

*Pilgrimage of the Soul  
Praying the Psalms  
Granite Springs Church  
July and August, 2022*

*2400 steps/mile \* 500 miles = 1,200,000 steps  
Every step a prayer*

The journey of life has countless twists and turns, hills and wetlands, blind curves and dense fog. We wish life was a smooth four lane expressway. We wish everything was “fine.” Sometimes we even pretend everything is “fine.” Maybe we work hard to look happy. We keep appearances—our homes sparkle, our clothes fashionable, our smiles bright. But inwardly we may feel like a toxic waste site. A tangle of anger, jealousy, and envy boil in an untamed wildness that belies our fine exterior. External chaos threatens our calm: we give birth to a special needs’ child; we are diagnosed with a chronic disease; or we learn our spouse is having an affair. When disorder threatens, we get tempted to dump our faith declaring, “It doesn’t work.” Religious formulas leave us resentful and empty, so we pronounce belief bankrupt and move on. Maybe we maintain an exterior of religious clichés. But inside we feel hollow. We quit on God and don’t know how to start again.

The Psalms offer us a way to pray the entire mess of our emotions as an act of faith. They teach us to pray not as pristine people of polished exteriors, but as pilgrims. As people on journeys known only to God.

Believers through every century experienced gospel life in the psalms. Athanasius said the psalms have “a very special grace” that portrays “the movements of the human soul.” John Calvin called the psalms “an anatomy of all the parts of the soul.” U2’s lead singer Bono wrote, “Words and music did for me what solid, even rigorous, religious argument could never do, they introduced me to God ...as a result the book of Psalms always felt open to me...”

Thanks for journeying with us in prayer as we walk this historic, 500 mile, forty-day pilgrimage on the historic “Camino de Santiago.” What a way to celebrate thirty years of ministry at GS—by walking this 1200 year old Christian pilgrimage with believers from around the world. As we walk, we invite you to pray with us this ancient, timeless prayer book of God’s people.

With thanks!

Kevin and Gerry Adams

**Friday**

**July 1, 2022**

**Destination: Saint Jean Pied de Port**

**Keeping Up, or *Not***

**Psalm 1**

“Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked...” Psalm 1:1

Rhonda has a new boyfriend. He’s funny, charming, and handsome. Her pulse races when he calls, her temperature rises when they touch. It feels wonderful to be with him. She gushes, “It’s like we’ve known each other all our lives.” People who don’t know her are charmed by her infatuation. Her friends are not. They’ve heard all this before. Rhonda *always* has a new boyfriend. One goes, another comes in an endless parade. Each is the true love of her life. And then they disappear.

Like Rhonda, we want to stay current. We buy a leisure suit, a Prius, or the latest video game to keep pace. Part of us is desperate to be sleek enough or smart enough or well-read enough or charming enough. The present moment urges us, “Do something!” Unsettled, we shift girlfriends or jobs or vehicles or political parties or churches.

Psalm 1 pictures this life of keeping up *and* its alternative: a life with deep roots. A hiker’s guide to the Redwood National Park calls it a “place where the most irreligious person can find religion.” Surrounded by peaceful, elegant giants, we no longer hear NASCAR races, sniff the latest perfume or eye new clothing styles. Anchored to one place for a thousand years, these ancient trees literally give life to all that surrounds them. In a sense, the righteous person stands still. Spiritual health may depend on our standing still.

Prayer: Lord, We are tempted to chase fancies, to buy happiness, and to go with the flow. Would you make us people of substance? Through Jesus, Amen

**Saturday**

**July 2, 2022–12 km**

**Destination: Valcarlos**

**Sunday**

**July 3, 2022–13 km**

**Destination: Roncesvalles**

**Monday**  
**July 4, 2022–21 km**  
**Destination: Zubiri**

**Political Prayer**  
**Psalm 2**

Psalm 97:1 “The LORD reigns, let the earth be glad; let the distant shores rejoice.”

The first psalm is personal. Blessed is the person. Blessed are you. Psalm 2 feels entirely different. Our attention shifts from a single individual to the cosmic sweep of nations and governments. It pushes us into politics.

Maybe you retreat: Politics? I don't want to be part of any group that mixes religion and politics. Psalms are supposed to teach us to pray. Why taint prayer by adding politics? To be sure, the mix of politics and religion has brought nasty results: crusades, inquisitions, witch hunts, and genocide to name a few. But the beginning of this prayer book says, “Prayer and politics *have* to mix.” If we don't mix faith and politics, we live our life in sections, eventually becoming phonies. A life of integrity requires we combine politics and faith without letting one corrupt the other. The only safe way to combine them is prayer.

Most of us keep our piety private. We pray to boost our inner peace. We ask God to watch over our family. But Psalm 2 uses *kingdom* language, praying for nations and rulers. No wonder. The Psalter's central image is that God is King! Psalms urge us to get this straight: the center of gravity for every human life, for all hope and justice is God, the King. Psalm prayers are just as concerned with rough and tumble politics as our prayer closet. God's eye is on the sparrow *and* politicians' smoke-filled rooms. And on our individual pilgrimage.

Prayer: Lord, Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.  
Through Jesus Our Lord, Amen.

**Tuesday**  
**July 5, 2022–21 km**  
**Destination: Pamplona**

**Night Prayer**  
**Psalm 4**

“I will lie down and sleep in peace...” Psalm 4:8

Many of us experience what psychologists call anxiety dreams. We show up to a college exam unprepared and maybe undressed. Our ex-husband is in the next room and we are about to get married. A pre-med student has slept through her alarm and forgotten surgical rounds. Yesterday’s regrets, today’s decisions, and tomorrow’s troubles flood our thoughts.

Like a monster under the bed or a bogeyman in our closet, bullying anxiety growls to life. Will our boyfriend ditch us? Will we lose our house? Will we reconcile with our children? Will the doctor give us a good report? Medieval people called this “the hour of brooding,” the moment when yesterday’s hassles grow into ogres.

In the Sixth Century Benedict created a pattern of daily living for his monks combining work and prayer. Every two weeks the monks would pray the entire Psalter. Every evening, in the final worship of the day, they would pray Psalm 4. Its content (personal trouble) and setting (evening) make it especially fitting.

