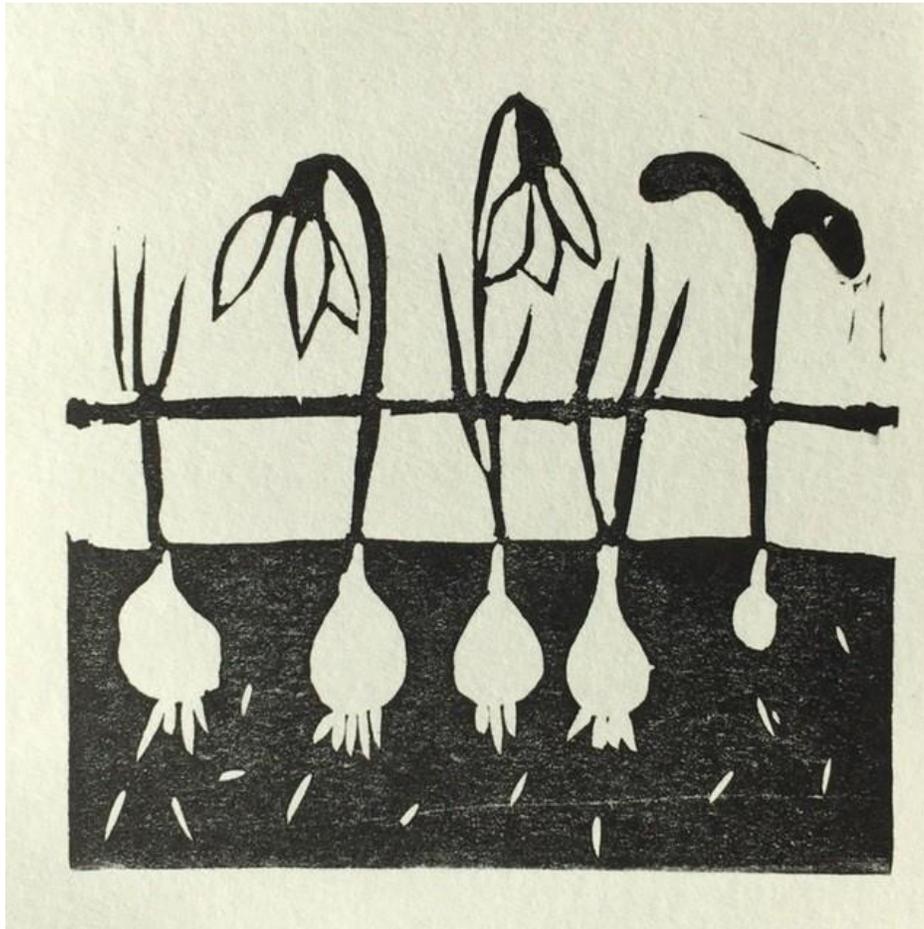
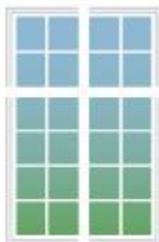


LENTEN DEVOTIONAL 2022 – HOPE

MARCH 24 - MARCH 28



Hope by Terry Wise



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Stockbridge, Massachusetts

LENTEN DEVOTIONAL 2022 – HOPE

March 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. 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@stockbridgeucc.org!

With love and thanks,

Elizabeth Young



LENTEN DEVOTIONAL 2022 – HOPE

THURSDAY MARCH 24

“Up and Doing”

I came across this poem my junior year in college, though I never knew the author. I was struggling that year, and the words resonated. It lifted me and gave me hope by centering me on “the living present, heart within and God o’erhead”. Fast forward 30+years, poem a distant memory, when a trip to Portland, ME, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s hometown, inspired the purchase of a book of his poetry. Imagine my surprise when I found this one, an old favorite:

A Psalm of Life, by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

TELL me not, in mournful numbers,
Life is but an empty dream!—
For the soul is dead that slumbers,
And things are not what they seem.

Life is real! Life is earnest!
And the grave is not its goal;
Dust thou art, to dust returnest,
Was not spoken of the soul.

Not enjoyment, and not sorrow,
Is our destined end or way;
But to act, that each to-morrow
Find us farther than today.

Art is long, and Time is fleeting,
And our hearts, though stout and brave,
Still, like muffled drums, are beating
Funeral marches to the grave.

In the world’s broad field of battle,
In the bivouac of Life,
Be not like dumb, driven cattle!
Be a hero in the strife!

Trust no Future, howe’er pleasant!
Let the dead Past bury its dead!
Act,—act in the living Present!
Heart within, and God o’erhead!

Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime,
And, departing, leave behind us
Footprints on the sands of time;

Footprints, that perhaps another,
Sailing o’er life’s solemn main,
A forlorn and shipwrecked brother,
Seeing, shall take heart again.

Let us then, be up and doing,
With a heart for any fate;
Still achieving, still pursuing,
Learn to labor and to wait.

