

THE MOSAIC

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EMMANUEL BAPTIST CHURCH

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Pastoral Ponderings



“Doubts are the ants in the pants of faith. They keep it awake and moving.” That’s more of the wisdom of Rev. Frederick Buechner who died six months ago. In other words, Buechner thinks that doubts are good. They keep us alive and attending to what matters.

Some people associate doubts with questions. They think some questions about faith are dangerous and therefore should be off-limits. Questioning God or God’s presence might be a slippery slope to losing faith altogether. But, in the spirit of life being a daring adventure or nothing at all, I invite us to open ourselves to questions and even to the possibility of doubts this Lenten season.

Every January, we hold our annual meeting. At that time, we usually look back over the previous year. We receive reports on the last 12 months – routine happenings, births and deaths, how much money we spent, how many ways we repaired the building, what special events we celebrated together. We can look back and describe with reasonable certainty what happened. But this year, we spent most of our time together focusing on questions. The questions were about our ministry priorities and how to sustain our building. Together we offered some preliminary answers. None of our answers carry the weight of certainty. Looking forward is a much more ambiguous, tentative task than looking over our shoulders.

Most of us are not comfortable being in that ambiguous place for very long. We want certainty. Hebrew Bible scholar and theologian Walter Brueggemann often speaks about this quandary. He says “We all have a hunger for certitude, and the problem is that the Gospel is not about certitude, it’s about fidelity.” He says that fidelity, which I call faithfulness, is a relational category. It is alive and changing. Like the ants in the pants of faith. Certainty nails everything down into mechanical facts. Faithfulness recognizes that the answers can change, depending on a great many things, like whose perspective is dominant, how the questions are framed and what we already know or believe and what we do not know.

For a while now, as a church, we have been seeking the way of faithfulness, the place of ambiguity more than certainty. The history through which we are living keeps demanding that we thrive in the tension between the rich tradition of the Emmanuel of our past and the ongoing missional possibility of the Emmanuel of the future. That is the backdrop of our Lenten season which is focused on the spiritual practice of seeking.

I pray that we can stay curious, open and nimble. I am working hard to soften my assumptions and expand my perspectives. I trust that you are also doing those things. May this season be one of honest exploration, drawing us more deeply into the fullness of life, into the heart of God and into richer faith.

Peace,
Kathy





seeking: honest questions for deeper faith

Lent 2023

The scriptures for this Lenten season offer many stories of Jesus encountering people who are seeking: Nicodemus comes to him in the veil

of the night, he heals a man born without sight. In these stories, each person is seeking a new beginning, a different life, a deeper faith. What unfolds is an exchange filled with questions and exploration. Often, an unveiling occurs—assumptions are disrupted, a new perspective is revealed, mystery grows.

Our Lenten series is founded on questions. Some feel restorative (*Can these bones live?*) Some feel like a charge or challenge (*Who will you listen to?*) Some are hopeful and curious (*How do we begin again?*). Our questions won't necessarily lead to answers, but they can help us find clarity and a new perspective. Ultimately, we pray they lead to a new beginning, a restoration, a wider grace. Like the characters in our Lenten scriptures, we are also seeking many things: clarity, connection, wonder, justice, balance. We are seeking our calling, the sacred, and how to live as a disciple. Throughout the turbulence of the past few years, many of us are asking big questions about our lives and our faith. We hope this series will help us unpack some of those big questions in ways that are honest and faithful. Throughout this season, we hope you will continually ask yourself: what am I seeking? What is God seeking?

Sunday Mornings

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|--------------------|--|
| February 26 | Lent 1 – Who will you listen to? Genesis 3:1-3 |
| March 5 | Lent 2 – How do we begin again? John 3:1-17 |
| March 12 | Lent 3 – Will you give me a drink? Exodus 17:1-7 |
| March 19 | Lent 4 – Who sinned? John 9:1-41 |
| March 26 | Lent 5 – Can these bones live? Ezekiel 37:1-14 OR John 11:1-45 |
| April 2 | Palm Sunday –Time for a New Foundation, Psalm 118 |

Ash Wednesday

February 22

Worship at 6:30 p.m.