Most of us have rituals to end each day. We watch the evening news. We read a book. We brush our teeth and lock the doors. Maybe it’s time for another ritual. Maybe we should try the wisdom of the monastery. Maybe the editors of the Psalter were on to something when after a two-psalm introduction they give us model prayers for the evening (psalm 4) and the morning (psalm 5).

Prayer: Visit this place, O Lord, and drive far from it all snares of the enemy. Let your angels dwell with us to preserve us in peace; and let your blessing be upon us always. Through Jesus Christ, Amen.

**Wednesday**  
**July 6, 2022–24 km**  
**Destination: Puente de la Reina**

**Fully Alive**  
**Psalm 18**

“I love you, Lord, my strength.” Psalm 18:1

Imagine someone highly spiritual, a pious person of prayer. What image comes to mind? A small, white haired widow? A grandfatherly schoolteacher? A bland office droid? Reflect on this *spiritual* person in your mind. What adjectives describe them? Withdrawn? Scholarly? Eccentric? Persnickety?

The Bible’s prototype of piety is an enthusiastic adventurer, a song-writing rock star, and warrior king. David believed in God, thought about God, imagined God, and prayed to God. His all-consuming passion for God shines in the metaphors he uses. God is a bedrock, a castle, a crag, a shield, and a hideout. Everything in David’s life points him to God.

By contrast, many of us have a plastic image of what it means to be "full of God." Pictures of sober nuns, rule-following puritans, and judgmental critics appear in our mind. No wonder the idea of being a prayer-full person sounds like drudgery. But David had a big life. A captivating pilgrim path. His life was big because he knew God was big. David experienced God fully, in life and death and victory and defeat. In every instant he turned to God in prayer: when running for his life in the desert, when grieving the death of a friend, when confronted by his own sin, or when asking God for mercy. That tendency to prayer was the key to David becoming "a man after God's own heart" and the key to us being that sort of person too.

Irenaeus, one of the Christian church's first pastors said, "The glory of God is a human being fully alive."

Prayer: Lord, Make us fully alive in you. For Jesus’ sake, Amen

**Thursday**  
**July 7, 2022–22 km**  
**Destination: Estella**

**I'm Listening**  
**Psalm 19**

“The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul.” Psalm 19:7

Church worship services can be infected by the same plague that twists the rest of our life. The morning news, our email inbox, and television besiege us with words, many of them cheap and empty. Why would anyone come to church to hear more?

Psalm 19 begins as a perfect text to keep us from church: “The heavens declare the glory of God.” Each starry constellation, meadowlark song, and biological breakthrough tells God’s wonder. So why not worship at our favorite campsite?

Consider natural selection. Animals run in a pack. When one falls, do they turn and help? No, they keep running. Imagine a young antelope saying “Sorry mom, I can’t stay and help! I’ve got to run.”

Nature’s speech is not enough. We need *literal* words. Just as the rejuvenating power of the sun gives our planet life, so God’s Word replenishes our spirit. It radiates divine love. It feeds our soul.

How can we know that God is love? Why are we inspired to sing “Amazing Grace, How sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me?” Who could guess a God who sends his Son to die and save the world from ruin? Left to our own we would invent a religion of human achievement. We would acclaim pious overachievers and mock people who fail. We would divide the world into good and bad people. Thank God he gave us His Word to tell us about Jesus, who “restores my soul.”

Prayer: O how we love your law! We meditate on it day and night. Your commands and grace are always with us. Thank you for pilgrim guidance. Amen

**Friday**  
**July 8, 2022–21 km**  
**Destination: Los Arcos**

**My Shepherd**  
**Psalm 23**

“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not be in want.” Psalm 23 (Part One)

I want. You want. All God’s children *want*.

Austin loves Legos the way a gardener loves roses, the way a marine biologist loves otters, the way a roofer likes a thirst-quenching beverage at the end of an August day. Austin memorizes Lego magazines. He studies the Lego website. He cleans his room, earns his allowance, and saves his birthday money to buy his heart’s desire: a giant Star Wars Lego.

Heather styles her hair. She carefully applies make-up. She combs new fashion magazines. She works out at the gym. All with one goal in mind: she wants a boyfriend. Friday night she watches TV re-runs alone and thinks, “If only I had a boyfriend.” Sunday in church she scans the seats for single men thinking “I wish I had a boyfriend.”

Bill wants a new 35’ motor home. He wants a designer pool. He wants a happy marriage. He wants his teenage son to practice the electric guitar at less than 130 decibels. He wants a job with health insurance. And he wants the past twenty years back.

Commercials tap our longing with brain surgeon precision. Advertisers identify and accent our cravings. In a world of broken relationships, they create luring images of a perfect family. In a world of rusted Ford pick-ups, they show us a handsome male driving his new SUV.

In such a world, what can it mean to pray, “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want”? What can it mean that having Jesus on our pilgrimage is enough?

Prayer: Lord, in a world of wants lead us to your goodness and mercy. Through Jesus, the Good Shepherd, we pray. Amen

**Saturday**  
**July 9, 2022-18 km**  
**Destination: Viana**

**Sunday**  
**July 10, 2022–10 km**  
**Destination: Logrono**

**Monday**  
**July 11, 2022–28 km**  
**Destination: Najera**

**My Shepherd (Part Two)**  
**Psalm 23**

“He leads me beside quiet waters...” Psalm 23:2

Deep in the psyche of God’s people is a well-loved image: God is our shepherd. Anyone familiar with the Christian faith may yawn at what seems a cliché. But this phrase is a brutal cut-down. If God is a shepherd that makes us a *sheep*! Other animals take far less care than sheep. Cattle and horses, dogs and cats roam free. But sheep cannot be let out unless in a closed area. Sheep can’t roar like a lion or run like a deer. They can’t even play dead like a possum. All they do is stand on their spindly legs or get themselves lost. A sheep is the very picture of spiritual weakness and cluelessness.

So why does this image appeal to people in trendy universities, chic urban hotspots, or well-manicured suburbs? Maybe in our deepest heart we recognize our own weakness and dependence. Maybe in our sane moments we sense God’s companionship transforms every situation. Maybe deep down we want to be carried in the arms of a shepherd.

