.
She smiled into soft northern lights of welcome,
Seeing sweet faces framed among the stars.
My father slipped away in his sleep,
Answering a silent call that roused no fear,
No need to contemplate the drop into eternity.

Humans expire and where are they?
Mortals lie down and do not rise again;
Until the heavens are no more...

Both my parents passed beyond this life with grace,
Gifting their heirs with the legacy of expansive testimony
That both life and death can be accomplished well,
   if not perfectly;
Faithfully, if not without faltering.
Great is Your faithfulness.

Which still leaves me sobbing
   and wounded, heart-rent.
Until the heavens are no more,
They will not awake...

Whenever colliding air masses of
Transience and transcendence
Meet, over steamy seas,
And I attempt to count the seconds
Between lightning flash and thunderclap,
To gauge the distance between myself
And the coming storm of loss.
This I call to mind, and therefore I have hope:
The steadfast love of the Most High never ceases.
HOLY THURSDAY—THIRTY-EIGHTH DAY OF LENT

John 13: 34

I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you should also love one another.

Love,
Not some poofy little Valentine’s Day confection, but
Love, the heavy duty, industrial strength,
Just-before-the-crucifixion variety,
Costly and crazy love,
Risky, rare, and relentless.
Outcasts and enemies,
Friends and cyphers,
Love one another.
Just as I have loved you...

With compassion and courage,
Ardor and accountability,
From glory to calamity,
Through the deadliness of daily-ness,
And the blessedness of serenity,
Love one another.
Just as I have loved you...

Gospel of John cited from New Revised Standard Version of the Bible commentary in italic
GOOD FRIDAY—THIRTY-NINTH DAY OF LENT
Psalm 22: 1-2, 9-18, 23-26, 31b

My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?
Why are You so far from helping me?
So far from the words of my groaning?
O my God, I cry out by day,
But You do not answer;
And by night,
But I find no rest.

Awash in grief, strained by cares,
Stretched taut over the crater of stress,
We can only wail in isolation,
Sleepless in our desolation.

Yet You are honored as the Holy One,
Enthroned by the reverence of Your people.
In You our ancestors trusted;
They trusted, and You delivered them.
To You they cried, and they were saved;
In You they trusted, and their hopes were not wasted.

Thin hope, a gruel
Watered down
With tears,
Leaves us
Wasted and done in.

Infuse this weak broth
With the marrow of memory,
That there may be substance
To our trust,
A steamy tureen of hardiness,
Hefty and robust.

In You they trusted, and their hopes were not wasted.

Psalm cited from Redemption Songs—A 21st Century Descant on the Psalms
commentary in italic
HOLY SATURDAY—FORTIETH DAY OF LENT
Lamentations 3: 22-23

The steadfast love of the Most High never ceases,
Whose mercies never come to an end,
They are new every morning;
Great is Your faithfulness.

Like the earliest disciples, we are so often stuck between crucifixion and resurrection,
Hope befogged with loss, grief, hesitancy,
   remorse for not having done more or
   having been more tenacious,
Hope choking for lack of clarity and oxygen,
As the tomb is sealed on Promise.

Wending through the anguish of death and betrayal,
The fond mercies of the Author of Life
Alight with preposterous hope
Among a disheveled and disoriented people.

The steadfast love of the Most High never ceases.

Lamentations cited from New Revised Standard Version of the Bible
commentary in italic