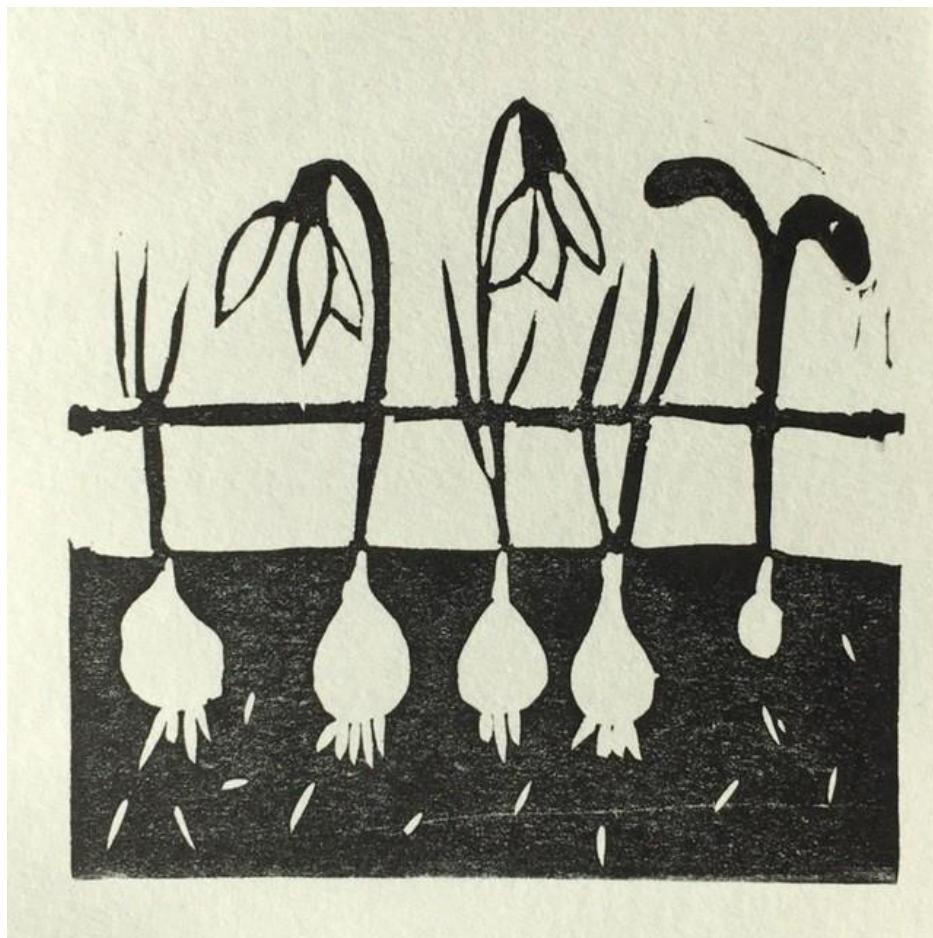
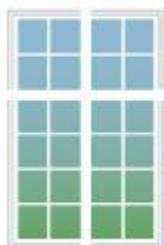


LENTEN DEVOTIONAL 2022 – HOPE

MARCH 2 - MARCH 10



Hope by Terry Wise



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Stockbridge, Massachusetts

LENTEN DEVOTIONAL 2022 – HOPE

March 2, 2022

Friends,

The project of gathering stories to form *Forty Stories of Hope: A Lenten Devotional* has been a joy thus far! I'm grateful to the Board of Christian Education for endorsing the project, and to the contributors who share these memorable moments of hope. Special thanks to Pastor Brent for his wisdom and generosity; to Will Garrison for his patience, creativity, and demanding work; and deep appreciation to Terry Wise for her artistry in making the cover with its hopeful snow drops emerging from the icy cold earth.

Each week we will be “releasing” new devotions for the week. We hope that you will be inspired as you read the daily devotions, and that you will consider contributing to the collection with a devotion of your own. We don’t yet have the requisite 46 devotions, so please do keep them coming in by email to either elizvyoung@hotmail.com or office@sockbridgeucc.org!