Are you in the middle of a messy divorce or custody battle? The Lord is my shepherd. Is your husband sick and there appears to be no cure? The Lord is my shepherd. Is your teenage adolescent chanting “I hate you”? The Lord is my shepherd. Are you in church for the first time in 40 years, or reading a devotional book for the first time ever? Is your pilgrim path especially miry?

Why not say it? Why not confess it? The Lord is my shepherd.

Prayer: Shepherd God, we act independent. We ignore you, run from you, even belittle you. But we need you. Amen.



**Tuesday**  
**July 12, 2022–21 km**  
**Destination: Santo Domingo de la Calzada**

**In The Deepest Gorge**  
**Psalm 23**

Psalm 23:4 “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death...”

Our sixteen year old neighbor died one sunny October day. An expert skateboarder, he was wearing his helmet and protective gear. But as he long-boarded with close friends, a truck surprised them around a blind corner. He couldn't swerve fast enough. Suddenly the life of his single mom, and everyone he knew, was changed forever.

How do we cope with the fragileness of life? How do we live in the valley of the shadow of death? Some cope by eating a lot; others by not eating at all. Some drink to forget. Sometimes when a child dies, strain presses on a family until it cracks, splitting apart.

Grief shreds us into tiny parts. It's as if our life becomes a jigsaw puzzle scattered over hundreds of miles. Weak and disoriented we have to put the pieces of our life back together and we don't know how to begin.

When our circumstances splinter, Psalm 23 holds us together. Its familiar words offer a border, an orientation for rebuilding. Even with a border it can be mighty difficult to put a 1000-piece puzzle together. But these familiar words offer a sense of hope, and help. In the particular chaos of our lives we have a framework that holds the pieces of our life together.

In Jesus we have the only guide, the only shepherd who has actually experienced death himself. With him leading us, we don't have to be afraid. He will restore our soul.

Prayer: Father God, for those who grieve we ask your mighty comfort. Walk with them through the shadow of death. Amen

**Wednesday**  
**July 13, 2022–23 km**  
**Destination: Belorado**

**Psalm 23**  
**God's Thanksgiving Feast**

*"You prepare a table before me..." Psalm 23:5*

God is an incredible host. He throws the sort of parties with the things we love: great food, great people, warmth, and laughter. God's parties are lavish, extraordinary.

For some who grew up going to church our idea of "God as host" might be cheap paper plates in a windowless basement, munching day-old ham buns and Jell-O from plastic molds. But traveling through the desert, God's people pictured a promised wonderland flowing with "milk and honey." Joel 2:24 says, "The threshing floors will be filled with grain and the vats overflow with new wine and oil." It's no surprise then that one of Jesus' favorite pictures of the kingdom of God is a joyful banquet. In the book of Revelation, the Apostle John describes heaven as "the wedding *feast* of the Lamb."

The dominant image of Psalm 23 describes God as our shepherd. But this second image also highlights God's providing care: Like the early American Pilgrims rescued from starvation, the psalmist has been rescued from trouble. In Psalm 22 the psalmist was surrounded by enemies. Now God's grace has rescued him. God has led him from deep trouble to a seat at a luxurious table. He's a confident, joyful banqueter.

No one is worthy to dine at God's eternal banquet. Our shepherd-host knows that we cannot qualify ourselves to attend. He never says, "I have given you a second chance, now make it right this time." No, Jesus does *everything* necessary to qualify us to attend.

Prayer: Lord, You prepare a table before me. You anoint my head with oil. Your goodness and love follow me. I will live in your house forever. Amen

**Thursday**  
**July 14, 2022–11 km**  
**Destination: Villafranca Montes de Oca**

**The True Owner**  
**Psalm 24**

*“The earth is the Lord’s and everything in it.”* Psalm 24:1

We were born into someone else’s kingdom. We did not choose our skin color or hometown, our IQ, or our body type. We did not choose our economic condition, our neighborhood, or our century. We were born into someone else’s kingdom.

Most of our lives we live with the illusion of control. We assume that we make our own decisions. We find our own way. We learn in kindergarten to “make good choices.” And so off we go through grade school picking our own little princess backpacks, designer clothes and BMX bicycle. We grow older and pick a college. Some of us choose a spouse and decide how many children to have. We find a career and decide whether to try a new one. We act like we’re in control.

Into our illusion comes the life-giving words of Psalm 24. The oil fields in Venezuela, vineyards in Spain, and the Great Barrier Reef near Australia belong to him. Psalm 24 takes us back to Genesis 1. The Earth is God’s handiwork; his much loved and fussed over project. It is HIS. Each of us lives as his dependent. To breath air, to eat lettuce or ride our bike is to be in a world that expresses God’s power.

For centuries Jewish folks have used this Psalm as a mealtime prayer. The Apostle Paul uses it to talk about Christian freedom. We could say it when we visit a shopping mall or view the ocean or when the offering comes by. Or when we take another pilgrim step.

Prayer: Our Father in Heaven, Hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done. Amen

**Friday**  
**July 15, 2022–18 km**  
**Destination: Atapuerca**

**Midday Prayers**  
**Psalm 27**

“Your face Lord, I will seek.” Psalm 27:5

During seminary, I preached a sermon suggesting we all carve out quiet time to talk to God each day. It’s a simple, historic idea. But an honest mom questioned me afterwards. “How am I supposed to do that? I’m interrupted even when I go to the bathroom!” I was sympathetic. Three children and 30+ years later I’m more so.

Stay-at-home moms put 15,000 miles a year shuttling children from school to soccer practice to piano lessons to karate workouts. Uber drivers work 14-hour shifts. Lawyers labor past midnight. Recent MBA grads spend their week in or between airports. One person described their apartment as more storage locker than living space. Add a long commute or ill parents to a stuffed life and prayer feels like an unrealistic luxury. The only people, it seems, with time to pray are monks.

But what if we pray another way? What if prayer is not another duty to pile onto an overcommitted schedule? What if our work or each step we walk becomes the stuff of prayer? Psalm 27 shows us the way. Part prayer of trust (verses 1-6) and part complaint (verses 7-12), this psalmist is having a rough day. Who knows what he faces. A corporate sales meeting? Office politics? Backbiting gossip? In the stuff of his life he prays his trouble. He has one request—the face of God. During the Reformation ordinary people used this phrase. Surgeons, plumbers, lawyers and homemakers imagined every part of their day as a prayerful gift lived before the face of God. They prayed by offering their work as a prayer.

