

Today our reflection comes from Pastor Matt Kofahl of St. James United Methodist Church (UMC) in Niagara Falls. Matt is also the pastor at Hope UMC in Sanborn, NY. Both churches have been supporters of Community Missions for a long time. At St. James, the congregation hosts our Gardens of Compassion project (see CommunityMission.org for details).

As with so many other churches, Matt is posting online worship services each week to help promote social distancing during the COVID-19 pandemic. In his services you will sometimes get to hear him sing with his (much more talented) wife, Mary. You can find the link to his online worship at the St. James website, www.stjamesniagara.org/worship. Pastor Mark



Out of the depths I cry to you, Lord;
Lord, hear my voice.
Let your ears be attentive
to my cry for mercy.
(Psalm 130:1-2 NIV)

Dear friends,

There is a strange synergy between the lectionary readings during Lent and our current crisis. Our reading from Psalm 130 is no different. Though it's a prayer of repentance, any of us could be praying these same words concerning our own health and safety, or the health and safety of our loved ones, healthcare workers, and our leaders. I want you to do something very specific this week: will you join me in beginning each of your prayer times with

these words from Psalm 130:1-2? Now, more than ever, it's important to be people of prayer. Prayer encourages us to be spiritually and emotionally honest with God and with each other. Now is not the time for platitudes. After you pray those initial words from the Psalm, let's be in prayer for those who are caring for us in hospitals, clinics, and nursing homes. And when we rise from our prayer, let us be as supportive as we can in the limited way that we're able in this moment.

God hears our prayers and will strengthen those we pray for in the long fight ahead. Thank you also for your prayers for me and for your continued support of all our pastors and ministries. I look forward to the day, hopefully soon, when we will be together again in worship, Bible study, and meetings of all kinds.

With grace and peace,

Pastor Matt Kofahl
St James United Methodist Church

Lectionary readings for the 5th Sunday of Lent: Ezekiel 37:1-14 • Psalm 130 •
Romans 8:6-11 • John 11:1-45