



# AN INVITATION TO FAST

## Lenten Lunch Feast Readings and Prayers

### FOR A BELLY FULL OF JESUS

**Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. John 6:35 (NIV Bible)**

### Welcome & Relax into Your Lenten Practice

You and I know that religion in any form without any real substance of spiritual life is like junk food - high calorie energy, that makes you feel miserable and hungrier hours later. New Hope and Trinity United Methodist Churches in Monroe, NC are offering you real soul food to enjoy and be nourished on to prepare you and our churches for an EASTER REVIVAL. This is what our church community does best- feed people God's love around tables that energize us with friendship and care. Please join us to be in unity with our leaders and families to fast and pray.

### Don't Knock it Until You Try It

"Fasting can release God's spiritual power to fight our battles, heal, restore and energize us to live into God's dream for our lives and church. When Christians do not fast it is like getting a \$1,000 gift certificate to your favorite restaurant and never using it. Why would anyone do that? Really? While food is great... the real blessing is sharing food with those whom you love. Fasting is a way to focus our attention on the Lover of our Souls to be in intimate communication with the one who loves us the best and most, now and forever. Fasting is not about starving or hurting our bodies, it is about our bodies signaling to us our real dependence is on soul food- Jesus. Jesus fasted to be in union with His heavenly Father and we can too.

### How to Fast During Weekday Lunches to Feast on Jesus

1. Determine Your Ritual, Routine & Practice.
  - Will you participate in the church-wide every Wednesday 12 PM lunch fast? At 12 PM everyone is invited to intentionally eat with others or alone to pray, read the devotion for the day and to contemplate God's word speaking to you. The other four days of the week will you do a lunch fast or choose another time to read your devotion & focus on feasting with Jesus.
  - Decide how each time you will:
    - 1- Pause & Start
    - 2- Eat & Think/Discuss
    - 3- Pray & Give Thanks at the End
  - Support your health by abstaining from a food or drink that you normally eat that will not harm your health. Some may totally eliminate a meal or more, if their health allows and a doctor says it is okay for you to do so.
2. Wear your purple prayer bracelet to be in unity with the church. Use the Cards, Devotional Guide and Materials to support your spiritual growth. Plan to Join us Easter Morning for Worship.
3. Respond to God: Call In or Join Facebook Live 7 PM on Wednesday Nights 425-436-6305, 861-422, Serve and Give as you are led.
4. Grieving a Loss? Join our Grief Share Group at 4PM on February 28th to meet for the month.

# FEBRUARY

EACH DAY ASK: What is the Spirit saying to me in today's passage?

What word or phrase is meaningful to me? How does this apply to my life?

## "Do you love me?" John 21:15

18

Jesus said, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me as I abide in you."- John 15:1-8 "Emmanuel, God with us, I give up all that is dead in me, so by your nourishment I am filled to overflowing with your love. I fast from discouragement and lift praise to you for you have a purpose and plan for my life. Amen"

19

Jesus answered them, "Very truly, I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For it is on him that God the Father has set his seal." Then they said to him, "What must we do to perform the works of God?" Jesus said, "Receive the bread of God is that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." They said to him, "Sir, give us this bread always." John 6 "Bread of life, fill me and satisfy my thirst. I confess I need you with all that I am, so I empty myself to be filled with you.

22

"God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Philipians 2:9-11 "Yeshua, you save your people from their sins. You are in union with me, so I may know salvation in you. I fast from judging others and the church to recall how you overlook my faults. Amen"

23

"When my soul was embittered, when I was pricked in heart, I was stupid and ignorant; I was like a brute beast toward you. Nevertheless I am continually with you; you hold my right hand. You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will receive me with honor. Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire other than you. Psalm 73:21-26 "Praise Yah, My flesh and my heart may fail; but you, God, are my strength and portion forever. Amen"

## "Who do you say I am?" Matthew 16:15

24

Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." Jesus said, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." Matthew 16:16-17,19-20 "Son of the Living God, fill me with more of you, so in union with you I may know and do your will. Amen

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25

"Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe." Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe." John 20:26-29 "My Lord and my God, open the eyes of my heart that I can see you and feel you in my body. I fast from anger & hatred hardening my heart and life from knowing unity of love with you and others in physical life. Amen

# FEBRUARY & MARCH

EACH DAY ASK: What is the Spirit saying to me in today's passage?

What word or phrase is meaningful to me? How does this apply to my life?