Prayer: Father, in my work, in my conversation, in every step I take, be glorified. Amen

**Saturday**  
**July 16, 2022–20 km**  
**Destination: Burgos**

**Sunday**  
**July 17, 2022–21 km**  
**Destination: Hornillos del Camino**

**Monday**  
**July 18, 2022–20 km**  
**Destination: Castrojeriz**

**Lost!**  
**Psalm 42**

“...I used to go to the house of the Lord, under the protection of the Might One...”  
Psalm 42:4

Our friend, a faithful pastor for twenty-five years, attended the funeral of a close colleague. That same week his twenty-year-old daughter lay in a specialized hospital without a diagnosis. Walking to her bedside he considered stopping at a nearby room to offer comfort to a dying woman. But at that moment he remembers thinking, “How can I speak words of hope? I don’t know if I believe or not.”

Psalm 42 describes this feeling of spiritual emptiness. The Psalmist lost his spiritual GPS. He *used* to be close to God. He *used* to know what it was like to be spiritually alive. He *used* to know how to find God. He used to give lessons on God. But now it feels like God divorced him. It is as if God left without a forwarding address.

Psalm prayers never step outside the church to doubt, they doubt from inside the church. Peter Gomes, chaplain of Harvard University, used to have students come to him and say, “I don’t believe in God anymore.” He would respond, “Why don’t you tell me what kind of god you don’t believe in. Maybe I don’t believe in him either.”

Praying the psalms keeps us from panic when our feelings of faith fade. Jesus once asked a father with a sick son, “Do you believe?” This desperate and weary father responded with beautiful honesty, “I believe Lord, help my unbelief.” May God give us his grace, especially when our steps are uncertain, and when we are lost.

Prayer: As the deer pants for streams of water,  
so my soul pants for you, my God.  
Help me put my hope in you. Through Jesus, Amen.

**Tuesday**  
**July 19, 2022–25 km**  
**Destination: Fromista**

**Refuge**  
**Psalm 46**

“God is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in times of trouble.” Psalm 46:1

No building captures the imagination like a castle. Turrets, moats, and secret passageways feed our inner romanticism. Their military, political, social and economic role was paramount. Developed first as private fortresses of timber and earthwork, they were later redesigned using stone. Crusades to Syria exposed Europeans to new possibilities in castle engineering so by the middle of the 13<sup>th</sup> century the medieval castle had reached the pinnacle of its development.

A castle was not the exact image in this psalmist’s mind, but the idea of an impregnable fortress was. He piles images accenting the idea of refuge. In a time of un-creation, when floods threaten and the world caves in on itself, fortresses hold fast. In such times believers have a foundation, a refuge. This metaphor holds fast the footings of faith in our mind. Such an image can give us poise in panicky times of unstable economies, political chaos or war. When the familiar collapses, we have a refuge!

You could put your trust in a retirement fund or a new political party. But wise people trust in *the* refuge. After their 13<sup>th</sup> century glamour period, few more castles were built. That’s because in the 14<sup>th</sup> century a weapon appeared that made them obsolete—gun powder. By the 15<sup>th</sup> century castles were not even maintained; their roof and timbers were stolen and put to other use. Be careful what you make your refuge.

Prayer: O God our help in ages past, our hope for years to come  
Be Thou our Guide while life shall last, and our eternal home. Amen

**Wednesday**

**July 20, 2022–19 km**

**Destination: Carrion de los Condes**

**Joy to the World, the Lord is King**

**Psalm 47**

“For the Lord Most High is awesome, the Great King over all the earth” Psalm 47:2

Like all people, the ancient Greeks mused about the “best possible government.” Known as the originators of democracy, their great philosopher Plato believed the best possible government would be led by a philosopher king. Plato wrote that if an ideal city-state was to ever come into being, “philosophers must become kings...or those now called kings [must]...genuinely and adequately philosophize.”

Psalm 47 describes God governing his world as the ultimate philosopher king. His government bears no resemblance to a democracy or parliament. He is no roving militant hack, but neither does he need votes like a president or premier. God relates to you, to me, and to every nation as king.

This image of God’s kingship saturates the psalms. When the psalmist pleads to God for justice, he imagines ancient kings who held ultimate judicial authority. When a psalmist says, “God is my shepherd,” he imagines God as the ideal king, a benevolent shepherd to his people. When God makes and keeps promises, he acts as a king who keeps treaties (covenants) with his subjects.

Few psalms are as enthusiastic as this: Clap your hand all you nations! Shout to God with cries of joy! Imagine a procession (or pilgrim path) with crowds shouting “Long live the king!” Centuries after this psalm was written, the true king did come to Jerusalem, riding a donkey. That day people shouted “Hosanna! He saves.” In their exuberance they had no idea how their king would save.

Prayer: Father, We thank you for being our one true king. We pledge our loyalty. In Jesus’ name, Amen

**Thursday**  
**July 21, 2022–17 km**  
**Destination: Calzadilla de la Cueva**

**Our Heart's Desire**  
**Psalm 63**

“You God, are my God, earnestly I seek you.” Psalm 63:1

Prayer is a kind of longing. In prayer we utter our deepest need. We ache. We hurt. We cry. So we long.

In a sense, all our longings are the same. Sure, we are different people with very unique lives and custom feelings. But our longings, our friends' longings, and even our enemy's longings point in the same direction. Behind all our longing is God.

He designed us to long for him. At the bottom, every hunger pang, every craving to buy, to belong, to bully or to beat up a bully show that in our deepest heart we long for him. We want to know and be known by him, to love and be loved by him.

One day Jesus met a woman carrying a water jug. She was thirsty but didn't know it. Married and divorced five times, ostracized by her community, she avoided people, preferring to draw water alone. She dodged Jesus' conversation with religious banter. She knew pious people wouldn't admit her into their circle. Why try? So she kept Jesus away with spiritual chit chat and repartee.

But the more he talked, the more she craved what he had. Soon the woman with the water pitcher found herself asking the jugless prophet for drink. Who could guess his chalice was filled with his own blood?

This nameless woman didn't know she was praying, but she was. Going from husband to husband, friend to friend, and fad to fad she was pleading. She was seeking *the* lover of lovers.

