



2025
**LENTEN
MEDITATIONS**

A Commonplace Lent

Study Guide



Episcopal
Relief & Development
Working Together for Lasting Change

A Commonplace Lent

As many friends of Episcopal Relief & Development know, our tagline is “Working Together for Lasting Change.” We hold this statement dear. It is so important to the Board of Directors and staff of Episcopal Relief & Development that it is the name of our current strategic plan. Nothing captures the true nature of our work better than these five words.

Working together is a special part of our story. From our program partners to our donors and supporters, from technical experts to those who hold us in prayer, we could not reach over three million people each year without this community of caring and compassionate individuals. Blessings are abundant in our working together.

For this year’s Lenten Meditations, we asked our dear friend and well-known author Jerusalem Jackson Greer to partner with us on behalf of this Spirit-led community. Jerusalem wrote the meditations in celebration of our common life. Although Lent can sometimes be seen as a solitary spiritual journey, Jerusalem challenges us to walk this road with others. Using monastic wisdom as her starting point, she highlights the divine gifts that come from community.

Titling her meditations “A Commonplace Lent,” Jerusalem celebrates two uses of the word “common.” The first is the sense that we come together to celebrate “all that we are and all that we have in common”—prayer, worship, grace, love, community, service and so much more. The second understanding of common is a reflection on the ordinary, everyday nature of these communal gifts. She finds this duality rooted in the wisdom of desert mothers and fathers, monastics and other spiritual leaders and infuses it into her meditations for each day of Lent.

We hope you find a connection to a larger community of faithful people as you read these meditations. You are not alone. You join tens of thousands of others on this journey. We hope you will see yourself as an essential gift to others, both near and far. And we pray that God will richly bless you and your varied communities this Lenten season.

Sean McConnell
Senior Director, Faith & Community Engagement



About the Guide

The Lenten Meditations prepared by Episcopal Relief & Development invite readers to deepen their spiritual practice during the season of Lent, the time of preparation leading to Easter. Our 2025 meditations explore the idea of “A Commonplace Lent.” This concept reflects Episcopal Relief & Development’s tagline: “Working Together for Lasting Change.” We share in common the work of advancing lasting change in communities impacted by injustice, poverty, disaster and climate change.

We also share in common spiritual practices that strengthen our faith—prayer, worship, love, grace, service and so much more. The author explores another meaning of common in the meditations: finding God in the common and ordinary as well as in the extraordinary mountain-top moments. Each day begins with wisdom from desert mothers and fathers, monastics and other spiritual leaders who offer insight into our common path of faithful discipleship and service. Each meditation concludes with a question for deeper reflection.

The Lenten Meditations may be read by individuals or studied in groups. The guide includes daily quotations from spiritual leaders and reflection questions. We encourage you to develop a practice that works for your setting.

About the Author

Jerusalem Jackson Greer is co-executive director and agrarian minister for the Procter Center, an Episcopal farm, camp and retreat center in the Episcopal Diocese of Southern Ohio. As former manager of evangelism and discipleship for The Episcopal Church under Presiding Bishop Michael Curry, she co-founded the Good News Garden movement and oversaw Way of Love and Evangelism initiatives for the wider church. She is also the author of two books, *At Home in this Life: Finding Peace at the Crossroads of Unraveled Dreams* and *Beautiful Surprises and A Homemade Year: The Blessings of Cooking, Crafting and Coming Together*, both published by Paraclete Press, as well as multiple Episcopal curricula, including as a contributor to Episcopal Relief & Development’s Abundant Life Garden Project® resources. Jerusalem recently completed her master of arts degree from Wartburg Theological Seminary with an emphasis on rural ministry. Jerusalem serves on the board of Edible Theology and the Council of Advice for Episcopal Relief & Development’s Faith & Community Engagement team. She is an associate of the Community of Saint Mary, Southern Provence, and a co-host of the Spade, Spoon, Soul podcast. Jerusalem is an in-demand speaker, preacher, and contributor around the topics of outdoor and agrarian ministry, discipleship, evangelism, leadership and the ministry of belonging in an era of loneliness.

