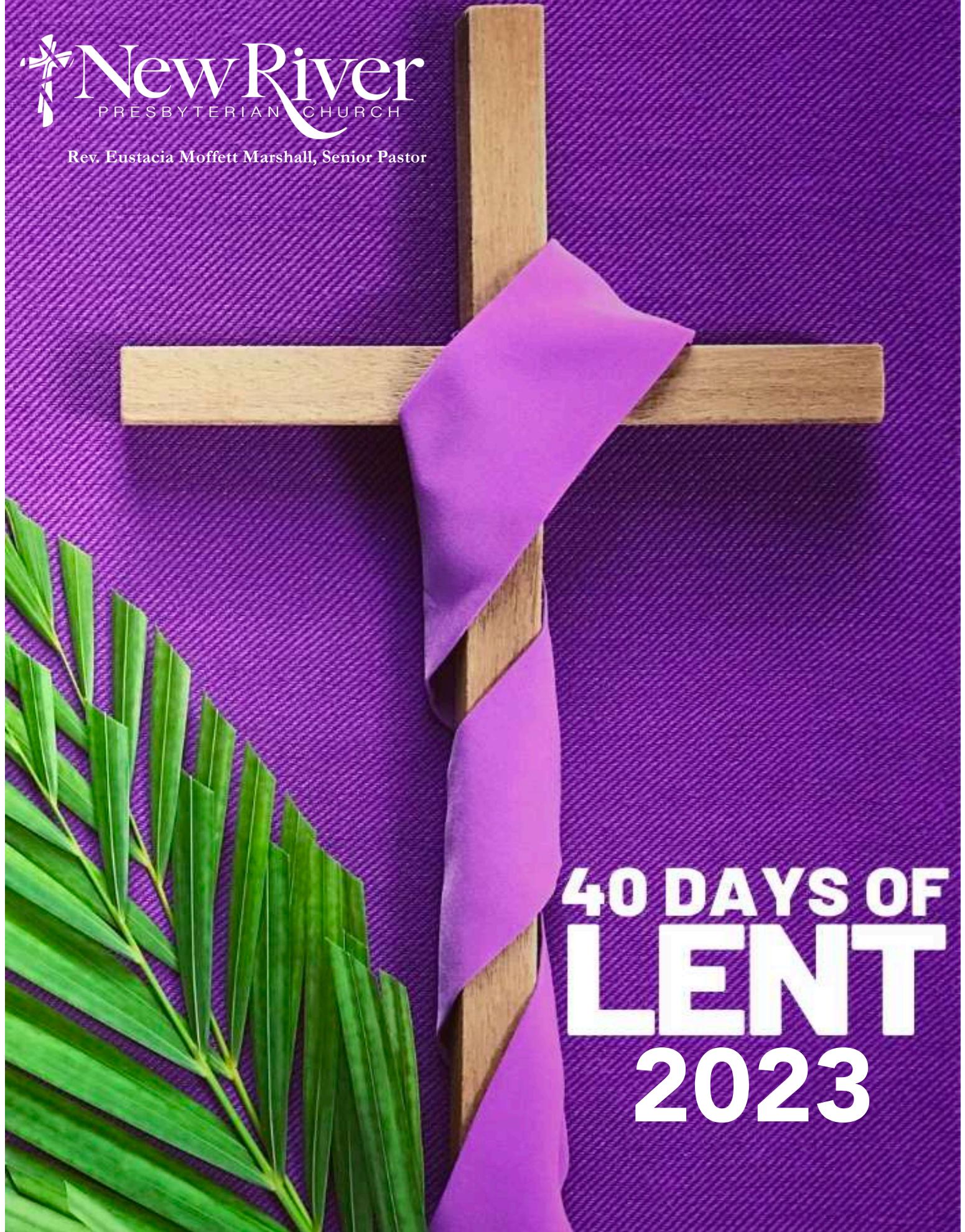




Rev. Eustacia Moffett Marshall, Senior Pastor



**40 DAYS OF  
LENT  
2023**

# Centering Prayer Lenten Guide

Dear Beloved,

You are invited to join New River in daily centering prayer during Lent.

## What is Lent?

Lent is a forty day season of spiritual reflection, in preparation for the death and the resurrection of our Lord at Easter. During lent, we are reminded that new life in Christ requires a daily surrendering of the old life. To practice letting go of the old and turning towards new life in Christ, we engage in spiritual disciplines like fasting and prayer.