With love and thanks,

Elizabeth Young



LENTEN DEVOTIONAL 2022 – HOPE

ASH WEDNESDAY MARCH 2

From Holsteins to Hope

I have believed in the power of confession since I was four years old. One night I crawl out of bed in tears and go down to the living room where Mom and Dad are reading. When they ask what's wrong, I take a deep breath and say, "I went into the pasture." They both look puzzled. Then Dad realizes: "The one on Dodge Road? The one with the barbed wire fence?" I nod. I have been told to never go in there. I was scared to make my way through the barbed wire. But Lynn and Nancy had gone in, and I followed.

Mom says, "You're not supposed to go in there." I nod. She goes on, "Sometimes there are cows in there. They might hurt you!" Disbelief and alarm battle on my face, and Mom rushes on: "Not on purpose, sweetie! But they are big and heavy. One could knock you over!"



Dad, more tuned into children, takes over. "Let's just stay out of their pasture, okay? It's their home. They don't come into our home, right?" I laugh at the image of the stolid black-and-white Holsteins lumbering into our living room. My parents send me back to bed and I fall back asleep, emptied of fear.

Fifty-five years later, today on Ash Wednesday, I look forward to confessing my sins. I have two that are big and heavy. I laugh to imagine a pair of Holstein cows in my heart. But then tears—of both sadness and joy—sting my eyes at the prospect of seeing my sins burn up, receiving the blessing of forgiveness as ashes are imposed on my forehead—and then renewing my hope to be better than I've been.

Prayer: God, when I am burdened by my own failures, help me confess them and let them go. Amen.

Elizabeth Young

LENTEN DEVOTIONAL 2022 – HOPE

THURSDAY MARCH 3



A Commitment to Hope

In 1990 First Congregational Church was an active participant in the Massachusetts – Ukraine Bridges for Peace, a program to extend friendship and welcome to new friends from Ukraine which, under Gorbachev, had just overcome the repressive “evil empire.” Over time, 37 new friends from Ukraine came to visit in the homes of members of the church and with our church community. A similar number of our church members visited our new friends in Ukraine. What a hopeful time. Glasnost (openness) and perestroika (restructuring) were the hopeful watchwords of the day in the former Soviet Union and soon resulted in Ukraine’s new status as a free and open country.

Unfortunately, it is now time to pray again that the hopes and aspirations of the citizens of this brave and peace-loving country can be fulfilled as Ukraine resumes its effort to be an independent member of the league of free nations.

Prayer: God, be with us all as we strive to build and rebuild bridges to peace.

Carl Bradford

LENTEN DEVOTIONAL 2022 – HOPE

FRIDAY MARCH 4

Acrostic

Heartfelt wishes
Overcome despair
Prayer is the means to
Everlasting peace

Prayer: God, we pray that you will sustain our hope in prayer.



Cris Raymond

LENTEN DEVOTIONAL 2022 – HOPE

SATURDAY MARCH 5

Heart of Hearts

Directly after graduating from college, I was hired as a high school teacher. It was not a good fit. In fact, I was deeply, intractably miserable. After six weeks I told my department head I was losing my voice and wouldn't be able to return after the Christmas break. He said he knew I wasn't happy and had a replacement who could start in two weeks if that would work for me. It did. An answer to prayer, this enabled me to enter a profession which I had, in my heart of hearts, long hoped to be a part of, and which brought me years of joy.

Prayer: God, we are grateful for our heart of hearts, where hope resides.



Brian Farrell

LENTEN DEVOTIONAL 2022 – HOPE

SUNDAY MARCH 6

Dogs Yet Unseen

This is a true story about a boy who wanted a dog. The boy—let's call him Peter—was nine years old, and had been asking his parents for more than a year if he could get a dog. But his parents were busy with Peter and his sister and two jobs and their own activities, and a dog seemed like one thing too many, so they kept saying no. But Peter went on hoping, and planning for the day when he would get his dog. When his parents said “No,” he heard “Not yet, but someday.”

When he went to the grocery store with his mother and sister, he would insist on going down the pet supplies aisle, and he would look at dog treats and say, “When I get my dog, I’m going to give him that.” When he saw a snazzy dog toy, he would say, “I think my dog will like this one.” Now, it is important to say here that Peter was a guileless child: if he were a tricky child, this would be a story about Strategy, not Hope. But he was not trying to convince anyone else: he would just look at the pet supplies longingly and lovingly, waiting with conviction for the day his dog would arrive, whenever that would be.