Prayer: Father, Our heart is restless until we find our rest in you. Thank you for filling us. Amen



**Friday**  
**July 22, 2022–23 km**  
**Destination: Sahagun**

**Psalm 67**  
**Bless You**

“May God be gracious to us and bless us.” Psalm 67:1

When we began Granite Springs, like any new congregation, we faced hundreds of choices about what church behaviors and traditions to keep and what to leave behind. We knew congregations marked by judgmental critique and wanted to leave that behind, focusing instead on God’s grace. We appreciated traditional organ music but decided our California context called for guitars and amplifiers. For three years I wore a formal suit and tie, but one 115-degree day decided we could leave that behind too.

We knew congregations that required complete adherence to a doctrinal code as a requirement for belonging. We decided to let people belong first (and try on the Christian faith) as a way to help them believe.

Thirty years later we realize some of those decisions were wise, others less so. Our first worship services ended with a prayer. Then someone would say something like “We’ll see you next week.” Benedictions felt too stiff and formal. But later we realized we *need* a blessing each week. If nothing else happened in a worship service, if the music was off key and the sermon boring, to have God pronounce his blessing on us is gift enough.

During a worship service we hear how God’s grace puts away our sin. We hear that through Jesus’ cross and resurrection we can walk with God without fear of judgment or punishment. The final blessing symbolizes all this. God turns his face to us, letting us know that things between us are all right. He loves us. His face radiates affection.

Prayer: May the peoples praise you, God, may all the peoples praise you!  
Amen.

**Saturday**  
**July 23, 2022–17 km**  
**Destination: El Burgo Ranero**

**Sunday**  
**July 24, 2022–19 km**  
**Destination: Mansilla de las Mulas**

**Monday**  
**July 25, 2022–19 km**  
**Destination: Leon**

**Psalm for a Slippery Faith**  
**Psalm 73**

“But as for me, my feet had almost slipped...” Psalm 73:2

Doubt is guaranteed. We *will* doubt. The fine writer and long time skeptic CS Lewis once wrote to a friend “I feel an amused recognition when you describe those moments at which one feels ‘How could I of all people—ever believe this cock and bull story?’”

Psalm 73 begins by affirming the core doctrine of Psalm 1: “Surely God is good to Israel.” Then doubt comes. He’s slipping. He’s trying to keep faith, but he’s tottering on a precipice. He has a bad case of vertigo, that dizziness when your eye tells your brain something it can’t process. And so he stumbles.

He *thought* God was good to Israel, but something he saw started him spiritually spinning. We’ve seen similar evidence. The most *Christian* baseball team does not win the World Series. The most Christian quarterback doesn’t start on the college team. It’s not always the Christian who becomes first violin in the symphony, or whose book tops the *New York Times* best seller list. Often selfish, proud, vain people prosper while good, God-loving folks suffer. Asaph saw this. So do believers of every century. So do we.

In the end, Psalm 73 pushes away the idea “if I do everything right, God will reward me.” Here we have a good person doing everything right and yet he suffers. Belief doesn’t make him wealthier or healthier; it doesn’t do any measurable good. In the end, he only has the presence of God. And that is enough.

Prayer: Lord, We believe. Help our unbelief. And help our friends who struggle to believe as well.” Through Jesus, Amen.

**Tuesday**  
**July 26, 2022–21 km**  
**Destination: Mazarife**

**Re-orientation**  
**Psalm 77**

“I cried out to God for help...” Psalm 77:1

His doubts started early. At the ripe old age of nine it dawned on him that he was a Christian because his parents were Christians. Like a thunderbolt it hit him, “That’s why I believe, I had been raised to believe!” That of course, his preadolescent mind quickly surmised, did not make it true. What if he had been born in India, wouldn’t he be a Hindu? What if he had been born in Iran, wouldn’t he likely be Muslim? He remembers panicking, “What if I wasn’t born in the right country?”

He went to his mother who was working innocently in the kitchen unaware of his spiritual crisis and asked, “Mom, why are we Christians? You did check it out first didn’t you? You know we believe in the right religion?”

She didn’t dismiss him with a quick “Don’t worry.” She knew her son was serious. She even resonated with the question herself. She said, “Jim, your father and I did look at all the faiths in the world and determined that following Jesus is the right way. You need to grow sure of this yourself, and you’re welcome to come to your own conclusions.

Psalm 77 begins with anguished perplexity about God’s action, or *lack* of action (verses 1-9). This frustrated believer had used his trusty “God-formula,” saying the correct words and proper phrases. But this time, they didn’t work. A crisis of faith begins setting him on a journey of faith he doesn’t want to take. He’s forced into deep water. Will his faith reach new depth or drown? Will his faith become new, or unravel? This is a critical move of biblical faith, from self-centered demands for God to do things our way, to new trust in God regardless of circumstances. When the psalm ends, nothing has been resolved, but his narrow religious agenda (it’s all about me) is to trust the God who “leads his people like a flock.”

Prayer : Father, Use today’s pilgrim journey to make our faith new. Make it less dependent on getting our way, and more dependent on your goodness. Amen

**Wednesday**  
**July 27, 2022–14 km**  
**Destination: Hospital de Orbigo**

**Children's Prayer**  
**Psalm 78**

“We will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord...” Psalm 78:4

A seminary professors sat at table with a group of his peers. Each told how their adolescent lives deteriorated into chaotic, selfish living. They had avoided and rejected God and lived independently. Then, one day, God stepped in and redirected them toward his grace.

As the conversation circled the table, and the time neared for him to tell his faith story, my professor felt awkward embarrassment rise. He apologized, “I’m sorry my story isn’t exciting. I was raised by authentic Christian parents. All through Junior and Senior High School, even college, my faith remained strong and steady. I don’t have much to tell.”

The other professors were shocked. They took turns scolding him. “Don’t feel ashamed, you have exactly the story we wish we had, the kind we hope our children and grandchildren have!”

Parents struggle to give children music lessons, academic opportunity, and time for their favorite sports. They pass on work ethic, relational health, and financial security. But no gift they have is as valuable as a sense of inclusion in the stories of faith. Your great grandchildren will not know your name, but you can give them a foundation of faith that gets them through whatever they face.

Some friends have a plaque prominently displayed on their kitchen wall: “Children are the only things you can take with you to heaven.” The most important thing we offer any child is faith in Jesus, a foundation strong enough to serve them long after we ourselves are gone.

