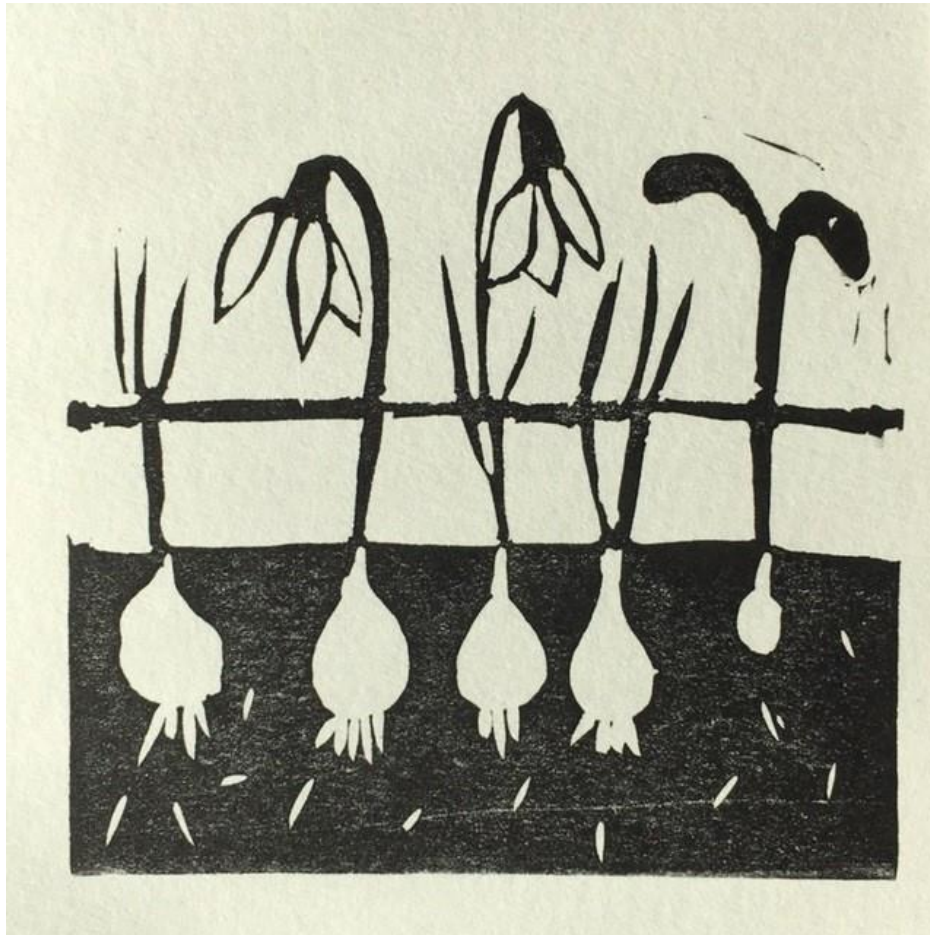
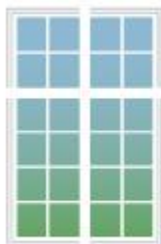


# LENTEN DEVOTIONAL 2022 – HOPE

MARCH 11 - MARCH 17



*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 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](mailto:elizvyoung@hotmail.com) or [office@sockbridgeucc.org](mailto:office@sockbridgeucc.org)!

With love and thanks,

Elizabeth Young



## LENTEN DEVOTIONAL 2022 – HOPE

FRIDAY MARCH 11

### The Desert Shall Rejoice!

A few years ago, there was a story on television about some beautiful flowers that had bloomed in Death Valley. It seems the seeds of these flowers had laid dormant among the rocks for many years and had weathered some of the harshest conditions on earth. Showers came to this region and new life burst forth. Isaiah's vision, "The desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose," (*Isaiah 35:1*) had come true.

During the recent snowstorm, February 25, 2022, I sat down and painted a pot of pansies. Now I have burgundy, white, and blue pansies, with their cheerful little faces, which will greet me every morning from now until spring. Dormant talents lie waiting for all of us to discover, no matter what the season of our life. God's creative spirit is within all of us, always giving us reasons for hope. Blessings to all.

**Prayer:** God, keep us alert to hope blossoming around us in so many ways. Amen.

*John McKinstry*



## LENTEN DEVOTIONAL 2022 – HOPE

SATURDAY MARCH 12

### Essential Hope

My own story of Hope centers around the birth of our daughter in 1974. Kathy was born eleven weeks early and spent her first six weeks in the neonatal intensive care unit. We weren't sure what to ask for in our prayers. I would wander around our apartment at night, looking out the window, asking God for whatever was "best." But we really needed Hope to keep going.

Fortunately, no one came by to assure me that everything would turn out *just fine*. I doubt I would have found that of much comfort. Learning about all the strides in neonatal care was comforting. Having a two-year old at home was hopeful. It helped immensely that friends and family offered prayers of support. By far the major source of Hope, however, was the knowledge that we were not alone. God was always there, with or without specific answers. Our church in Brooklyn, our home churches, our family, and friends buoyed our spirits.

Kathy came home from the hospital after six weeks and is a wonderful, healthy daughter. Sometimes Hope seems so fragile and ephemeral, but it is essential for our well-being, indeed, for our very survival when life feels too much to bear.



**Prayer:** God, thank you for the gift of your presence when we feel afraid. Amen.

*Janet Canning*

## LENTEN DEVOTIONAL 2022 – HOPE

SUNDAY MARCH 13

### Tuning In



When I thought about hope, I realized that many times it's not visible and can be subtle. My next thought was a childhood memory, riding in the backseat while my parents drove through western Ohio. It's nighttime and my father tuned the AM radio so he could find the broadcast of the Dodgers vs Cubs game on Chicago's WGN radio. A

signal which could sometimes be heard 250 miles away at night. He was hoping to listen to the game, hoping the signal would remain strong, hoping the Dodgers would win.

