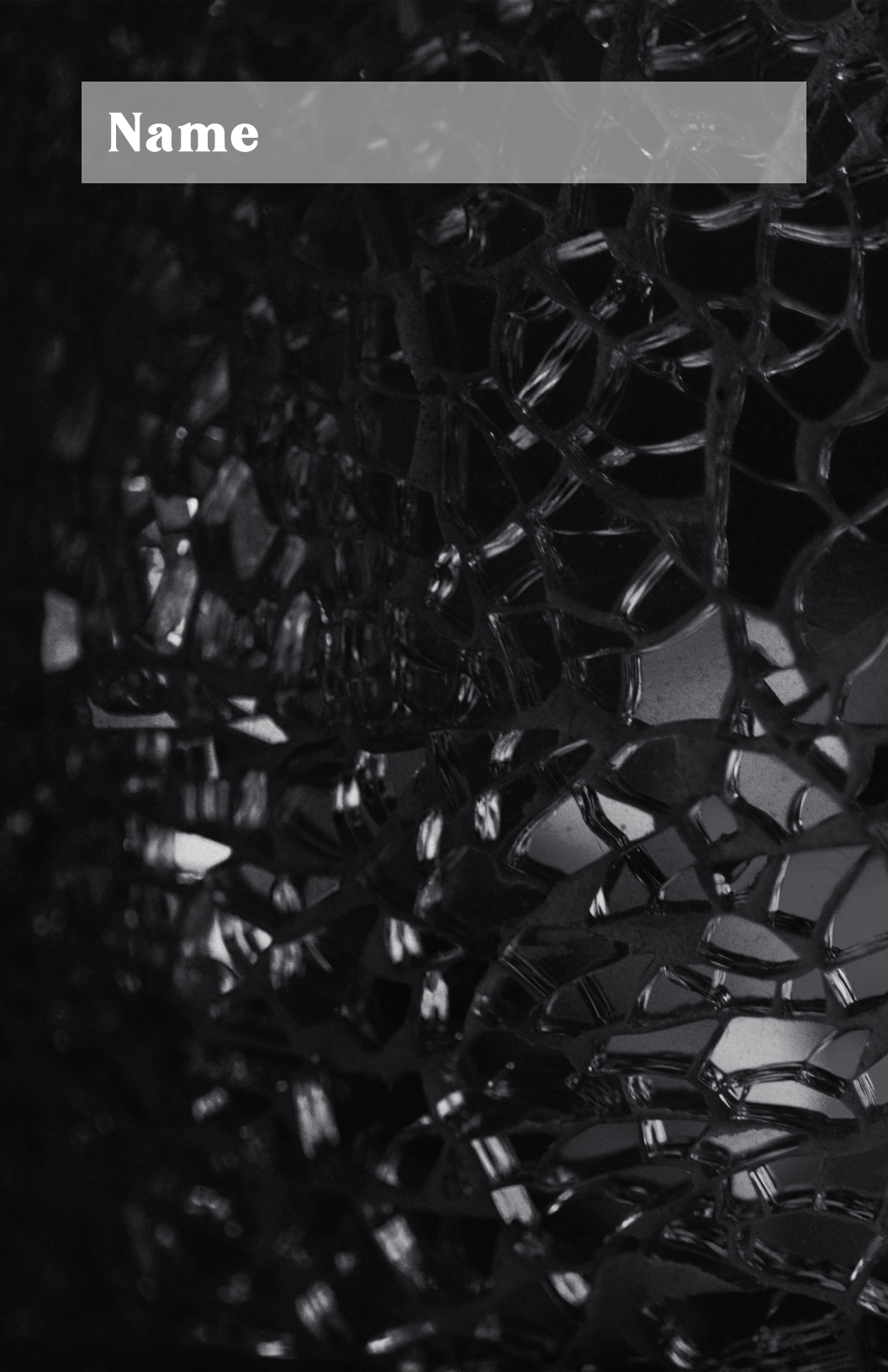


Reformed Liturgy

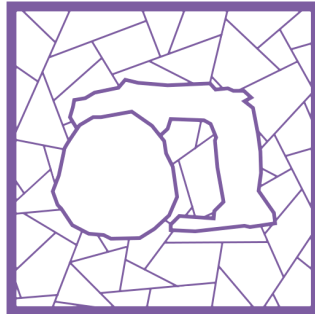
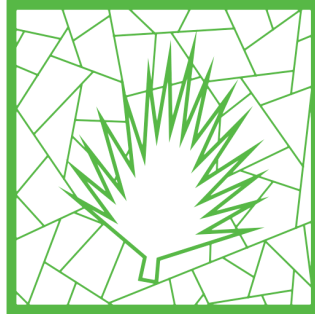


