



Lent 2021

Word of the Week

Repent/Rethink: Word of the Week devotions focus on our Lenten journey of repentance and invite us to engage with a weekly photo/image challenge.

Lent is traditionally a time to REPENT, a time to turn back to God in renewed faith. The Church encourages this work of repentance by offering worship opportunities like Immanuel's Wednesday night Holden Evening Prayer Worship. We also encourage people to take time repenting, or turning to God, through devotions and prayer. This year we are encouraging one another to RETHINK Lent, to take to heart the work of repentance in new and renewing ways.

In this year of pandemic, we have been forced to rethink so much of life, how we work, how we connect with family, how we renew our friendships with one another and renew our faith in God. As repentance invites us to renew our relationship with our Lord, rethinking that work of repentance helps make this work new and fresh, just as we need creative renewal.

Word of the Week

Each Wednesday, beginning with Ash Wednesday, we invite you to post an image on your social media with the hashtag **#REthinkILC** (or email us a copy) that helps you connect or unpack the meaning of that word of the week. The words are: *Dust, Reflect, Broken, Costly, Beloved, Cry, Love*. This is an opportunity to connect and engage with our Lenten themes via a visual medium and help others to also contemplate (rethink) these themes during Lent.

How this will work:

- Post your photos on your social media channel with the hashtag, **#REthinkILC**, or send your photos to kelly@immanuel.us
- Please submit them by noon on Saturday (so Kelly has time to create a collage of images that will be shared in worship on Sunday). The collages will also be shared on Immanuel's [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) pages.



Called to care. Sent to serve.

Dust

Ash Wednesday, February 17 - 20

"Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

These words about our being dust and returning to dust remind us of our mortality every Ash Wednesday. The words are inspired by a passage from Genesis that tells about Adam and Eve being cast out of paradise and beginning to experience the consequences of their sin. God concludes a long list of the repercussions of sin with this declaration to Adam and Eve,

"...by the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return" Genesis 3:19.

We repeat these words as we begin the season of Lent because in this season we are invited to reflect on, and repent of, our sin. We remember our own mortality because of sin, and we confess the suffering that sin causes us and others. In repentance we seek to live new and different lives, turning from sin as we are inspired by God's love and empowered by God's grace. We remember those we love who have suffered death, and even as we grieve death, we reach out again for the sure and certain comfort and new life we have in Jesus Christ.

As people of faith, we seek each day to be reconciled with God and with one another. But a vital step in reconciliation is repentance, the holy and healing work each of us do when we take responsibility for our sins, confess the damage we have caused, and seek to make amends and set things right. May God give us the strength and will to do this holy and healing work of repentance this Lenten season.

#REthinkILC Lent Photo for this week: Inspired by the word "*DUST*", take a photo and either put it on your social media with **#REthinkILC** or email it to kelly@immanuel.us by noon on Saturday, February 20.

REnew52 action for this week: TALK. Talk with family and friends about how you live out your faith in daily life. How does faith influence and instruct your relationships, your work, and your life in the world?

Reflect

February 24 - 27

"I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect. Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. Do not repay anyone evil for evil but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all." Romans 12:1-2, 9-18.

A necessary step in the work of repentance is *reflection*, a rethinking of our past actions and attitudes. Have our words and actions been good and acceptable and perfect? Where have we fallen short of who we would like to be, of who we believe God created us to be? Where can our love be more genuine, and how might we turn from evil and hold tighter to all that is good? As you take time to reflect on your life, invite God to help you be renewed in faith, hope, and love! Even more, picture what that might look like in your life, and then resolve to bring that picture to life.

#REthinkILC Lent Photo for this week: Inspired by the word "**REFLECT**", take a photo and either put it on your social media with **#REthinkILC** or email it to kelly@immanuel.us by noon on Saturday, February 27.

REnew52 action for this week: PRAY. As you reflect on your life raise up prayers of confession and ask God to bring about change in your life.

Broken

March 3 - 6

***Broken:** having been fractured or damaged and no longer in one piece or in working order; having given up all hope; despairing.*

One way to look at sin is that it leaves us broken. This brokenness is personal, caused by the pain and shame of our bad choices or behavior. This brokenness is also relational when our selfish words or actions hurt others, causing us to no longer be united with each other or with God. This brokenness can indeed lead to despair. Part of the work of repentance is to recognize what is broken in our lives and to seek to be made whole through God's love and grace in Christ.

As the Apostle Paul declares in the 6th Chapter of Romans: *“What then are we to say? Should we continue in sin in order that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin go on living in it? ... Therefore, do not let sin exercise dominion in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions. No longer present yourselves to sin as instruments of wickedness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and present your yourselves wholly to God as instruments of righteousness.”*

As you REthink how sin has caused brokenness in your life and in the world, contemplate how you can find help, hope, and healing from the brokenness of sin through a growing relationship of faith in Jesus. How might you, through your loving words and graceful acts, help heal the brokenness of this world?

#REthinkILC Lent Photo for this week: Inspired by the word **“BROKEN”**, take a photo and either put it on your social media with **#REthinkILC** or email it to kelly@immanuel.us by noon on Saturday, March 6.

REnew52 action for this week: TALK. Take time this week to renew relationships that have been damaged or broken and seek to make amends for any harm you may have caused. Offer forgiveness for those whose words or actions have caused you hurt.

Costly

March 10 - 13

How much does it cost? A question that might be asked when trying to ascertain the value of something. Certainly, the price we are willing to pay for something determines value, that's how economies work.