Prayer: Let children everywhere hear of your mighty deeds and amazing grace.  
Amen

**Thursday**  
**July 28, 2022–17 km**

**Hello Darkness**  
**Psalm 88 (Part One)**

“Lord, you are the God who saves me. Day and night I cry to you.” Psalm 88:1

In the 2001 season finale of NBC’s *West Wing*, President Bartlett is in anguish. His secretary died in an awful drunk driving accident. Political opponents are about to leak word of his multiple sclerosis, showing his inability to lead. Torment over life’s cruel twists leads him to linger in the National Cathedral following his secretary’s funeral. After other guests have gone, his handlers aim to whisk him away. But with secret service agents blocking the door, he prays.

He doesn’t begin, “Our Father who art in Heaven...” No. With nerves raw and faith tested he hisses, “You’re a feckless thug” That’s just the translated part. Perhaps to avoid a rush on the NBC switchboard, he offered the rest of his prayer in forced Latin. “Am I really to believe these are the acts of a loving God? A just God? I was your servant here on earth, and I spread your word and I did your work....may you go to a cross!” The scene ends with Bartlett, in a show of contempt, crushing a cigarette on the sacred Cathedral floor.

Maybe such a prayer makes you strongly uncomfortable. Maybe you’re the sort of believer who thinks “complaining in faith” is a contradiction in terms. Maybe you think once we question God our faith is gone. One commentator says Psalm 88 ends conventional, predictable, plastic faith. What’s this doing in the Bible? A lot of good, if we listen to it.

Prayer: Jesus, You are the light of the world who steps into our darkness.  
Help us trust in you, to step forward to follow you, even in our darkest night.

Amen

**Friday**  
**July 29, 2022–20 km**  
**Destination: Rabanal del Camino**

**Darkness is My Only Friend**  
**Psalm 88 (Part Two)**

“You have taken me from friend and neighbor and darkness is my closest friend.” Psalm 88:18

Christians, especially North American Christians are naïve about suffering. We design a remedy for every anguish. We go to the doctor to replace our knee. We go to the pharmacist for quick pain relief. We leave neighborhoods or jobs or spouses or children to avoid suffering. But in this “dark” psalm, God gives us a gift.

This psalm is a gift precisely because it doesn’t resolve. It leaves us teetering, dangling in the depths, pleading without a clear sign of rescue. This is important prayer to have in our repertoire, because life is like that. Faith does not always fix the stuff of our life. Not every crisis has a way out.

Too many church people and too many church leaders act as if we can resolve things with the right formula. They treat the Bible like a recipe book of faith fixes. But this psalm tells us that faith doesn’t retreat to former spiritual naiveté. Nor does it charge ahead to some imagined, or forced, resolution. Faith stays in reality, even if that reality has a slow, tortuous pace. We all spend time in darkness; no matter what we do.

When John Donne was pastor of St. Paul’s Cathedral, three waves of the great plague swept through London. Half-crazed prophets stalked deserted streets saying God had sent the plague to scourge London for its sins. Donne taught people to pray like Psalm 88.

Prayer: Father, Thank you for giving us words to pray, when there are no words to pray. Through Jesus, the Light of the World. Amen

**Saturday**  
**July 30, 2022–16 km**  
**Destination: El Acebo**

**Sunday**  
**July 31, 2022–16 km**  
**Destination: Ponferrada**

**Monday**  
**August 1, 2022–24 km**  
**Destination: Villafranca del Bierzo**

**Sanctuary**  
**Psalm 91**

A funny thing happens to you when you become a minister. People start asking you to pray a lot. You know, grace at the potluck supper, an invocation to open a meeting... things like that.

If I had thought about it, back when I was a rookie public pray-er, I would have realized that all the prayers I could ever need were right there, in the center of my Bible: the Book of Psalms. Every day, all over the world, people open their Bibles and prayer books, and they pray the psalms. And there is a very good reason for that. The psalms present us with a panoramic view of the human condition. In the preface to his five-volume commentary on the psalms, John Calvin says this: “I have been accustomed to call this book... ‘An Anatomy of all the Parts of the Soul’ for there is not an emotion of which any one can be conscious that is not here represented as in a mirror. Or rather, the Holy Spirit has here drawn to the life all the griefs, sorrows, fears, doubts, hopes, cares, perplexities, in short, all the distracting emotions with which the minds of men [and women] are wont to be agitated.”

No matter the emotion we are experiencing... whether that be joy, rage, fear, doubt, sorrow, a sense of national pride, a sense of betrayal... we can open the psalms and find that emotion mirrored somewhere. And this tells us something powerfully true and vitally important to the spiritual journey of every one of us: we can bring to God in prayer the people we truly are, with all our chaotic jumble of human emotions, and not merely idealized versions of people we are hoping and striving to be.

The psalms invite us to get real with God. To be who we really are. Psalm 91 is a beautiful example. A snapshot of a very human relationship with God.

Prayer: We live in your shelter. Thanks for protecting us. Amen.

**Tuesday**  
**August 2, 2022–21 km**  
**Destination: Herrerias**

**Thanks Giving**  
**Psalm 100**

“Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise.” Psalm 100:4

Listen. Listen, and you will hear the sound of a thousand grumbles. Children grumble about parents. Parents grumble about children. And grandparents grumble about both. Teachers grumble about students. Students grumble about teachers. And principals grumble about both. Coaches grumble about their players. Players grumble about their coaches. And referees grumble about both.

Grumbling is a favorite past time of Jesus-followers. Few vices are more preferred. God's people may not get drunk, they may not cheat, they may not commit adultery, but oh can they grumble. The people following Moses were given manna and water from a desert rock and a miraculous passage through a Red Sea. Their response? They grumbled. God's people grumbled so regularly Peter had to say, “Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.” (I Peter 4:9) James added, “Don't grumble against each other or you will be judged.” (5:9)

In our world of a thousand grumbles, the psalms call us to a different way. Just as the psalms teach us to voice our fear (Psalm 46) and darkness (Psalm 88) and anger (Psalm 137) so they also teach us to live every day as a gift by praying thanks.

But, you might be thinking, why shouldn't we grumble? The world is a mess. The Psalm answers: because “we are his and he made us, we are his people.” We belong to God. He saves us. He adopts us. As children of the king, grumbling is beneath us. It is not the family way.