LENT & HOLY WEEK DEVOTIONAL

Name



Reformed Liturgy



LENT & HOLY WEEK DEVOTIONAL

Table of Contents

Introduction: Reformed Liturgy Devotional	3
Fasting: <i>Matthew 6:16-18</i>	5
Prayer: <i>Psalms 55:1-8,22</i>	8
Solitude: <i>Mark 1:35</i>	11
Paradox Wednesday: <i>2 Corinthians 5:21</i>	14
Palm Sunday: <i>Hebrews 7:26-28</i>	17
Good Friday: <i>Galatians 3:13-14</i>	20
Holy Saturday: <i>Acts 13:29-30</i>	23
Resurrection Sunday: <i>1 Corinthians 15:20-22</i>	26

Introduction

REFORMED LITURGY DEVOTIONAL

The seasons of both Lent and Holy Week are of great cultural and liturgical value in our beloved Valley. These seasons play a familiar role in the formation of our lives. For instance, when we consider the seasons of Lent and Holy Week, we're reminded of a specific time in the life and ministry of Jesus and therefore we intentionally slow things down to focus our minds and heart on the symbolism of these seasons such as fasting, drinking deeply from the well of God's word, and celebration as a result of His victory over death and sin through His resurrection. Additionally, our beloved Valley does a great job in slowing things down sometimes because we appreciate meaningful conversations and time spent in community with one another.

These cultural and liturgical seasons teach us to reflect on the beauty of God's goodness for us by remembering that God so loved you and I that He willingly stepped into time and space as the man Jesus Christ, lived a sinless life, rejected temptation with the Word of God, then died on a cross in our place and for our sin, and after being buried for three days He rose again by the power of the Holy Spirit conquering sin and death and leaving them in the grave.

We titled this devotional Reformed Liturgy because the goal for us as we slow time down momentarily, we want our hearts reformed and aligned with the will of God through the word of God. In the course of Jesus' life, He repeatedly called people to attention saying, " He who has ears to hear, let him hear" (Matthew 11:15) because Jesus knew that what we give our attention to reveals who we are and where our heart lies. The seasons of Lent

and Holy Week are meant to reform our hearts and draw our attention back to the One who is faithful and true.

HOW TO USE THIS DEVOTIONAL

This devotional is designed to help you consider and apply God's word in practical ways. We have created content, such as this devotional, because we desire for you to grow as a disciple of Jesus through delight in His word and community with one another. Each devotional is meant to help you slow down and contemplate on the word of God as you apply it in the context of your everyday life.

I pray that you are blessed by this devotional and the creative work placed by several writers to better serve you. May the Holy Spirit be your great guide and counselor as you receive the word of God during this season of Lent and Holy Week.

Warmly,

Pastor Marco

Fasting

MATTHEW 6:16-18

¹⁶“When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. ¹⁷But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, ¹⁸so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

In order to be a Navy SEAL, one has to survive what is called BUD/S (Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL) This is an intensive six-month training course where SEAL candidates are deprived of food, sleep, oxygen, warmth, and any other comfort one could think of. The intent of this training is to make sure that they are conditioned for whatever they may encounter as they go on special operations overseas. It goes without saying that it takes relentless discipline to become a Navy SEAL.

Though we may not be SEALs, there are areas in our Christian life that require discipline. One of those areas is fasting. Biblical fasting is not an ordinary fast where we jump into a morning workout without eating anything. It is actually supposed to be an outward expression of our dependence on God. When we fast, we are willing to abstain from things that our bodies depend on, such as food and water, and depend on God and His word alone (*Matt 4:4*). During this time, not only do we grow in our relationship with Him by spending time in the Word, but our hearts are sanctified as idols are exposed when we become hangry, frustrated, and unfocused. Pursuing God through fasting certainly takes discipline.

However, the Pharisees in *Matthew 6* did not view fasting in this light. They would starve themselves to the point that they would “disfigure” their faces so that they could “look” as if they

were fasting (*Matt 6:16*). They used their appearance as boasting tools so that everyone could see how “holy” they were. It was ultimately a pointless fast because their hearts were nowhere near God.