## What is Centering Prayer?

Centering prayer, is a contemplative prayer practice. In centering prayer, we quiet our thoughts, images, and feelings, and we rest in God's presence. Through the process of resting in God's presence - beyond thoughts, feelings, associations, and commentaries - we open up to the divine presence at a deeper level (Thomas Keating, *Invitation to Love*).

Centering Prayer is not meant to replace other kinds of prayer. Rather, it adds depth of meaning to all prayer. The next page outlines the specific guidelines for practicing centering prayer.

As you join New River for forty days of prayer, may you be blessed by the fruit of spending time with God.

Yours in Christ,



Rev. Eustacia Moffett Marshall



# Centering Prayer Guidelines

1. Choose a sacred word as the symbol of your intention to be open to God's presence.
  - ❖ Choose any short word with which you are comfortable.
  - ❖ Examples of a sacred word: Jesus, Yes, Silence, Be Still, Listen, Peace, Mercy, Let Go.
2. Sitting comfortably with eyes closed, settle briefly, and silently introduce the sacred word as the symbol of your consent to God's presence and action within.
3. When you notice that you have become engaged with your thoughts, gently return to the sacred word.
  - ❖ The recommended time for silence is up to 20 minutes. However, feel free to start your prayer practice with a shorter period, and work your way towards 20 minutes.
  - ❖ The sacredness of this prayer practice is not in how long you do it, rather it's your consent to do it at all.
  - ❖ Do not judge your thoughts or grade your prayer time. Prayer is not about performing for God. Prayer is about being with God. The Holy Spirit will meet you with infinite love, compassion and grace.
4. At the end of the prayer period, remain in silence with eyes closed for a couple of minutes. End the prayer with intercessions and a closing prayer.



# **Week 1:**

## Ash Wednesday February 22 – February 26, 2023

### *Invitation to Stillness*

#### **Opening Scripture:**

Be still and know that I am God (Psalm 46:10).

#### **Quiet - Centering Prayer:**

Withdraw to a quiet space at a time of your choosing. At the end of the centering prayer period, remain in silence with eyes closed for a couple of minutes, followed by a closing prayer of intercession.

#### **Closing Prayer:**

Gracious God, thank you for your presence. Hear my prayers,

- for the world ...
- for our country ...
- for New River ...
- for my family and friends ...

\*Lord, make me an instrument of your peace,

where there is hatred, let me sow love,

where there is injury, pardon,

where there is doubt, faith,

where there is despair, hope,

where there is darkness, light,

for it is in giving that we receive.

it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,

and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Amen.

\*Adapted from a prayer by St. Francis Assisi



# Week 2:

## February 27 – March 5, 2023

### *Invitation to Surrender*

#### **Opening Scripture:**

Behold, I am the servant of the Lord. Let it be to me according to your word (Luke 1:38).

#### **Quiet - Centering Prayer:**

Withdraw to a quiet space at a time of your choosing. At the end of the centering prayer period, remain in silence with eyes closed for a couple of minutes, followed by a closing prayer of intercession.

#### **Closing Prayer:**

Gracious God, thank you for your presence.

Hear my prayers,

- for the world ...
- for our country ...
- for New River ...
- for my family and friends ...

\*To you, Oh Lord, I surrender my life.

I pray to be your servant.

I pray to be aligned with your will.

I pray to fulfill my life's calling for your glory!



# Week 3:

## March 6 – March 12, 2023

### *Invitation to Abide*

#### **Opening Scripture:**

Remain in me as I also remain in you (John 15:4).

#### **Quiet - Centering Prayer:**

Withdraw to a quiet space at a time of your choosing. At the end of the centering prayer period, remain in silence with eyes closed for a couple of minutes, followed by a closing prayer of intercession.

#### **Closing Prayer:**

Gracious God, thank you for your presence.

Hear my prayers,

- for the world ...
- for our country ...
- for New River ...
- for my family and friends ...

\*Spirit of Life, come unto me.

Sing in my heart all the stirrings of compassion.

Blow in the wind, rise in the sea.

Move in the hand, giving life the shape of justice.

May your roots hold me close,

May your songs set me free.

Spirit of life, come to me, come to me.

Amen.

\*Adapted from a prayer by Carolyn McDade



# Week 4:

## March 13 – March 19, 2023

### *Invitation to Gratitude*

#### **Opening Scripture:**

Speak, Lord, your servant is listening (I Samuel 3:10).