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Ash Wednesday, March 5

My life and my death are not purely and simply my own business. I live by and for others, and my death involves them. —Thomas Merton, *Contemplation in a World of Action*

For Reflection

This Lent, what spiritual practice could your community adopt as a communal endeavor? How could we travel the wilderness together with intentionality?

Thursday, March 06

Monastic spirituality says we are to honor one another. We are to listen to one another. —Sr. Joan Chittister, *The Rule of Benedict*

For Reflection

Whose words or example encourages you as you strive to love as Jesus loves us?

Friday, March 7

We carry ourselves wherever we go. —Matrona 1, *The Forgotten Desert Mothers* by Laura Swan

For Reflection

People experience God's presence differently. Some feel God's presence as an emotion or physical sensation, and some hear or see God's presence in nature, another person or a work of art. How do you experience God being present to you, especially in the wilderness? Do you experience it in the moment or upon reflection months or years later?

Saturday, March 8

Reverence declares, "All of the things God established please me. I do not hurt any of them." —Hildegard of Bingen, *Book of Life's Merits*



For Reflection

Consider the ecosystem of a community in your life. What practices related to one member potentially damage the whole? What changes could positively affect the whole ecosystem?

Monday, March 10

If you want to keep peace in the community, judge yourself and no one else.
—John Trithemius

Whoever says, “I abide in him,” ought to walk in the same way as he walked.
—1 John 2:6

For Reflection

Is there an area of judgment you are struggling with this Lent? How could you replace these thoughts with an act of vulnerability?

Tuesday, March 11

Only God, its Creator, who is incomparably better and more worthy than it, can make the human Spirit content and happy. —Louis De Blois, *Spiritual Doctrine*

God also spoke to Moses and said to him, “I am the Lord. I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as God Almighty, but by my name ‘The Lord’ I did not make myself known to them.” —Exodus 6:2-3

For Reflection

What if, this Lent, you replaced names for God with the name Love in your prayers and some scripture readings? For example, “Only Love, its Creator, who is incomparably better and more worthy than it, can make the human Spirit content and happy.” Could you share your experience, good or bad, with your community?



Wednesday, March 12

Together we shall try to find the exact answer to each one of the problems.
—Abba Pachomius to housemaster Thomas

For Reflection

*How do you feel about being vulnerable with others when you are walking a tough road?
Do you ask for help?*

*How are you for listening and creating a safe space for others to be vulnerable with you?
Do you make space for other people's needs?*

How can you learn from Jesus's choices regarding community?

Thursday, March 13

Do your work in peace. —John the Small

For Reflection

Working to right systemic and generational wrongs such as climate change or racism can seem daunting. Like planting a Good News Garden herb box, what is one beginning step you could take?

Friday, March 14

Do not always be wanting everything to turn out as you think it should but rather as God pleases then you will be undisturbed and thankful in your prayer. —Abba Nilus

For Reflection

*This Lent, what question of discernment are you or your faith community wrestling with?
How could your discernment process change if you consider the flourishing of all of creation as the guide instead of making people happy?*



Saturday, March 15

Holiness...has something to do with being who we are, claiming our truths, opening our hearts, giving ourselves to the other pure and unglossed.

—Sr. Joan Chittister, *The Rule of Benedict*

For Reflection

What helps you give yourself to others, unglossed and honest, in who you are?

Monday, March 17

This is the advice from one who loves you; welcome it and faithfully put it into practice. —The Rule of Benedict, *Prologue*

For Reflection

Do you have a Rule of Life? Does your family or church? How could having a Rule change the common life of one of your communities?

Tuesday, March 18

Find out how much God has given you and from it take what you need; the remainder is needed by others. —Saint Augustine

For Reflection

Do you or your church struggle with being distracted by the “if only” question? Try keeping a list of the gifts you already have for a month and invite the Holy Spirit to reveal where there is abundance. Want to go deeper? Check out the Called to Transformation resources at calledtotransformation.org



Wednesday, March 19

Abba Moses asks Abba Silvanus, "Can a man lay a new foundation every day?" The old man said, "If he works hard, he can lay a new foundation at every moment." —Silvanus

For Reflection

Who or what helps you build a foundation when you are struggling to serve Christ in all persons?