## "Do you believe?" Matthew 21:22

26

Jesus said to Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" She said to him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world." John 11:25-27 "Anointed one, my heart hungers and thirsts for you. I long-awaited to taste the oil of salvation. I fast from overspending on things of this world to fill my life, so I may be full of you. Amen"

1

"Teacher, I brought you my son; he has a spirit that makes him unable to speak; and I asked your disciples to cast it out, but they could not do so. It has often cast him into the fire and into the water, to destroy him; but if you are able to do anything, have pity on us and help us." Jesus said, "If you are able!—All things can be done for the one who believes." Immediately the father of the child cried out, "I believe; help my unbelief!... Jesus took the boy by the hand and lifted him up, and he was able to stand." Mark 9:17,22-24,27 "Teacher, I open my mind to you to fill me with belief, so your healing can flow in and through me to help others. Amen"

2

"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name." John 15:12-17 "Logos, the Word of God, may I want what you want and be motivated to show love to those you love, in Jesus Christ's name I pray. Amen"

3

"I have come in my Father's name, and you do not accept me; if another comes in his own name, you will accept him. How can you believe when you accept glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the one who alone is God?" John 5:43-44 "Our Father in Heaven, give this day my daily bread. Forgive me for not seeking to be filled up with your favor, but getting my portion of worth from others. Amen."

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## "What does scripture say?" Luke 10:25

4

A lawyer stood up to test Jesus, "Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus replied, "What is written in the law? What do you read there?" He answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." Jesus said, "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live." Luke 10:25-28 "Word of God, Jesus Christ, write your instructions to love as you do on my heart and in my mind, so I may not sin against you, but reveal your love to all. Amen."

5

"Every part of Scripture is God-breathed and useful one way or another—showing us truth, exposing our rebellion, correcting our mistakes, training us to live God's way. Through the Word we are put together and shaped up for the tasks God has for us." 2 Timothy 3:16-17 MSB "Word of Life, forgive me for my choice to be ignorant of your written words, because they are challenging. I fast from self-hatred and anger by staying in the dark, so you may fill me with the light of life found in scripture. Amen."

# MARCH

EACH DAY ASK: What is the Spirit saying to me in today's passage?

What word or phrase is meaningful to me? How does this apply to my life?

## "Will you tell how I have helped you?" Mark 5:30

8

A woman suffered a condition of hemorrhaging for twelve years—a long succession of physicians had treated her, and treated her badly, taking all her money and leaving her worse off than before. She reached out to Jesus and touched his robe. She was thinking to herself, "If I can put a finger on his robe, I can get well." The moment she did it she felt the change and knew her plague was over. Jesus felt energy discharging from him. He turned around to the crowd and asked, "Who touched my robe?" Knowing she was the one, stepped up in fear and trembling, knelt before him, and gave him the whole story. Jesus said to her, "Daughter, you took a risk of faith, and now you're healed and whole. Live well, live blessed! Be healed." Mark 5:25-30 "El Shaddai, God Almighty, fill my mouth with praise for you are so good to me. I fast from discouragement to remember your promise to be with me all the days of my life. Amen."

9

"Don't love money; be satisfied with what you have. For God has said, "I will never fail you. I will never abandon you." So we can say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper, so I will have no fear. What can mere people do to me?" Hebrews 13:5-6 "El Roi, God of Seeing Me, I feast my eyes on all you have given to sustain my family and me. I fast from resentment and bitterness, to work on forgiving others and myself for the hurt I see in life and have caused. Amen"

10

Jesus said, "Your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him! Pray like this: Our Father, who is in heaven, holy is your Name; your kingdom come; your will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen." Matthew 6:8-13 "Yahweh-Shalom, your name means the Lord is Peace, so I feast at your heavenly banquet table set before me now. I am starving for peace, since fasting from the energy gained by hating my neighbors and self. Amen"

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11

"And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love." Romans 8:38 "Adonai YHWH Tzevaot, you are the Lord God of Angel Armies, I give the battles and wars in and around me to you for in you I am safe. I fast from fear. Amen."

## "Do you want to be made well?"

12

A man laying near the pool of healing water in Bethesda had been sick for 38 years. Jesus asked him, "Would you like to get well?" "I can't, sir," the man said, "for I have no one to put me into the pool. Someone else always gets there ahead of me." Jesus replied, "Stand up, pick up your mat, & walk! Instantly, the man was healed! John 5:1-9 "Elohim, the power of all, I fast from complaining to be made well by filling my mouth with joy for taking the next step of healing faith toward you. Amen."

15

"Jesus never answered back when insulted; when he suffered he did not threaten to get even; he left his case in the hands of God who always judges fairly. He personally carried the load of our sins in his own body when he died on the cross so that we can be finished with sin and live a good life from now on. For his wounds have healed ours!" 1 Peter 2:23-25 "Our Shepherd, I return to you the Guardian of my soul who keeps me safe from all attacks and feeds me in green pastures. Amen."

EACH DAY ASK: What is the Spirit saying to me in today's passage?

What word or phrase is meaningful to me? How does this apply to my life?

