

Dear Friends,

I haven't shared much lately through the news updates. It's not that I don't have things to say; I always have something to say! I've been trying to provide space for the voices of the other members of the leadership team, so I haven't written anything for you to read and consider.

I've enjoyed reading the thoughts and inspirations from the gifted people serving on the leadership team. We are also trying to promote good news and ministry focus coming from our congregations and ministries in the mission center. All those pieces take up space and I felt it was important to enjoy the sharing of others.

Last week, Amanda and I were able to get away for a few days. While we were away, I came across this writing by Joyce Rupp. Even though I was on a few days break, I was taking time each morning to prepare for a retreat I'm facilitating this weekend. Listening to music to help me focus on what it means to receive and offer blessings. The words and phrases kept coming to me throughout each day.

This year, I have felt more scattered and wrestling with more issues during Lent. It just seems that things are happening more that are taking away my focus and situations are forcing their way into the spaces I was hoping to give to Lent. Maybe that's why this writing continues to visit me each day in my devotions. I am aware of several struggles and also celebrations. New experiments in how we gather as community as well as how to address behaviors and expectations of others are just a couple of things that have crept into the spaces.

Health needs of so many in our mission center as well as our extended families continue to creep into the spaces. Decisions about priesthood calls and ministry find their way into space. If I'm honest, I'm not sure I have any space left for the journey of Lent and yet, the season continues on regardless of my space issues. Thankfully, I recognize God is in the midst of every one of these spaces and even the ones to which I'm blind.

This week, I offer you this writing from Joyce Rupp as words of comfort, challenge, and blessing. May we each embrace the space of what her words inspire.

In Gratitude,
Larry

Carrying Crosses, A Lenten Prayer (Joyce Rupp)

Holy One who journeys with me on the road of life with its hills and valleys,

May I recognize the cross that is mine and carry it in a trustful way, confident that the undesired parts of my life can be guides to my growth.

Teach me how to be with my personality traits that I consider unworthy or unacceptable.

Inspire me to release my tight grip when I wrestle with the resistant part of myself, the one that

insists on having everything in life turn out the way I desire or demand.

Increase my awareness of the false judgments, the unfair expectations that quickly arise to crowd out kindness and compassion for self and others.

Lessen unrestrained fears and tedious worries that keep me imprisoned in turmoil and confusion, thus diminishing my spirit's strength and ability to reach beyond myself.

Soften any hardness of heart that I have toward another. Increase my ability to be understanding. Help me topple walls that prevent my being a forgiving person.

Expand my perception of the good things my life already holds. Decrease apprehension about not having enough, being enough, doing enough, or growing enough.

Awaken the undying song of hope in my soul as I carry my unwanted cross each day, so that even in the worst of times I continue to trust you to provide what is needed.

Confident of your grace and daily empowerment, I give myself to you as fully as I am able at this time. As I carry the crosses that are mine, remind me often that you are always with me, and never against me. I place my desire for union with you into your loving care. Amen.