As we seek God this Lent, what kinds of practices will we choose to engage? How will we live into the questions? The season begins with a short time of worship and reflection. Ashes will be available, but are always optional. Zoom worshippers are invited to bring a small amount of olive oil to your worship space. The Zoom link is the same one we use for Sunday morning.



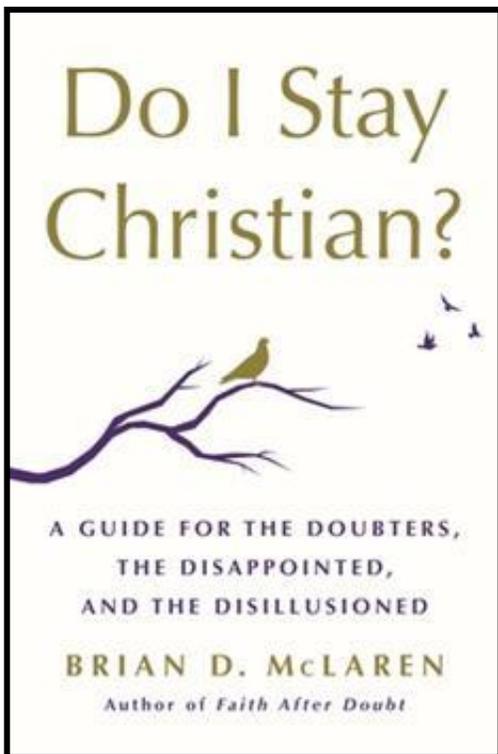
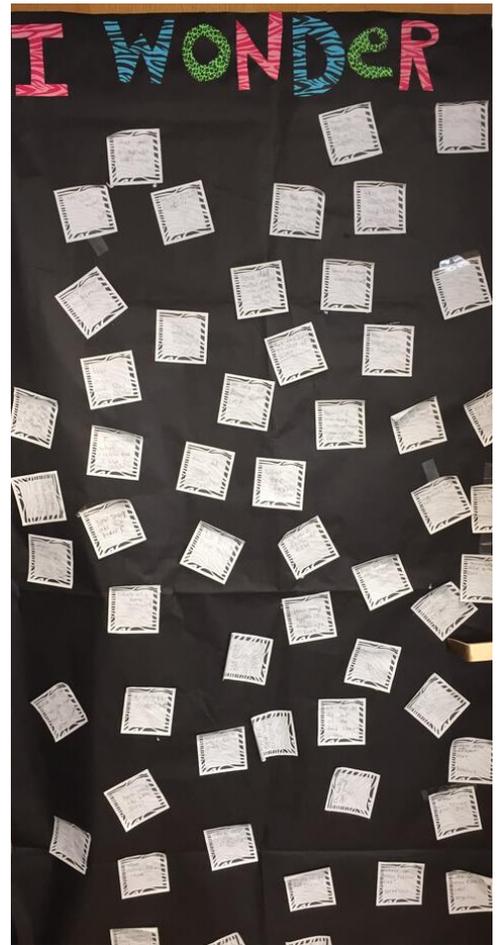
seeking:

*Is this the fast
that I choose?*

Wondering Wall

As we lean into seeking mode, each week of Lent will bring new questions. You will see questions in the Bible stories, questions in the daily prayer cards, questions in the weekly devotional. If that feels like too many questions, feel free to opt out of some of them.

If you only choose one question per week, please choose the one that we engage together. At the beginning of the week, a question will be sent out on EBC-Announce. Dorothy will be ready to receive your answers by email or phone call through noon on Thursday. All responses will be recorded on sticky notes and transferred to our Wondering Wall. During coffee hour, you might wander over to the wall and enjoy the range of answers from Emmanuelites and you might engage other folks at the wondering wall in conversation. Zoomers, don't leave as soon as worship is over, because we will bring you to the wondering wall as well.



Tuesday Book Study February 28-March 28 7:00 p.m. on Zoom

Do I Stay Christian? addresses in public the powerful question that surprising numbers of people—including pastors, priests, and other religious leaders—are asking in private. Picking up where *Faith After Doubt* leaves off, *Do I Stay Christian?* is not McLaren's attempt to persuade Christians to dig in their heels or run for the exit. Instead, he combines his own experience with that of thousands of people who have confided in him over the years to help readers make a responsible, honest, ethical decision about their religious identity. There is a way to say both *yes* and *no* to the question of staying Christian, McLaren says, by shifting the focus from *whether we stay Christian* to *how we stay human*.