Prayer: Father, for your creation, for your saving work in Jesus, for adopting us into your family, for grace in the steps of today, we give you thanks. Amen



**Wednesday**  
**August 3, 2022–9 km**  
**Destination: O Cebreiro**

**Lovingkindness**  
**Psalm 103:1-12**

“...who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion.”  
Psalm 103:4

Kathleen Norris first rejected the Christianity of her parents and grandparents. When she returned to faith, she realized that she had no understanding of its words. For any courageous person who ventures to worship, services can feel like a word bombardment, a barrage of heavyweight theological terms. Norris writes, “I was so exhausted afterwards I would need a three-hour nap. And I would wake depressed, convinced the world called “Christian” was closed to me.”

Today we help each other understand the grandest word of the psalms. It’s a central part of the question, “Who is God?” and “How does God relate to me?” The word in Hebrew is *chesed*. English translations translate it “love” (NIV), lovingkindness (AV), steadfast love (RSV). It has overtones of tender mercy and compassion. It’s associated with God’s faithfulness and dependability. Through the generations, God’s people experience God’s *chesed* as the tender, faithful, stubborn love on which every breath depends.

In Psalm 103 God’s *chesed* overcomes our mistakes. We pretend we are better than we are. We easily find fault with people in our family, but our own sin seems minor. Still, sin clings to us. Ask any spouse or good friend and they can quickly make a list of our faults. The psalms teach us to honestly pray our sins, pointing out we are often worse off than we think. We can be warped, weak, sometimes deluded people. This is not a cause for worry or groveling, but to celebrate God’s *chesed* that wins the day.

Prayer: Jesus, Thank you for being a friend of sinners. Help us see your kindness today. Amen

**Thursday**  
**August 4, 2022–21 km**  
**Destination: Triacastela**

**The Good Die Young**  
**Psalm 103:13-18**

“...they flourish like a flower of the field...” Psalm 103:15

A recent manual in the “death care” industry notes “...certain words and phrases long associated with cemeteries sometimes increase sales resistance because they suggest images of a negative, morbid and depressing nature.” They recommend a new vocabulary. Undertakers are called funeral directors. The deceased are carried in a “casket coach,” not a hearse. The “loved one” (never corpse) is to be shown in a reposing room, not a showroom. People used to be buried in grave yards, now its “memorial parks.” It continues, “The word death should be avoided if at all possible.”

Thinking like this made Woody Allen comment, “It’s not that I’m afraid to die, I just don’t want to be there when it happens.” Ernest Becker wrote “The idea of death, the fear of it, haunts the human animal like nothing else.” It’s no surprise that when famous baseball slugger Ted Williams died his family members froze his body hoping it might be reheated later.

Most of us try to outsmart death. We join the local health club, apply facial creams, and envy those with personal chefs. Some of us get surgery; others move to a healthier city. Psalm 103 compares humans to a week-old floral arrangement. We fade. But rather than advise a new health club membership, it points to *chesed*. Puppy love ends. Parental love ends. Marital love ends. Our lives end. But God’s love never ends. To those of us reluctant to say “death,” God teaches us another word, his word: *chesed*.

Prayer: Father, as we walk through the particular mystery of this day, teach us to number our days that we might get a heart of wisdom. Amen

**Friday**  
**August 5, 2022–9 km**  
**Destination: Samos**

**What a Wonderful World!**  
**Psalm 104**

“...the wild donkeys quench their thirst, The birds of the sky nest by the waters...”  
Psalm 104:11-12

In the early 300’s Pachomius founded a monastery that grew to 7000 monks. He observed, “The place in the monastery that is closest to God is not the church, but the garden. There the monks are the happiest.”

In the 1400’s Thomas a Kempis wrote, “If your heart were right, then every created thing would be a mirror of life, and a book of sacred doctrine. There is no creature so small and worthless that it does not show forth the goodness of God.”

In the 1500’s John Calvin urged us to heed “a universal rule and not to pass over with ungrateful inattention or oblivion, those glorious perfections which God manifests in his creatures.”

In the 1800’s Russian novelist Fodor Dostoevsky wrote “Love all God’s creation, the whole and every grain of sand in it. Love every leaf, every ray of God’s light...If you love everything, you will perceive the divine mystery in things.”

Naturalist John Muir whose tireless conservation work started National Parks in the United States said, “It was a great comfort...that the vast multitudes of creatures, great and small and infinite in number lived and had a good time before man was created.”

When a farmer delights in his freshly mowed field, when a pilot glories in her expansive view, when a chef grows giddy tasting his crème brule, it can be a prayer echoing Psalm 104. God sustains lions and wild donkeys. No wonder we can pilgrim through this day in trust.

Prayer: All Creatures of our God and King  
Lift up your voice and with us sing. Alleluia! Amen.

**Saturday**  
**August 6, 2022–10 km**  
**Destination: Sarria**

**Sunday**  
**August 7, 2022–22 km**  
**Destination: Portomarin**

**Monday**  
**August 8, 2022–22 km**  
**Destination: Palas de Rei**

**No One is Too Small**  
**Psalm 113**

“He lifts the needy from the ash heap.” Psalm 113:7

When children are old enough to speak, parents ask, “How big are you?” Children always give the same answer, “I’m sooooo big!” They raise their hands high as if to say, “I’m huge, I’m colossal. There’s no telling how big I may be.”

Our psalm asks, “How big is your God?” The answer is not so easy. Ancient Jewish people pondered this question. Their country was never big or powerful. Its economy never became world class. Except for an 80-year span with King David and Solomon, their armed forces were mostly outmaneuvered, outnumbered and over run. In other words, they lost. Their theology said “God is “soooo big.” Reality said our country is small.