The dog arrived. But the point here is that living in hope is living, as Peter did, in the presence of the future. After all, that dog brought lots of joy even before she arrived in all her furry glory. Hope is like that: we take comfort now from the glorious then.



Prayer: Thank you, God, for all the glories you promise, that we enjoy now as we look forward in hope to their arrival. Amen.

David Anderegg

LENTEN DEVOTIONAL 2022 – HOPE

MONDAY MARCH 7

Hope from the Wood Wide Web

I've been reading one of the books that Pastor Brent recommended for our Lenten discussions—*The Book of Hope*, about Jane Goodall, the “chimpanzee lady,” and more recently, fervent and effective humanitarian. One of Jane's main reasons for remaining hopeful is through the “intelligence and resilience of nature.” She even talks about an intricate “wood wide web” through which trees send support and warnings to their arboreal brethren—and maybe even to us. We really are all connected.

Prayer: Dear God, help me to find hope in the wisdom of *all* your creations



Cathy Clark

LENTEN DEVOTIONAL 2022 – HOPE

TUESDAY MARCH 8

“You’re Back!”

Late one evening, I woke in a strange bed with no idea where I was and no memory of how I got there. People came into the room to talk with me, and I eventually learned that I was in the intensive care unit at a hospital near our home in Connecticut. Earlier that evening, apparently, I’d had surgery to remove the blood from a subdural hematoma between my skull and my brain. I had no memories of the last three days.

I trusted in the hope that my family would show up. And indeed, Janet came to see me as soon as visiting hours started the next morning. Her first words to me were “You’re back!” She also explained that our two adult children were flying north from Florida that very morning to help us.

I can’t overstate and will be eternally grateful for the hope I experienced from the love and support from my family at this time. It is literally thanks to Janet’s efforts that I am still alive. Over the next few days, she explained to me that I’d started showing signs of confusion when we were in Florida the weekend before. She managed to get me on our scheduled flight back home, where my signs of confusion worsened. The next day, she took me to the doctor, who took one look at me and ordered an ambulance to take me to the hospital.

Fortunately, my surgical procedures in the hospital went well and, after a couple of months during which I had some strict rules to follow, my internist has pronounced me fully recovered and able to resume my normal routine.

Prayer: God, thank you for my family’s love and support, which gave me hope for recovery.

John Canning

LENTEN DEVOTIONAL 2022 – HOPE

WEDNESDAY MARCH 9

Trusting in the Holy Spirit



This morning I read a devotion from "Upper Room" written by a woman who learned she had metastatic breast cancer. She talked about her days and nights alternating between calm and complete anguish but trusting in the Holy Spirit she knew one thing: God has been and will be with her every step of the way, and she knew she would be with our Creator in eternal life. Since writing this, she passed and now is in eternal life.

Prayer: Dear Lord, I share this woman's beliefs. I trust that the Holy Spirit is with me now and will be in the future, and I will be with our Creator in eternal life. This gives me hope. Thank you, Lord.

Joyce Hovey

LENTEN DEVOTIONAL 2022 – HOPE

THURSDAY MARCH 10

A Horizon of Hope

It was the early 1970s when I first studied Jeremiah. It was the time of Watergate, Vietnam, and the Cold War. We were discouraged about the state of our nation and the world. Jeremiah prophesied during one of Israel's worst times: the armies of Babylon had surrounded Jerusalem, and Jeremiah was under house arrest because his words had been too painful for King Zedekiah of Judah to hear.

There was not much room for hope. But amid all this trouble Jeremiah received a word from God to buy a field and to put the deeds in a jar to be kept safe for a long time. Someday, God promised, “houses and fields and vineyards shall again be bought in this land.” Bill Holladay, my Old Testament professor, first brought this text to my attention. He took Jeremiah to heart and bought himself land in Vermont as an act of hope.

We survived Watergate and the Vietnam War ended. The Berlin Wall came down, ending the Cold War. Of course, we still have worries. A new war in Ukraine. Global warming. Gun violence. Nuclear weapons. Divisive politics, hatred, bigotry. But Jeremiah’s act of purchasing land at the very worst moment reminds us to take a long view of history and to live our lives within a horizon of hope.

Prayer: God of time and eternity, help us to live, not by our worse fears, but by our best hopes, and by your enduring promise and steadfast love.

Richard L. Floyd



View from Monument Mountain