**"Why are you so afraid?"**

16

"Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you. Discipline yourselves, keep alert. Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour. Resist him, steadfast in your faith, for you know that your brothers and sisters in all the world are undergoing the same kinds of suffering. The God who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, support, strengthen, and establish you." 1Peter5:7-10 "Lord, I fast from fear to be filled with your strength. Amen"

17

FEAST DAY

"Do not fear, O soil; be glad and rejoice, for the Lord has done great things! Do not fear, you animals of the field, for the pastures of the wilderness are green. Children, I will repay you for the years that the swarming locust has eaten, the hopper, the destroyer, and the cutter. You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied. I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and daughters shall prophesy, old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even on the male and female slaves, in those days, I will pour out my spirit." Joel 2 "Great I am, I fast from judging to feast on your Spirit in me, so I all filled with faith not fear. Amen"

18

"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." Philippians 4 "King Jesus, my Lord and Savior, in your presence I am safe and known, so fill me wherever I am with your peace. Amen"

19

"Beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you. And my God will fully satisfy every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus." Philippians 4: 19 "Adonai, Adonai, Adonai, Lord of my life and all creation, keep my mind full of the beauty in nature and in my life. I fast from complaining to count the blessings beyond measure for being alive in such a world of splendor. Amen"

**"Why did you doubt?"**

22

"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them." Revelation 21:1-3 "My Beloved, I yield my life to be in unity with you, so I may live in the truth of eternal life now and forever with you and all people. I fast from doubt and blindness to see your kingdom now. Amen."

23

"I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love." Ephesians 3 "Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world and within me, so I may be united to the family of God where I belong and have value beyond any earthly measure. I fast from believing my weakness is greater than your love that pursues my heart and life and keeps me secure in your fold. Amen"

EACH DAY ASK: What is the Spirit saying to me in today's passage?

What word or phrase is meaningful to me? How does this apply to my life?

**"Do you still not see or understand?"**

24

FEAST DAY

"I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen." Ephesians 3 "Jehova Jireh, The Lord Who Provides, fill me with your understanding, so I may fast from all thought that is apart from you. Amen."

25

"Long ago God spoke in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs." Hebrews 1 "Yahweh, God you call me to be yours, so I may know my inheritance in you. I fast from defining my worth in worldly treasure. Amen."

26

"So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God. Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God, just as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, so that they may be saved." 1 Corinthians 10 "Elohai, my God, may I be so filled with you that I can yield my preferences and will to serve others for your glory. Amen"

**Holy Week Begins on Palm Sunday, March 28th Join Us in Worship**

**"Are you also going to leave?"**

29

"I am the true bread from heaven. "This is very hard to understand. How can anyone accept it?" Jesus was aware his disciples were complaining said, "Does this offend you? The very words I have spoken to you are spirit and life. 64 But some of you do not believe me. That is why I said that people can't come to me unless the Father gives them to me." At this point many of his disciples turned away and deserted him. 67 Then Jesus turned to the Twelve and asked, "Are you also going to leave?" John 6 "Elohei, My God you have called me, so fill me with confidence in you alone. Amen."

30

Jesus prayed, "I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. John 17 "Jehova Rapha, you are the Lord that Heals, so fill me with your healing, so I may know my worth and belonging in you. Amen."

31

FEAST DAY

"I sought the Lord, and he answered me, and delivered me from all my fears. Look to him, and be radiant; so your faces shall never be ashamed. This poor soul cried, and was heard by the Lord, and was saved from every trouble. The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them. O taste and see that the Lord is good; happy are those who take refuge in him. O fear the Lord, you his holy ones, for those who fear him have no want." Psalm 34 "Elohim, forgive me for...Amen"

EACH DAY ASK: What is the Spirit saying to me in today's passage?

What word or phrase is meaningful to me? How does this apply to my life?

1

"If there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion & sympathy, make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus." Philippians 2:1-2, 4-5 "Christ, the anointed one, you gave all of yourself to save me, so I give all of me to be in loving union with you and your church. I fast from complaining to recall the joy of you and your people. Amen"

2

"In my vision, the man brought me back to the entrance of the Temple. There I saw a stream flowing east from beneath the door of the Temple and passing to the right of the altar on its south side. The man brought me outside the wall to see the river growing and flowing wider and deeper. I was surprised by the sight of many trees growing on both sides of the river. Then he said to me, "This river flows east through the desert into the valley of the Dead Sea. The waters of this stream will make the salty waters of the Dead Sea fresh and pure. trees of all kinds will grow along both sides of the river. The leaves of these trees will never turn brown and fall, and there will always be fruit on their branches. There will be a new crop every month, for they are watered by the river flowing from the Temple. The fruit will be for food and the leaves for healing." Ezekiel 47 "Jesus you washed our feet and set before us a table of abundance, so we may live life with you. By your example of love, I fast from being concerned about the filth of this world, so I may serve others by being like you- healing water in chaotic times. Amen."