Thursday, March 20

It is the responsibility of the abbot or prioress to have great concern and to act with all speed, discernment, and diligence...they should realize they have undertaken care of the sick, not tyranny over the healthy.
—The Rule of Benedict

For Reflection

Who or what in your life or community needs to rest? Is it a habit, a person or a program? Who or what needs to be allowed to stop so that regeneration can begin its holy work?

Friday, March 21

Openness to the working of the Spirit in both individual and in community is vital, life-giving. Without it, there will be a closed-up person, a closed-up community. —Esther De Waal, *A Life-Giving Way*

For Reflection

Consider your prayers or your community's prayers for growth. Have you predetermined what growth looks like? Or do you need to be reoriented to where the Holy Spirit is already at work?



Saturday, March 22

When we live in community, let us choose obedience over discipline, for the latter teaches arrogance while the former calls for humility. —Syncletica

For Reflection

Where could you begin to listen more and punish or criticize less? How might it change the relationship or communal experience?

Monday, March 24

Silence is neither mute nor talkative. —Peter of Celle, *The School of the Cloister*

For Reflection

How do you practice silence and listening? If it is not a common practice, how might you begin to fold it into your daily life?

Tuesday, March 25

Annunciation of the Lord

Persist in your holy purpose, even if you fail a thousand times a day.
—Louis De Blois, *Spiritual Mirror*

For Reflection

What might you need to fast from to hear God's holy purpose in your life?



Wednesday, March 26

[We ought] to be of help to all, to refrain from hurting others out of bitterness. —Bede, *Homilies on the Gospels*

For Reflection

Can you distinguish between bitterness and righteous anger? Is there a spirit of bitterness in your community? If so, what would it take to begin rooting it out communally?

Thursday, March 27

What lies dead and deformed in the letter on the dead parchment comes to life when put into practice. —Peter of Celle, *The School of the Cloister*

For Reflection

What spiritual practice might you need to bring to life by practicing more regularly, alone and with others?

Friday, March 28

The members should serve one another. Consequently, no members will be excused from kitchen service unless they are sick. —Rule of Saint Benedict

Everyone does a turn in the kitchen. —Procter Community Practices

For Reflection

What thankless or inconvenient tasks or roles might you take on for a season to contribute to the flourishing of your household or faith community?



Saturday, March 29

Wherever you go, you will find that what you are running from is there ahead of you. —Anonymous

For Reflection

Have you experienced the “greener grass syndrome”? What was the outcome? What did you learn?

Monday, March 31

And let the brothers who know how to work, labor and exercise themselves in that art they may understand, if it be not contrary to the salvation of their soul, and they can exercise it becomingly. —Saint Francis

For Reflection

Is there a ministry in your faith community that is languishing? Is it time to let it die, or is it time to re-imagine it according to the gifts present in your community?

Tuesday, April 1

Whoever can weep over himself for one hour is greater than the one who is able to teach the whole world; whoever recognizes the death of his own frailty is greater than the one who sees visions of angels. —Isaac of Nineveh

For Reflection

Have you ever experienced the death of your own frailty? What did that look like or feel like? How did it change your participation in your community?



Wednesday, April 2

One cannot simply open his eyes and see. The work of understanding involves not only dialectic, but a long labor of acceptance, obedience, liberty and love. —Thomas Merton, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*

For Reflection

This Lent, consider the upcoming or desired transitions in your life or your faith community's life. How can you cultivate gratitude for what is instead of focusing on what could be?

Thursday, April 3

For what is greater than such a vision, to see the invisible God in a visible human being, his temple? —Life of Pachomius

But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.

—Jeremiah 29:7

For Reflection

What or who is the "Babylon" you have difficulty loving? What word or action can you take this week to practice loving them as you have been loved?