If we can learn anything as we start off the season of lent, it is that fasting is an intimate act that we ought to do in the privacy of our hearts (*Matt 6:18*). We are to approach God with pure intentions that are purged of pride and selfishness. Church, let us depend on Him as our true source of our life.

Prayer

PSALM 55:1-8,22

¹Give ear to my prayer, O God, and hide not yourself from my plea for mercy! ²Attend to me, and answer me; I am restless in my complaint and I moan, ³because of the noise of the enemy, because of the oppression of the wicked. For they drop trouble upon me, and in anger they bear a grudge against me. ⁴My heart is in anguish within me; the terrors of death have fallen upon me. ⁵Fear and trembling come upon me, and horror overwhelms me. ⁶And I say, "Oh, that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest; ⁷yes, I would wander far away; I would lodge in the wilderness; Selah ⁸I would hurry to find a shelter from the raging wind and tempest."

²²Cast your burden on the Lord, and he will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved.

From pigeons, to landlines, beepers, and now answering a phone call through a watch, human communication has drastically evolved. Despite all of the technological improvements we have reached, there has been one form of communication that has stayed the same since the creation of the world: prayer. Though many might have a complex definition for prayer, it is simply talking to God.

The Psalmist teaches us that through prayer, we can approach God with anything that troubles our hearts. This certainly includes the burdens that consume our everyday lives. Though we will never know the burden of running for our lives in ancient times like King David, we can surely feel burdened with our family struggles, finances, friends, and jobs. These burdens can weigh on us so heavily that we want to run away and escape. We can definitely sympathize with David in *Psalm 55* when he says, "Oh,

that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest" (*Ps 55:6*).

However, after what seems to be a list of David's sorrows and burdens, his tone changes as we get to the end of the chapter. He encourages us to, "Cast [our] burdens on the Lord" (*Ps 55:22*). Despite what he felt, he knew that God cares for His people. For this reason, instead of running away from his problems, he runs to God with them.

When we are burdened with problems, though we may feel alone, we are not alone. The fact is that Jesus is alongside us sharing our burdens because He loves us (*1 Pet 5:7*). It is for this same reason that He carried the heaviest burden of all: our sin. How much more, then, can we approach Him with any other burden we have? We certainly can.

Church, are you weary? Tired? Restless? Continue approaching Jesus. He has promised us to give us supernatural rest in our time of need (*Matt 11:28*). Though giving our burdens to Jesus does not mean we will be bulletproof, like a shelter in the raging wind, He will bring us assurance and sustain us by His mighty hand through all difficult seasons (*Ps 55:22*).

Solitude

MARK 1:35

³⁵*And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed.*

We are familiar with the recipe to a busy life. Start with the mundane of the day-to-day. Next, mix in hobbies, meetings, projects, exercise, community group, etc. Then, divide your time between family, friends, and loved ones. Lastly, sprinkle evenly with more than a few sweet moments and you get a slice of a pleasant, occupied life.

Even so, in the midst of a life immersed in activities and routine, we are left hungry. This is because the enjoyments of life, as much as we delight in them, will not satisfy us. True joy is only found in Christ; in His presence there is fullness of joy (*Ps 16:11*).

Mark 1:35 tells us that Jesus rose early in the morning and intentionally withdrew from people so that he could pray to the Father. In addition, *Luke 5:16* tells us: "But he [Jesus] would withdraw to desolate places and pray." Like Jesus, it is crucial for us to seek aloneness with God amid the busyness of our lives. Our need for stillness and solitude is evident when we reflect on the consistent battle for the attention of our minds and our hearts.

Therefore, when we prioritize our solitary time in prayer and in His word, not only do we grow in our relationship with Him, but our joy in Him also increases. Plus, he delights in our pursuit of Him; "I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently find me." (*Prov 8:17*).

Ultimately, Jesus made it possible for us sinners to commune with God when He reconciled us to the Father with His own blood. He paid the ultimate price of sin on our behalf so that we would receive redemption. The Word of God says, "For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he

might bring us to God..." (1 Pet 3:18). Through the atoning work of Christ, God "was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation." (2 Cor 5:19) Thus, let us proclaim this marvelous Good News!

Paradox Wednesday

2 Corinthians 5:21

²¹For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

The Valley loves invitations. When it comes to weddings, quinceneras, parties, or graduations, most in our beloved area will do whatever it takes to be there. The funny thing is that it doesn't matter when we get an invitation, but whether or not we get one! An invitation communicates not only participation, but the gift of being a part of something bigger than ourselves. It's a beautiful combination of relationships and honor where we are folded into one another's story, grateful for a simple seat at the party.