Then I thought of my career days when I traveled outside Montreal for weeks on end to work on engineering projects. At night, I would tune the radio to find WCBS Newsradio 880 from New York, I was hoping to hear the weather, the Yankees game, the traffic – any little reminder of home. It seems to me that hope stirs us to perk up our ears, to focus our attention on better days to come. Hope prompts us to seek out the promise through the static and noise.

**Prayer:** God, keep us focused on the promise of your love. Amen.

*Kim Ruffing*

## LENTEN DEVOTIONAL 2022 – HOPE

### MONDAY MARCH 14

#### Moving to Hope

Losing a job that one loves and having to leave strong collegial relationships is hard to accept. It happened to me twice in my early 60's. Initially, I cried frequently, felt desperate, lonely, unappreciated. Was it my fault that the job didn't work out? Had I done something wrong? Was I "too old" to find another job at the height of my career? I lost my confidence, and with it my hope.

When meeting with a search firm executive, I was told, "You sound raw! I can't send you out on an interview this way!" A wake-up call: I had to change my attitude and present myself in a confident manner to prospective employers. I needed to get back in the game. But I'd lost hope.

During the first nine months of my unemployment, I tried to stay busy, and I prayed. One day a light went off inside me: why not approach my church to see if I could use my talents as a volunteer? I enjoyed the people in the church office, and I was willing to do just about anything on a regular basis. Plus, I didn't need to apply, as I would for a job! A glimmer of hope was born in me.

Over the next nine months, I became the go-to person in the office and regained my self-worth. I was appreciated, praised for the work I did, valued. Slowly, my hope of finding a job in my profession returned. I found a new position while doing something purposeful and satisfying as a volunteer. Hope sustained me.

**Prayer:** God, when I am wounded, let me remember that you are with me. Amen.

*Susan Moyle Lynch*

## LENTEN DEVOTIONAL 2022 – HOPE

TUESDAY MARCH 15

### That Tiny Bit of Hope

My vibrant, funny friend had descended the horrible downward spiral of depression again. She had worked so hard to climb out of it, not that long before. And now she was back in the depths again. This time, there might be no way out. She left her city life to move in with a relative in a part of the country she deplored for its politics and lifestyle, which didn't match hers. She suffered one debilitating accident after another. Her hair fell out. I tried to stay in touch with her, but her responses, if any, were two words or less. My heart ached for her, but in time I gave up on her. It was easier to stop praying for a miracle.

That was two years ago. And now, I get a text message as she reaches out to me. And then a phone call, like old times, talking for almost an hour. She has so much to tell me: ideas



and possibilities for better long-term living arrangements and location, a plan for self-sufficiency, for freelance work. We both rejoice together as we talk. It was hard work, but she and her doctors did not give up. Somewhere deep down inside herself, she located that tiny bit of hope and coaxed it to grow.

**Prayer:** Lord, help me to remain vigilant in hope for the wellbeing of loved ones, and forgive my hopelessness for the world and for those who feel hopeless.

*Terry Wise*

## LENTEN DEVOTIONAL 2022 – HOPE

WEDNESDAY MARCH 16

### Woven Fine

When I think of hope, I think of my mother. She had such a tragic life, and yet she never lost her joy.

She contracted polio at age 15, which left her legs paralyzed. The rest of her life she walked on crutches and used a wheelchair. Her twin brother was killed in an auto-train accident. She had to drop out of school, because he had been the one who had carried her to the second floor for classes. Later she returned to graduate. A sister died of tuberculosis.



Then the war: she met my father at the small air base where he was stationed. They married when he returned; they had three children in five years.

She saw the death of her only grandchild from a gun accident when he was four years old. Her second son died at 33 from complications of diabetes. Her husband died of cancer two years later. She grieved all deeply, then moved on.

When she moved to a nursing home, she blossomed in a social life she'd never had. She was twice elected "Miss Good Samaritan." She married a man with quadriplegia, and a few years later, experienced his death.

And yet, and yet, she was full of joy in life. She somehow managed the balance between joy and woe, knowing as the hymn says, they are "woven fine." She was a model of hope and resilience; I am forever grateful.

**Prayer:** God, bless the people who show us hope time after time after time. Amen.

*Linda Hoddy*



## LENTEN DEVOTIONAL 2022 – HOPE

THURSDAY MARCH 17



Just a few days after the ice storm we had here in northern New Jersey, I stepped outside to see in a sheltered, sunny patch of ground, daffodils pushing up through the softened ice. I smiled and felt warmed inside, filled with hope from the determination and commitment of these flowers to bloom.

Soon after, I opened my front door to take in the early day's sun through the storm door. Surprise! A pair of Mourning Doves were building a fragile nest in the apple cider press we keep on our front porch. On the second day the eggs were laid and being sat on. My daughter Cynthia and I would once again have a front row seat. Ahh, I smiled and again felt warmed inside, hopeful seeing the determination and commitment of these birds to bring a new brood into the world.

Later I came upon some young children playing and laughing together, with their masks on, like it was the most normal garment in the world! And I smiled, had to even laugh out loud with them. Regardless of the ups and downs, the good and bad days, children seem to know when we are ready to throw our arms up in defeat...and they do or say or achieve something that makes us smile, melt—and hope.

And then there are the days when I get to share my faith and experience growth within the arms of God and the hands of people being church. I smile. I feel warm. I fill up with hope.

**Prayer:** God, thank you for your infinite blessings of hope that are right before our eyes, all the time. Amen.

*Marilyn Strauch*