

## Full to the Brim: An Expansive Lent

As Ash Wednesday draws near, many of us may already be thinking about our Lenten practices. What kind of intention will we set this year to help us return to God with renewed commitment? Traditionally, Christians give something up for this season. They'll abstain from things like alcohol, chocolate, or other guilty pleasures. In a way, these sacrifices feel like a holy diet of sorts, invoking the power of asceticism to remind us of all that God requires of us. For some people, and in some years, these practices can be effective; but this year, it feels like we ought to do things differently.

The last two years have been an unending stream of "giving up." We've given up a way of life we'd grown to love, we've given up family gatherings and social outings. We've given up financial security and stability. We've given up relationships. We've given up childcare. We've given and given and given, as everything in our lives has required our utmost flexibility. In fact, these years have felt like an extended Lenten wilderness that began in March of 2020. So, given all that we've been through, it seems appropriate to approach *this* season of Lent differently.

Based on readings from the [Revised Common Lectionary](#), and using the amazing resources of *Full to the Brim* produced by Sanctified Art, we will be exploring themes of God's abundance and expansive grace throughout the season. These themes from scripture will guide our worship services March 2 (Ash Wednesday) through April 17 (Easter Sunday). To accompany worship, we will offer a **discussion guide for Sunday school** classes who want to connect more deeply and personally with the themes. In addition to that, each family will have an opportunity to use **daily devotional cards** as a means for personal devotion. Alongside these opportunities, members of our ministerial staff team will lead a **Wednesday Night Series** on prayer. We are calling it, **Prayer-full Practices**. Be sure to save the dates (page 2) for those hybrid (in-person *and* online) gatherings. One more exciting thing that is coming this Lent is a **new prayer group** that will meet on Tuesday evenings! Be sure to keep reading to learn more about each of these opportunities and to make your spiritual commitment for the season.

-Chrissy Tatum Williamson





## Lenten Resources

**Sunday school Discussion Guides:** We will offer discussion guides for Sunday school classes to use Sundays, March 6 through April 17. These guides will feature questions that invite each class and class member to go deeper into the themes and scriptures presented during worship each week. If your class would like to use this guide to focus your time during Lent, you can access them in the Season of Lent email or obtain a printed copy by contacting the church office, Monday - Thursday 8:30 am - 4:30 pm.

**Daily Devotional Cards:** The talented team at Sanctified Art has created daily devotional cards that go along with the *Full to the Brim* theme. We've printed and prepared the cards for you to pick up - one per family please - at the church. They will be available throughout the season and while supplies last!



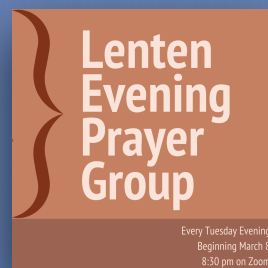
**Wednesday Night Series - Prayer-full Practices:** The ministerial staff team is excited to lead us through four different kinds of prayer. As we explore God's abundance in our lives, it is important to stretch ourselves to listen and speak to God in an abundance of ways. To that end, each minister will guide us through one kind of prayer each Wednesday night of the Prayer-full Practices series. Here's a glimpse of what we have in store! (Please note: all gatherings are planned as in-person with an online option via Zoom. They will be held in the Fellowship Hall, on the following dates, from 6:00 - 7:00 p.m.)



March 16: Praying with Scripture, Pastor Chrissy  
 March 23: Visio-Divina, Pastor Anna Beth  
 March 30: Taize, Pastor Christian  
 April 6: Artful Prayer, Pastor April

**Tuesday Evening Prayer Group:** Using a similar format to the ongoing Wednesday Morning Prayer Group (Wednesdays, 7:45 a.m., Zoom), this group is open to all and will meet weekly on Zoom for an informal time of prayer. This group, co-led by Pastor April and Elizabeth Santana will feature some of the poetry and artwork created by the Sanctified Art team for the Lenten series. The Zoom information is available below.

Meeting ID: 854 6936 6673  
 Passcode: gblent  
[Direct Link](#) to Meeting





# Pastor April's Sabbatical

A fabulous Sign Language Camp meeting with children eager to learn, and a retreat with many of my colleagues was a great precursor to sabbatical. While I am away, I plan to spend most of my time resting, refocusing my mind and restarting my creative juices. I will spend intentional time with family and with friends whom I rarely get to see. I will sit in God's creation by the ocean and in the mountains. I will search for my favorite of all of God's creations - a waterfall. Sitting at the base of a waterfall listening to the rushing water and watching the water find its way over, under, around and between rocks is my favorite place to 'be still and know'. I will also be working on a new project that I am excited about - reinventing our children's library at Greystone. Some of that work has already been done, and there will be more to do once I return, but while I am away I will be working on the fun part - reading children's books and making a list of even more that I want to read. You can read along with me if you are interested. The first list to tackle is books that teach children about housing and food insecurity in age appropriate ways. I would love for you to read with me and to share these books with children whom you love. I would also love to hear about your favorite books to teach children about God, faith, family, feelings and hard subjects such as grief, homelessness and more. Make a list and be ready to share it with me when I return.