Holland Eaton

LENTEN DEVOTIONAL 2022 – HOPE

FRIDAY MARCH 25

A Gift of Hope

In 1980, at the age of 24, I was diagnosed with a rare disease of the bone marrow called aplastic anemia. The prognosis was grim because the only cure is bone marrow transplant, then a new and experimental procedure. As an only child, I was not a candidate. But luckily, I responded to a chemotherapy in clinical trial – and then was lucky again and again when confronted with repeated relapses.

In 1986, I became aware of the newly founded Aplastic Anemia Foundation. I established a local chapter in NY and sat on the Foundation board for ten years. Each year, the Foundation hosts a Family/Patient Conference to present research/treatment news and offer resources and support. I attended nearly every year for twenty-five years. I met with those newly diagnosed and told my story. Many were devastated and desperate families who had received a virtual death sentence for someone they love. When they realized that I had survived many years beyond what they understood was possible, they knew in the flash of a moment that it might be possible for them too. I had given them the gift of hope by simply being in the room.

Where did *my* hope come from? Faith.

Prayer: May we have a faith that gives us hope and a spirit that shares it. Amen.



Drea Pecor

LENTEN DEVOTIONAL 2022 – HOPE

SATURDAY MARCH 26

Hope and Survival

During World War II, on my fifth birthday, April 2, 1944, my mother and I found ourselves in an abandoned apartment in Warsaw, Poland, waiting for a transport ship to take us over the Baltic Sea, fleeing Russian troops that were advancing west.

Miraculously, we were spared from boarding a previous ship at the dock, which was torpedoed with thousands of refugees aboard killed.



We were separated from my father because men were drafted into service.

Miraculously again, he met his sister who knew where we were, thanks to the help of the Red Cross.

Sitting on a blanket in the hull of the huge ship with hundreds of refugees, I looked up and to my amazement (another *miracle!*) I saw my father being lifted down by two sailors along the inside wall of the ship. We hugged and kissed and then he left us quickly. I was scared and cried for a long time. I prayed to God to be able to see him again, despite the uncertain future.

Mom and I were transported as refugees to a small farm town in North Germany. Every day I would ask my mom, “When is Dad coming home?” I prayed so much for his safe return to us. The War finally ended and *miraculously* one morning I open my eyes and there was my beloved father! Hope, God, miracles, and many answered prayers have been part of my life.

Prayer: Thank you, God!

Olga Schwede

LENTEN DEVOTIONAL 2022 – HOPE

SUNDAY MARCH 27

Misplaced Hope

Nine days before I tie the knot, I make a list of pro's and con's about marrying Rick. The reasons to marry him are equal to the number of reasons not to. I have a lot of optimism: I "hope for the best." On our honeymoon, I lose some optimism. Ten months and a lot of disillusionment later, I separate from him and go home to visit my mother.

One morning over coffee, I confess that I am hoping that Rick will just die. Mom says incisively, "No, you don't hope he dies." She goes on: "You need to get away from him and that is hard to face. It seems easier to just have him carried off, without your having to do anything to end the marriage."

"You're right," I say slowly. "He doesn't need to die. Instead, I need to file for divorce."

"Misplaced hope" can be a defense against taking necessary, painful action. Hoping for the best when I married Rick led to hoping he'd die when we were married. That wasn't actual hope, of course. Instead, it was an effort to avoid having to confront a big mistake, end a destructive relationship and, in so doing, actually be honest with myself, with Rick, and with God.

Prayer: God, help us see when we're hoping you'll do something we actually need to do ourselves. Amen.

Elizabeth Young

LENTEN DEVOTIONAL 2022 – HOPE

MONDAY MARCH 28

Hitting the Road

From my book for my granddaughter called Family Stories That Might Be True:

Anderegg is a Swiss name; our family came from Switzerland. In the old days they lived in Sweden, far north. But about the year 700, there was a famine in Sweden; there was not enough food for everyone to eat. The people picked names out of a hat, and every tenth family moved away so the families that remained would have enough food. They moved until they came to a valley in the mountains of Switzerland that looked like the place they had left behind. They stayed there.

But famine struck again. Again, there was not enough to eat. The government paid people to go where they could find enough food. Kaspar Anderegg—your great-great-great-great grandfather—sailed to America! Just like his old folks, he kept moving until he found a beautiful valley surrounded by hills that reminded him of home in Switzerland.

Because it is a children's book, the not-so-nice elements of emigration were left out. What does it feel like to leave your home because if you stay you might starve? My ancestors left their homes because they had to. But they also had to have hope that where they were going would be better. For them, I think, moving meant being pushed from behind, and pulled from ahead, to a place where things could be better. That's what we mean when we use the expression "desperate hope." In the case of my ancestors, their hopes for a better life came true, with the help of God and the courage their faith provided.

Prayer: Loving God, we trust in you. When we need to move on again, guide us and protect us. With Your help, maybe we can land on our feet like our old folks did.

David Anderegg