In a better way, Jesus provides sinners with an invitation to come and know Him, to be a part of something bigger than themselves, and to be made new, not simply better. In *2 Corinthians 5:21*, God, through the Apostle Paul, is inviting you to come and know Jesus as a result of His work on the cross. This invitation is one where Jesus offers a new life and a new heart through faith in Him alone. As the Valley lovingly scrambles to get to the quinceñera because the time has come, the invitation of the gospel through faith in Jesus has come, and the wonderful news is that there is no need to scramble, only respond.

The Apostle Paul tells us that on the cross, for our sake, not His, Jesus bore our unrighteousness – that is, all of our guilt, shame, and sin – and in exchange gave us His righteousness. Jesus invites us to stand right before God the Father through faith in the Son. And just like we respond eagerly to an invitation with action, the same is said of the gospel as we respond with repentance by turning away from our sin and turning to Jesus.

The entire point of Jesus' time on earth was set so that He would not only live a sinless life, but die a death in place of sinners.

This was something He regularly communicated to the disciples, but their minds were elsewhere, arguing over who is the greatest or cashing checks their hearts could never deliver (*Matthew 26:33*). We named today Paradox Wednesday so that unlike the disciples, we would redirect our mind and heart to the events that were about to lead to the crucifixion of Jesus. Therefore, as we walk into Holy Week, may we do so with a refreshed understanding of Jesus' life and a renewed thanksgiving for His work on the cross for sinners such as us.

Questions

1. The invitation to come and know Jesus is one to receive or one to remember. Which is it for you? And keeps you from receiving? From remembering?
2. Christians bear the righteousness of God because of what Jesus accomplished for them. How does this shape the way we ought to live?
3. Examine your heart today. What do you need to confess and repent of that is keeping you from Jesus?

Notes

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Palm Sunday

HEBREWS 7:26-28

²⁶For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. ²⁷He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself. ²⁸For the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever.

We've all been there. It's your first time at a new restaurant that everyone has been recommending to you. You've even gone as far as starving yourself so that you can indulge in this one meal, putting all your eggs in this one basket. When your order arrives, you dig into your meal, but as you start eating - that dreaded moment hits you: it was not as good as you expected. With all the hype about the place, starving yourself the whole day, and spending your hard-earned money, you are left unsatisfied, disappointed, and angry.

This is what the Jewish people felt about the arrival of Jesus. Although they had known about a coming Messiah, in their minds it meant someone who would radically change the political powers that were in place in their favor. After hundreds of years of waiting, they momentarily believed that they had found their "political messiah" in Jesus. However, as Jesus grew from a toddler to a man, it was very clear to them that He was not here for their political purposes. In their raging anger and disappointment, He was given up to be crucified and killed (*John 1:9-11*). Though they didn't get the messiah they expected, Jesus is the Messiah we all need.

If it were not for Jesus, we would stay alienated from God because of our sins, with no possibility of ever getting back to Him. The writer of Hebrews even tells us that the highly regarded Old Testament priests, though they worked diligently by continuously providing peace offerings to God for the people's sins, could not truly provide a way back to God (*Heb 7:27*).

However, when Jesus came, "he offered up Himself" as a sacrifice for us, living the perfect life we could never live and dying the death we deserve (*Heb 7:27*). It is through His life and death that He alone provided for us the way back to God "once for all" (*Heb 7:27*). Church, let us celebrate this great truth as we look back at the arrival of our Great High Priest. It is because of Jesus that we are no longer strangers to God, but His very own children (*John 1:12*).

Questions

- 1. Usually, Palm Sunday is known for Jesus' triumphal entry (*Luke 19:28-44*). What are some of the things you notice in that passage? What does that say about Jesus?
- 2. What are some of the ways Jesus is better than the Old Testament high priests? (*Heb 7:27*)
- 3. We all came to Jesus at different points of our lives. Looking back to that day, what are some of the things that Jesus has done in you that you can celebrate?

Notes

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Good Friday

GALATIANS 3:13-14

13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”— 14 so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.

The word “curse” can easily make us think of witches, spells, or superstitions. The last person that would ever come to mind, if at all, would be Jesus. We would never think of Him as a curse, especially when we look at His life in Scripture. Jesus preached the gospel, performed miracles, and disciplined those around Him. He was a blessing to humanity.