- April Alston



## My reading list:

**A Chair For My Mother** by Vera B. Williams  
**Crenshaw** by Katherine Applegate  
**Four Feet, Two Sandals** by Karen Lynn Williams & Khadra Mohammed  
**Home** by Tonya Lippert  
**On Our Street: Our First Talk About Poverty** by Dr. Jillian Roberts and Jaime Casp  
**Still a Family: A Story about Homelessness** by Brenda Reeves Sturgis  
**The One Day House** by Julia Durango

# Greystone Music Lab Coming in 2022!

Our instruments and materials are in, and throughout this winter and spring, we are excited to be working on setting up our new GBC Music Lab! We will be outfitting a room in our youth building with 5 individual workstations – 2 for piano/keyboard, 2 for electric guitar, and 1 for electric bass. Each workstation will include an iPad with software allowing the user to plug in and take online lessons using headphones, all while being supervised and provided guidance and as needed. This project is geared toward our youth with the hope that they will take advantage of a completely COVID-safe opportunity to advance their musical skills. Primarily self-directed learning will allow anyone who would like to take lessons to work at their own pace. Maybe a Greystone youth worship band could be in our future!

While the music lab is designed with our youth in mind, it will also be open for any of our members to use. We hope it might eventually become something we'll be able to open up to the local community!

Setting up the lab will be a process, and we will continue to communicate about progress toward its opening. If you and/or your children have ever been interested in learning to play piano, guitar, or bass, we hope you're excited to hear about this opportunity and we look forward to providing this unique way to help you develop as a musician!

- Christian McIvor



# Recognizing Resilience in Our Young People

Three years of high school graduating classes and seven semesters of college graduates have now been affected by the ongoing conditions of the pandemic. That's three years of high school proms, college visits, choir concerts, undergraduate events, football games, and many more missed and adapted opportunities that just before March 2020 were a part of the norm of one's young adult years.

*Obviously, we all have been affected greatly by the pandemic for the past two years, no matter your age. However, I believe our young people have faced some of the greatest challenges of all, and yet, have remained resilient.*

During the Epiphany season, Pastor Chrissy walked us through a blog series called "Recognizing Resilience," in which she challenged us to reflect on our own experiences from the past year, good and bad, joyful and difficult. This journey of reflection guided me to think of our young people, what our youth and young adults have endured over the past two years. Many have moved up two grades, begun looking at schools, graduated, moved away from home, begun new jobs, and faced plenty more transitions, big and small. I myself have faced more life transitions in the past two years than I think I ever have at one time: finishing my master's, moving twice, transitioning through multiple jobs, getting married, and beginning life in Raleigh. As difficult as post-graduate life has been in a pandemic, I can bet it has been even harder for our youth and college students. And the sad truth is that the lasting effects of the pandemic will continue to affect them for years to come. They say, "your college years are some of the best years of your life," whoever "they" are; but can that still be true in the midst of a pandemic?



Through these challenges our youth have faced, they have also found ways to be hopeful, to grow, to show love, and to be loved. I have already seen this hope in their positive attitudes about plans changing for our youth group: from in-person to online, back to in-person, back to online, and now plans for in-person again. This pattern is exhausting, but they have remained flexible and patient, willing to show up, eager to participate, faithful to engage. We have pivoted both of our youth retreats for this school year, but that has not phased them.

*Our youth have given me hope and comfort through the frustration of uncertainty, giving me and our youth leaders the drive to continue ministering with them during this crucial time of their lives.*

Another area in the life of our church I have recognized resilience in is that of our "twenty-somethings," our young adults. In September, we began reaching out to all of the church members and visitors that make up this demographic, trying to begin a regular gathering, building community among younger adults connected to Greystone. We had our first gathering in October, another in January, and the most recent one to watch the Super Bowl together in February. As a twenty-something myself, I have found hope in the budding of this community. Each of these young adults have faced many of the same life transitions and challenges during the pandemic. Each holds a level of resilience that is encouraging, providing a sense of cohesion among our fellowship and time together.



The young people in our church are not only the future of the church, but contribute to the present life of the church in the here and now. Knowing how resilient they are provides comfort, with hope that this resilience is reflective to our entire congregation too. My prayer is that we continue to value our young people, empowering them to be leaders in our church body and to guide us all as we continue this path of resilience for whatever lies ahead.

- Anna Beth Cross



# The Diaconate is on the move!

We have designated ourselves into three different teams: Care, Engagement, and Prayer. Each of these teams have determined ways to engage GBC in how we might better minister to our congregation.

**Engagement:** This team has prepared a communication survey to determine how folks in the congregation wish to engage with our church, whether it be by email, text, snail mail or phone call. You will soon be receiving this survey and we are hopeful you will complete it in a timely manner.

**Prayer/Spiritual Enrichment:** A few of this team's proposals include "Prayer Pals" (partnering with the pre-school to develop prayerful relationships. For example a SS class could be paired with the three year olds to pray with and for each other), recorded prayers on our website, and congregational prayer partners. These are just a few of the exciting suggestions from this team.

**Care:** The Care Team is holding a training for the Diaconate led by Elizabeth Worley, Patty Austin and Justin Williamson on 3/3/22 to allow deacons to understand ways to approach members in crisis or who are grieving. The goal of this team is to insure that all GBC members feel seen and cared for, with special emphasis on our seniors. If you have any suggestions for these teams, please contact any deacon. And continue to pray that the Diaconate is inspired and guided by Christ.



## Pastoral Staff

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