3

Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. John 7:38-39 "Christ, you were pierced for my transgressions and crushed for my sin, have mercy on my a sinner. Oh God, I die, so you may live in me. Amen"

## The Story of Christ's Passion from Isaiah 53

My servant grew up in the Lord's presence like a tender green shoot, like a root in dry ground. There was nothing beautiful or majestic about his appearance, nothing to attract us to him. He was despised and rejected—a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief. We turned our backs on him and looked the other way. He was despised, and we did not care. Yet it was our weaknesses he carried; it was our sorrows that weighed him down.

And we thought his troubles were a punishment from God, a punishment for his own sins! But he was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed. All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God's paths to follow our own. Yet the Lord laid on him the sins of us all. He was oppressed and treated harshly, yet he never said a word. He was led like a lamb to the slaughter. And as a sheep is silent before the shearers, he did not open his mouth. Unjustly condemned, he was led away. No one cared that he died without descendants, that his life was cut short in midstream. But he was struck down for the rebellion of my people. He had done no wrong and had never deceived anyone.

But he was buried like a criminal; he was put in a rich man's grave.<sup>10</sup> But it was the Lord's good plan to crush him and cause him grief. Yet when his life is made an offering for sin, he will have many descendants. He will enjoy a long life, and the Lord's good plan will prosper in his hands. When he sees all that is accomplished by his anguish, he will be satisfied. And because of his experience, my righteous servant will make it possible for many to be counted righteous, or he will bear all their sins. I will give him the honors of a victorious soldier, because he exposed himself to death. He was counted among the rebels. He bore the sins of many and interceded for rebels.

## The Good News According to Mark 16th Chapter in The Holy Bible

Saturday evening, when the Sabbath ended, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome went out and purchased burial spices so they could anoint Jesus' body. 2 Very early on Sunday morning just at sunrise, they went to the tomb. 3 On the way they were asking each other, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?"

4 But as they arrived, they looked up and saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled aside. 5 When they entered the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a white robe sitting on the right side. The women were shocked, 6 but the angel said, "Don't be alarmed. You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He isn't here! He is risen from the dead! Look, this is where they laid his body. 7 Now go and tell his disciples, including Peter, that Jesus is going ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there, just as he told you before he died."

8 The women fled from the tomb, trembling and bewildered, and they said nothing to anyone because they were too frightened. Then they briefly reported all this to Peter and his companions. Afterward Jesus himself sent them out from east to west with the sacred and unfailing message of salvation that gives eternal life. Amen.

9 After Jesus rose from the dead early on Sunday morning, the first person who saw him was Mary Magdalene, the woman from whom he had cast out seven demons. 10 She went to the disciples, who were grieving and weeping, and told them what had happened. 11 But when she told them that Jesus was alive and she had seen him, they didn't believe her. 12 Afterward he appeared in a different form to two of his followers who were walking from Jerusalem into the country. 13 They rushed back to tell the others, but no one believed them.

14 Still later he appeared to the eleven disciples as they were eating together. He rebuked them for their stubborn unbelief because they refused to believe those who had seen him after he had been raised from the dead. 15 And then he told them, "Go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone. 16 Anyone who believes and is baptized will be saved. But anyone who refuses to believe will be condemned. 17 These miraculous signs will accompany those who believe: They will cast out demons in my name, and they will speak in new languages. 18 They will be able to handle snakes with safety, and if they drink anything poisonous, it won't hurt them. They will be able to place their hands on the sick, and they will be healed." 19

When the Lord Jesus had finished talking with them, he was taken up into heaven and sat down in the place of honor at God's right hand. 20 And the disciples went everywhere and preached, and the Lord worked through them, confirming what they said by many miraculous signs.

### Do you want to know and grow into maturity as a follower of Jesus Christ?

Scripture is clear. A person must be regularly be fed by the Holy Spirit to grow-up in the faith that reveals heaven on earth now. The church is the body of Christ gathered together around the Lord's Table open to all who believe salvation comes from Jesus. The church is the most visible witness of Christ's presence in the world and exists to make disciples of Christ for the healing and hope of the world. Yes, you can be a Christ follower and not belong to a church. Yet, you miss out on God's call in your life to feast abundantly at His table that is really more of a huge spiritual potluck of people doing their best to serve up what they have on hand- and that is more than good enough.

Eat His Word by studying it, fill your life with Christian friends who feed one another words of God's nourishment, worship Him with praise, serve others by meeting their physical and spiritual needs, feast on prayer and fast from those things in the world that do not feed your soul. The first step is opening your mouth to drink in the living waters of Baptism to fill you with the Holy Spirit. Connect with Pastor Emily [ekroeger@wnccumc.net](mailto:ekroeger@wnccumc.net) or 704-351-5027 to learn more about taking your first or next step of faith.

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