That being said, the costliest things in life aren't things. It is relationships that demand the most from us, and their value is determined by our willingness to pay the price for attending to those relationships and keeping them healthy and strong. Another way to say this is that *love costs!* Love costs us our time, our effort, our attention; our investment in these gifts blesses our relationships.

Perhaps no bible passage states this as well as Paul's words from Philipians 2:

"If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. 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, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death."

Christ died so we might live, and so that we might know how much God loves us. And real love is costly; love calls us to hold on, to humbly seek and generously offer forgiveness. Love calls us to serve those we love with our best gifts, just as Christ has served us.

#REthinkILC Lent Photo for this week: Inspired by the word "**COSTLY**", take a photo and either put it on your social media with **#REthinkILC** or email it to kelly@immanuel.us by noon on Saturday, March 13.

REnew52 action for this week: SHARE. Take time this week to connect with your loved ones, find out how they are doing; share your highs and lows with one another.

Beloved

March 17–20

We tend not to use fancy language like “beloved” in our everyday speech. Do you remember the last time you may have called someone your beloved? Beloved is a word we might write out in a card or letter, but to use it in everyday conversation? Doubtful. Which is too bad because the word beloved is so particularly expressive and inspiring.

Beloved refers to one who is not just loved, but much loved, one who is precious and adored. When we look upon someone as precious and adored, we are inspired to go out of our way to care for them, bless them, help them, and ensure they know they are loved! When a couple falls in love, each of them are inspired by that love to pour out their energy, time, and attention upon their beloved, and when they do the relationship thrives. If, over time, because of the busyness of life or the habits of familiarity, those gifts of energy, time, and attention are no longer given as abundantly as they once were, relationships can struggle as those involved no longer feel beloved.

When someone is beloved, we love them with our whole life. This is how Jesus loves us, with his whole life; Jesus loved us enough to pay that price. As John 3:16 proclaims, *“For God so loved the world that he gave his only son, that whoever believes in him should not die but have eternal life.”* We are beloved of God, and Jesus invites us to love one another like that! This is our highest purpose, our reason for being, to love one another as God loves us. Beloved, let us love one another!

#REthinkILC Lent Photo for this week: Inspired by the word *“BELOVED”*, take a photo and either put it on your social media with **#REthinkILC** or email it to kelly@immanuel.us by noon on Saturday, March 20.

REnew52 action for this week: BLESS. Dedicate your energy, time, and attention to helping those around you feel beloved.

Cry

March 24 - 27

What makes you cry? When is the last time you cried? We can cry with joy and gratitude when something happens that changes our life for good. We might cry with frustration when things don't go our way, or when life is unfair. We cry with empathy as we feel the pain of another and are moved to respond with comfort and concern. Of course, we cry in pain when we are wounded, perhaps in the hope that someone might hear and come to our aid. We cry from grief when loss is overwhelming.

Jesus cried. He cried as he grieved the death of his beloved friend Lazarus, just as we cry at the death of our loved ones. He cried even knowing that he could and would raise Lazarus from the dead, because even though things might turn out all right in the end, that does not mean we don't grieve the sad moments along the way. Jesus cried out in the garden as he prayed that God might spare him from his own death, and Jesus cried out on the cross, once for forgiveness for those who crucified him, and once because he felt forsaken in that moment.

This is the measure of God's love in Christ. God will suffer with us, cry with us, share our pains, our griefs, our fears, our heartaches. But God shares our tears with this purpose, that we might endure our pains and find healing, that we might last the long nights of grief and troubles and find joy in the morning. May this be comfort for our cries, that God is with us. God not only hears our cries but cries with us, and God will wipe away our tears and bring us new hope and fresh joy.

#REthinkILC Lent Photo for this week: Inspired by the word "*CRY*", take a photo and either put it on your social media with #REthinkILC or email it to kelly@immanuel.us by noon on Saturday, March 27.

REnew52 action for this week: TALK. Talk about what makes us cry, or cry out, with family or friends and share how you find comfort and extend support to one another.

Love

Holy Week: March 28 – April 3

“Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things, love never ends!”

1 Corinthians 13: 7-8

The events around Holy Week, particularly those final 24 hours of Jesus’ life leading up to his death, are referred to as the passion of Christ. The word “passion” has its roots in a Latin verb meaning “to suffer”. Christ endured suffering out of love for us. Love inspires passion, which is more than intense feelings for another. Love is willingness to give what we have and share what we can for the sake of another.

Not that love is suffering, love is joy and belonging and grace and comfort, or at least love should be. But love is also our willingness to share support and help with one another in times of need, our willingness to sacrifice for another’s sake, to hold on to each other even when things are tough, to endure challenges and difficulties with the hope that we can and will get through these things together, and that we will share blessed times again.

One of the most beautiful verses in the bible simply declares that “God is love!” God’s whole being is about love, so much so that God created the universe so that there would be a place for love to exist. And God made us so that love might flourish in this creation. Created in the image of God, our purpose is love too, to love God and one another, and to be loved. And that love means that with each other we will bear with one another, endure with one another, and share hope with one another so that our love will never end.

#REthinkILC Lent Photo for this week: Inspired by the word “*LOVE*”, take a photo and either put it on your social media with #REthinkILC or email it to kelly@immanuel.us by noon on Saturday, April 3.

REnew52 action for this week: PRAY. This Holy Week pray for the power of God’s love and Jesus’ passion, to renew you, your family, friends, community, country, and world in compassion and love.