#### **Quiet - Centering Prayer:**

Withdraw to a quiet space at a time of your choosing. At the end of the centering prayer period, remain in silence with eyes closed for a couple of minutes, followed by a closing prayer of intercession.

#### **Closing Prayer:**

Gracious God, thank you for your presence.

Hear my prayers,

- for the world ...
- for our country ...
- for New River ...
- for my family and friends ...

\*I want to thank You, God,

for life and all that's in it.

Thank You for the day,

and for the hour and for the minute.

I know many are gone.

I'm still living on.

Thank you, Jesus. Amen.

\*Adapted from a prayer by Maya Angelou



# Week 5:

## March 20 – March 26, 2023

### *Invitation to Guidance*

#### **Opening Scripture:**

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path (Psalm 119:105).

#### **Quiet - Centering Prayer:**

Withdraw to a quiet space at a time of your choosing. At the end of the centering prayer period, remain in silence with eyes closed for a couple of minutes, followed by a closing prayer of intercession.

#### **Closing Prayer:**

Gracious God, thank you for your presence.

Hear my prayers,

- for the world ...
- for our country ...
- for New River ...
- for my family and friends ...

\*God, our Creator and our Sustainer,

show us the way.

Show us the way not to fortune nor fame,

nor to win morals or praise for our name,

but show us the way to tell the great story,

to live the great story.

For thine is the Kingdom and the power and the glory. Amen.



# Week 6:

## March 27 – April 2, 2023

### *Invitation to Lament*

#### **Opening Scripture:**

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted (Matthew 5:4).

#### **Quiet - Centering Prayer:**

Withdraw to a quiet space at a time of your choosing. At the end of the centering prayer period, remain in silence with eyes closed for a couple of minutes, followed by a closing prayer of intercession.

#### **Closing Prayer:**

Gracious God, thank you for your presence.

Hear my prayers,

- for the world ...
- for our country ...
- for New River ...
- for my family and friends ...

\*God, we lament the ways our societies

and selfhoods are marred by injustice,

cruelty, neglect and greed.

Help us to see our own role in the decay of the world,

that as we push back evil, we might become people

capable of admitting those secret evils which dwell in us.

And as we name how we've been complicit in the suffering of this world,

help us to bear pain in solidarity and hope,

knowing you are a God who meets us in the tomb

and releases us from the grip of the grave.

In Christ we pray, Amen.

\*Prayer adapted from [instagram.com/blackliturgies](https://instagram.com/blackliturgies)



# Week 7:

## April 3 – April 8, 2023

### *Invitation to See in the Dark*

#### **Opening Scripture:**

It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, for the sun stopped shining (Luke 22: 44).

#### **Quiet - Centering Prayer:**

Withdraw to a quiet space at a time of your choosing. At the end of the centering prayer period, remain in silence with eyes closed for a couple of minutes, followed by a closing prayer of intercession.

#### **Closing Prayer:**

Gracious God, thank you for your presence.

Hear my prayers,

- for the world ...
- for our country ...
- for New River ...
- for my family and friends ...

\*God who meets us in the dark,

In the beginning, there was darkness,  
the womb out of which we are born.

Thank you for meeting us in the dark.

May the light of Your divine revelation,  
be seen in the dark.

And may the illuminous, mothering darkness,  
nurse us into being the offspring of your image.

May it be, that the darkness becomes the blessed dimming  
of all our ego-driven striving.

May it be so. Amen.

\*Prayer adapted from a meditation by Rev. Dr. Barbara Holmes



# Easter

Sunday, April 9, 2023

*Invitation to Hope*

## **Opening Scripture:**

You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here (Matthew 16:6).

## **Quiet - Centering Prayer:**

Withdraw to a quiet space at a time of your choosing. At the end of the centering prayer period, remain in silence with eyes closed for a couple of minutes, followed by a closing prayer of intercession.

## **Closing Prayer:**

Gracious God, thank you for your presence.

Hear my prayers,

- for the world ...
- for our country ...
- for New River ...
- for my family and friends ...

\*God of Life, thank you for the resurrection!

When we have exhausted our store of endurance,

when our strength has failed and the day is half done,

when we reach the end of our rope,

the resurrection is the promise that no road is at last swallowed up in evil,

that there is strength added when the labors increase,

and that multiplied peace matches multiplied trials.

God, we thank you for the resurrection!

Hallelujah! Amen.

\*Prayer adapted from a mediation by Rev. Dr. Howard Thurman