Friday, April 4

Order your soul; reduce your wants; live in charity; associate in Christian community; obey the laws; trust in Providence. —Saint Augustine

For Reflection

Sometimes, when seeking God's will—as an individual, household, or faith community—we look for grand plans or fiery bushes. What would it look like to embrace the words of Saint Augustine as "the plan:" Order your soul; reduce your wants; live in charity; associate in Christian community; obey the laws; trust in Providence. How might this view change our common life together?



Saturday, April 5

It feels good to rest after working. —Peter of Celle, *On Affliction and Reading*

For Reflection

How do you practice rest in ways that help others in your ecosystem to rest as well?

Monday, April 7

Complaining is the acid that shrivels our own souls and the soul of the community around us as well.” —Joan Chittister on the Rule of Benedict

For Reflection

Where does complaining show up in your communities? How can you choose or encourage a different approach?

Tuesday, April 8

Offer advice with the deference of humility, and do not presume to defend your point of view obstinately. —Rule of Saint Benedict

For Reflection

What relationships in your life—at home, church and work—could benefit from an intentional practice of Mutual Listening?



Wednesday, April 9

When God created human beings, he enjoined them to work on created things. —Hildegard of Bingen, *Book of Life's Merits*

For Reflection

How can you create spaciousness? Is there a chore or a spiritual practice that might help?

Thursday, April 10

We are placed in this world, and it is in and through this world, not by the denial of it, that we shall come to know God. —Esther De Waal, *A Life-Giving Way*

For Reflection

Is there a part of your world or life different than you expected? What might you learn about the love and nature of God through this change?

Friday, April 11

Let the brothers, in whatever places they may be among others, serve or work. —Saint Francis

For Reflection

Is there a challenge or issue in your life that feels like pushing a boulder uphill? Could you practice this spiritual exhale exercise for the remainder of Lent?

Saturday, April 12

And you shall so announce and preach His praise to all peoples that at every hour and when the bells are rung praise and thanks shall always be given to the Almighty God by all the people through the whole earth.

—Saint Francis, *A Letter to All the Custodes*



For Reflection

What bells are frequent in your life? School bells? Camp bells? Alarms? Maybe you live in a place where church bells ring frequently. Could you begin to hear those bells as reminders to offer prayers of thanksgiving and praise? Is this something your whole community could practice together?

Monday of Holy Week, April 14

In particular this vice is to be rooted out of the monastery: that anyone... have anything at all as his own. —Rule of Benedict

For Reflection

Part of being in community with others is sharing time and space, often going at a slower pace than we would like. How do you cultivate a posture of humility that allows others to lead?

Tuesday of Holy Week, April 15

God himself gloried in becoming a member of the human race.
—Thomas Merton

Loneliness and isolation hurt whole communities. —Dr. Vivek H. Murthy,
U.S. Surgeon General

For Reflection

Consider this statement: "Our mission, as followers of Jesus, is to work to eradicate aloneness together." Do you agree or disagree? Say more.

Wednesday of Holy Week, April 16

Pray and work. —Saint Benedict

For Reflection

What does "pray and work" mean to you?



Maundy Thursday, April 17

Preside in order to promote the good of those whom you govern...Provide rather than dominate. —Bernardmo of Clairvaux, *In Consideration*

For Reflection

Most of us lead in some capacity. We lead in our households, at church, in the workplace and in the public square. How does this picture of leadership challenge or encourage your practice?

Good Friday, April 18

There is a grief that is useful and a grief that is destructive. —Syncretica

For Reflection

Is there a point of pain in your life or your community's life? How are you responding?

Holy Saturday, April 19

No one grows simply by doing what someone else forces us to do. We begin to grow when we finally want to grow. —Sr. Joan Chittister, Rule of Saint Benedict

For Reflection

As you wait for Easter, consider where and how God is calling you to grow.

Easter Day, April 20

It is solved by walking. —Saint Augustine



For Reflection

Where are you looking for resurrection in your community life? What do you need to let die in order for something new to arise?