Books may be purchased wherever you like to shop. If you need help finding a copy, speak with Jim Ketcham. Join us for honest, probing conversation via Zoom on Tuesdays in Lent.



Special Guest: *Elijah Zehyoue*

April 2

The Rev. Elijah Zehyoue (he/him), who serves as the co-director of the Alliance of Baptists, will be our guest on Palm Sunday. He will preach in worship that morning. Plans are in the works for an evening presentation on anti-racism work to which we will invite the wider community. Mark your calendars now. You don't want to miss this!

As a historian, theologian, pastor, preacher and teacher, Elijah is committed to using his many gifts to help people of all walks of life do the head, heart, and soul work required for our collective liberation. He is a graduate of Morehouse College and the University of Chicago and is currently a PhD candidate in African History at Howard University

where he is writing a dissertation on the Trans Atlantic Slave Trade and the Origins of the Conflict in Liberia. Elijah is originally from Liberia, West Africa and grew up in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

logo imagery key *what do you see?*



eye- The eye holds all of the logo's imagery and summarizes the theme of seeking, while referencing various narratives from the scriptural texts: Adam & Eve's eyes are opened, Jesus rubs mud on the blind man's eyes, Jesus asks Mary, "Who are you looking for?" The circles that create the pupil and iris can also represent: an aerial view of the well, the water basin at the footwashing, or the stone and tombs of Lazarus and Jesus.



veil- This curved line and the shape it creates repeats throughout the *Seeking* branding. The veil references the confusion and revelations that occur in a journey of seeking.



mud / garden soil- The drop of mud represents the dirt and garden imagery that is found throughout the scriptural texts: the Garden of Eden, the mud that is rubbed in the blind man's eyes, the garden of Gethsemane. It also references when Jesus is mistaken as a gardener at the empty tomb.



water- The drop of water references the many times water is mentioned in the texts. Jesus tells Nicodemus he must be born of water and spirit. Moses strikes a rock to find water. At the well, Jesus asks a Samaritan woman for a drink and offers her living water. Jesus meets the blind man at the pool of Siloam. Jesus washes the disciples' feet. The water drop can also reference a tear; Jesus weeps at the mouth of his friend Lazarus' tomb, and Mary weeps at the mouth of Jesus' tomb.



vessel- The shape of the vessel can be seen as a cup or a jar poured out. The vessel represents: the jar the woman leaves behind at the well after meeting Jesus, the jar of sour wine offered to Jesus while on the cross, and the communion cup present at our remembrance of Christ's sacrifice.



star / night- The star references a couple of the narratives that take place under the veil of night. Nicodemus finds and questions Jesus at night, and Mary comes to the tomb while it is still dark. In reference to the logo's overall eye composition, the star represents the glistening of recognition in one's eye.



leaf- The leaf represents the foliage present throughout the texts, and further supports the repetition of garden imagery. Adam & Eve create fig leaf coverings in the shadow of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and upon Jesus' humble entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, the crowds wave palm branches.



Godly Play, Juniors and Youth Class Schedule: meet at 9:00 a.m. on these Sundays:

March 5
March 12
March 26
June 4

April 2 (Palm Sunday)
April 16
April 23

May 7
May 21



Anyone who would like to donate a lily to decorate the sanctuary for Easter is invited to do so. Karen Green is coordinating this effort and will announce the cost soon.

Please include the short form below that includes your name, if you are donating the plant to a church member or keeping it for yourself, and if it's in memory or celebration of someone. Thank you.

I would like the lily designated in memory/honor of

I would like the plant donated to a church member.

I would like the plant for myself.

NAME: _____

Happy Birthday...

Jasmine Osborne
Jonathan Malone
Amiya Collins
Rory Garner
Sofia Wah



5th
10th
11th
13th
29th

If your birthday is not published in our monthly listing, please notify Dorothy at 465-5161.

Daylight Saving
Time begins
March 12!



Spring Begins...
March 20 !!!



Remember the
Food Pantry...

toilet tissue

**Deadline for the April
MOSAIC: March 18.**

Emmanuel Baptist Church
275 State St.
Albany, NY 12210