Even after decades of military defeats, temple songs rang out, “The Lord is exalted over all the nations, his glory above the heavens.” In a world where each country or village or household had its own god, the boast that their God was the great King was an act of sheer faith. Still, they sang with enthusiasm, “Who is like the Lord our God...? ”

Jesus confused people. They expected leaders to ride beautiful white stallions; he parades on a donkey colt. They expected commanders to begin military revolutions; he orders followers to love enemies. They expected kings to rule from marble palaces; he heals lepers in obscure villages and plays with children. For thousands of years God keeps telling us “I’m so big that I care for the poor.” Someday we will believe him.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, You cared for the poor and crippled and lost. Help us walk in that same grace. Amen

**Tuesday**  
**August 9, 2022–28 km**  
**Destination: Arzua**

**Faith Maintenance**  
**Psalm 131**

‘Every branch that does bear fruit he prunes that it may bear more fruit.’ John 15:2

Every spring calm, law-abiding citizens grab sharp objects that bite, cut, pierce and lop and then walk outside. It's pruning time. Pruning, an annual practice for people who care about growing things, is grossly misunderstood. To outsiders who do not understand how growth works, pruning looks like horrible mutilation.

We live on 1/5th of an acre, a modest lot on which we once had eleven fruit trees. After their first growing season, a seasoned gardener volunteered to assist our first pruning. We loved those trees like family members: small, vulnerable relatives needing tender treatment. We wanted to leave as much growth as we could, hoping for fruit to come soon!

He knew better. He lopped and cut and snipped and sheared and when he was done half of my beloved fruit trees lay on the ground. He left nothing but a gaunt skeleton!

So the next year we didn't invite him back. We pruned our own trees. You should have seen how many peaches we had that year! A week before harvest two main branches broke under the weight of blessing. That year and the following our beloved tree was broken.

Eugene Peterson calls this the pruning psalm. This small psalm lops off "unruly ambition," our tendency to act more independent than we really are. It cuts "infantile dependence," our refusal to cut the apron strings. If we are not careful, doing things our way might break us in half. Thank God for the gardener.

Prayer: Lord, We have calmed ourselves and quieted our ambitions.  
Prune us as you see fit. Amen

**Wednesday**  
**August 10, 2022–23 km**  
**Destination: Amenal**

**Singing our Faith**  
**Psalm 136**

“Give thanks to the Lord for he is good.” Psalm 136:1

For years the Australian government, corporate sponsors, and thousands of citizens planned an elaborate nation-wide celebration. The entire country poised to commemorate the anniversary of the landing of the First Fleet in 1788. Twenty-five thousand events were planned for Sydney alone. But something happened that government officials didn't plan. Indigenous Australians united in protest. From every corner of the country they organized, aiming to counteract rising national pride focused on one race. Tired of treatment as second-class citizens they protested a celebration applauding the landing of oppressors. Protestors descended into Sydney united to counteract national pride for a few. Hoping to forge a new dialogue, thousands of indigenous people and their supporters rallied. Their method of protest? To Sing!

We sing to protest. But we also sing going to work, watching the Grammys, at karaoke parties, and at weddings and funerals. Even those who claim they can't sing, sing. Or they whistle, hum or tap their toe. Songs put words in our mouths, knowledge in our bones, and deepen our conviction. Songs shape how a community believes and how we act on our belief. The most intense moments of our life involve singing. And they always have.

Jewish folks used this psalm at the end of Passover to celebrate God's saving acts, calling it “The great hallel” (the great praise). It's no wonder then that for centuries, Christians read this psalm at Easter, affirming God's *chesed* in the resurrection of Jesus.

Prayer: Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God,  
Thank you for having mercy on me, a sinner. Amen

**Thursday**  
**August 11, 2022–16 km**  
**Destination: Santiago de Compostela**

**God Knows**  
**Psalm 139**

“O Lord you have searched me, and you know me.” Psalm 139:1

We are a mystery to each other. Our doctor may know our bodies, charting our bone spurs, cancer-looking cells, or the plaque buildup in arteries. Our dentist may know our inept brushing habits or which teeth are capped. Our therapist may diagnose us manic depressive or obsessive compulsive. After 45 years of marriage some spouses can finish each other’s sentences. Others use non-verbal signs like a raised eyebrow to signal the time to leave a party. They know us, or do they?

We’ve been studying the psalms because they help us know God. He is our shepherd. He is our refuge. He is the king. Today we remember that God knows everything about us: he knows if we can do a push up, he knows if we can curl our tongue. Jesus said God has numbered our hair follicles. He knows what we’re doing this split second as you read this devotion. He knows if we are interested or if our mind is wandering.

We tend to hide parts of ourselves. If people know about our anxiety or alcoholism, they might ditch us. Others might gather inside information for emotional blackmail or publicly mock us. Former colleagues publish kiss and tell memoirs; others blog our inadequacies. Many people use their insider knowledge against us. But God uses his knowledge *for* us. He knows we are sinners. And His response is not to mock or belittle or threaten or bully. But to send a savior.

Prayer: Search me O God and know my heart.  
Test me and know my anxious thoughts.  
And lead me in the way everlasting. Amen

**Friday**  
**August 12, 2022**

**All Praise**  
**Psalm 150**

“Let everything that has breath, praise the Lord.” Psalm 150:5

Praise isn't rational. At odds with our technologically oriented lives, it rejects typical standards of achievement, control and objectivity. It leaves the world of email, twitter and memos that reduce and minimize our world.

Instead, praise invites us to see life as mystery and gift. Embracing an alternate reality, it puts aside passive routines and pious sounding platitudes. It creates room for imagination. Praise is disruptive, boisterous and disordered. But even more, praise is an act of trust. When we praise, we cede our life to God the King. We say, no we *shout*, “God runs our life.”

The Psalter began its prayer journey with confidence. Psalm 1 spoke of two ways: the blessings of God's law and the pitfalls of human self-government. Then the psalms prayed every human trouble: questions, doubts, anxieties, fear of enemies, even darkness. To enter the Psalter is to find startling candor, a dangerous life of God-following. Now at the end, this ancient prayer-book gives us a final word to pray: praise.

Psalm praise isn't naïve; it comes after pilgrim-suffering. Nor is it demanding; it asks for no answers or favors. It knows life is flawed. It knows the world is skewed, that sometimes innocent people suffer. It faces day-to-day reality unflinchingly. Still, it calls the entire world to mobilize in an orchestra of praise. The final prayer tells anyone who will listen: God is king. He gives us our breath. And the wisest thing to do with that breath is “Praise the Lord!”

Prayer: Father, as we near the end of this particular pilgrimage we say with those who have gone before: Praise God in his sanctuary! Praise God in his mighty heavens. Praise him for his acts of power. Praise the Lord. Amen!