Yet, the writer of Galatians tells us very blatantly that “Christ...[became] a curse...” (*Gal 3:13*). Jesus certainly didn’t turn evil, nor did he believe in superstitions, so what does this mean? Simply put, Jesus was the chief recipient of His Father’s wrath. We clearly see this in His crucifixion. There, Jesus’ flesh was ripped open as He was beaten with a multi-knotted whip, forcibly carried His own cross, was pierced through His hands, feet, head, and side, struggled for breath on a splintered cross, and ultimately, died on it. In the crucifixion, Jesus became a curse.

After reading this imagery, we can see that there is nothing good about the crucifixion itself. It was sad, painful, gory, and brutal. However, there is “good” in the purpose of the cross. The writer of Galatians tells us that Jesus’ purpose for becoming a curse was “for us” (*Gal 3:13*). Jesus willingly went to the cross and purposely stood in our place to bore the punishment that we deserve so that we wouldn’t have to. When we sin and approach God in repentance, we don’t receive wrath; rather, we are forgiven since Jesus paid for our sins Himself. That is good news!

When we look at the cross, let us look to it in gratitude, thanking God for sending His Son to bear our sins. It is only through His sacrifice that we no longer have to face the penalty of sin. Rather, we are given the free gift of grace (*Rom 6:23*).

Holy Saturday

ACTS 13:29-30

²⁹And when they had carried out all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb. ³⁰But God raised him from the dead...

At the end of the movie, *Shawshank Redemption*, Morgan Freeman's character, Red, is narrating the desire to reunite with his friend, Andy, played by Tim Robbins. Red goes on to say, "I hope to see my friend and shake his hand. I hope the Pacific is as blue as it has been in my dreams. I hope." The movie ends with Red and Andy reuniting, but there was a possibility that it may not have happened. Depending on the circumstance, there was no guarantee that Red would see his friend again. Here's the point: most people think of hope the way Red describes it in the movie, as wishful thinking. But in the pages of Holy Scripture, hope is far from wishful thinking. Rather, hope is the certainty of God's promises. The Bible is not written with wishful thinking or with the dreams of what could be, but instead with redemptive assurance.

Holy Saturday is the day between Good Friday and Resurrection Sunday (Easter) and to the disciples of Jesus, this was a day that was filled with uncertainty as Jesus went to the cross and died, only to later be buried in a tomb (*Acts 13:29*). What hope was there? The disciples experienced fear as they wondered what would happen to them, dragged out by the religious leaders of their day or worse, their own crucifixion. The disciples experienced grief as their friend and teacher was murdered before them. The disciples experienced sorrow as they felt all hope was now lost.

However, the beauty of hope is that it is rooted in the character of God and not in the skepticism of man. The beauty of hope is that it reveals certainty, not colorful wishes. When the disciples and family of Jesus considered that hope was lost at the

death of Jesus, God raised Him from the dead. On Holy Saturday, we learn that the Lord's silence does not equal His presence, for Sunday is coming and redemption is here.

Resurrection Sunday

1 Corinthians 15:20-22

²⁰But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. ²²For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

The well-known American poet, Emily Dickinson, once wrote:

*“Hope” is the thing with feathers
That perches in the soul,
And sings the tune without the words,
And never stops at all,”*

This popular poem compares hope to a bird that perseveres during hardships. Similarly, we want hope to help us persevere through suffering and hardship, so we can often place it in things, in others, or in ourselves. We eagerly desire for this hope to be real, to help us make sense of the unknown, or to simply bring us comfort.

Where we place and find our hope is critical. If we place our hope in things such as money, jobs, promotions, or success, we will still be unsatisfied. While those things are worth acknowledging, we quickly realize that our achievements and accomplishments are nothing but momentary. Likewise, wrongly placing our hope in ourselves or others will result in disappointment, for “as by a man came death” and “as in Adam all die” (1 Cor 15:21-22).

However, we can confidently place our hope in Jesus, who being fully God (*Heb 1:3*) and fully human (*Heb 2:14*), died on our behalf for the forgiveness of sin and reconciled us to the Father, yet defeated death so that we may have eternal life. Christ does not only give us hope for the life we live on earth, but the life that

follows after we die. We can trust in the promises of God because of the work of the Son.

On Resurrection Sunday, this is the Good News that we celebrate victoriously! So, let us not grieve as others who do not have hope (*1 Thess 4:13*), but boldly declare the hope solely found in Christ.





STOREHOUSE
Community Church