

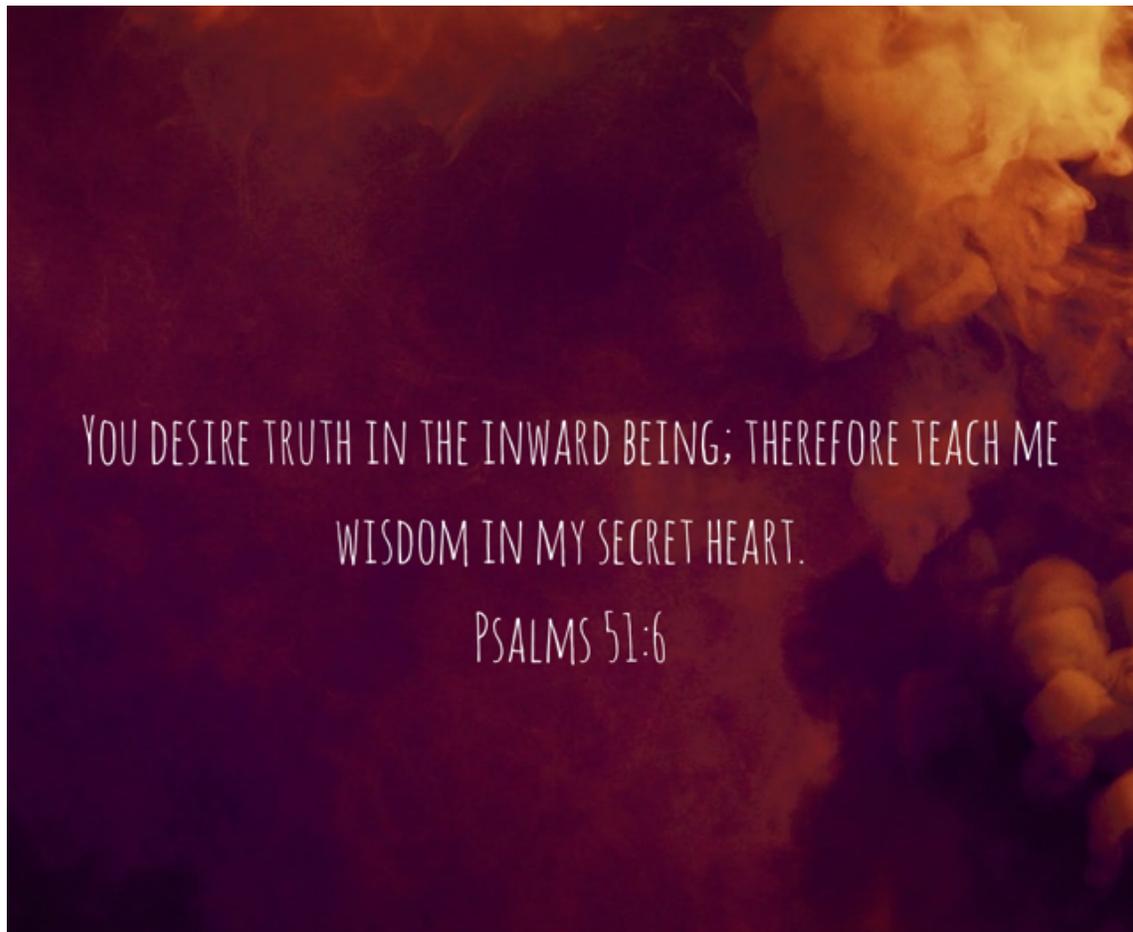


Presbyterian Mission
**Office of Christian
Formation**

You'll Never Walk Alone

UKirk Lenten Resource - Lent 3

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Theme - Truth

Overview: Today's theme is truth. For reflection purposes, we'll consider truth in terms of reporting factual information, telling one's own truth, and speaking truth to power. In our faith tradition, a significant component of our shared spiritual practices and worship elements is the act of confession. We intentionally set aside time in our worship services and in our lives to tell the truth. We tell the truth about ourselves to God and we tell the truth about ourselves to each other. We tell the truth about what we did wrong. We tell the truth about our mistakes. We own our imperfections. And we admit the truth about times we could have said more or done more and we didn't. We admit when we lacked boldness to speak out. We admit when we choose comfort over justice. We tell the truth to and for each other, yet how often do we hesitate to share our authentic truths in our communities? Whose truth needs to be told this day?

Scriptures

Psalm 51:6

John 8:31-32,37-38

Background

The Scriptures from Psalms and the Gospel of John speak to God's desire for truth and God's gift of truth. The Psalmist declares, "You desire truth in the inward being, therefore teach me wisdom." This request of God is a humble and vulnerable one. The author begs God for wisdom, which is a beautiful reminder that we cannot be our fully vulnerable selves without God's help, wisdom, and guidance. It is a comforting reminder that we were never intended to do this alone. It's an inspirational reminder of our reliance on God for all that we need to live fully authentic, truth-filled lives.

This request also emphasizes that it is a very healthy thing to be known as people of truth, for the truth is full of wisdom and liberation. Our truths are bound to each other just as our liberation is bound to each other. We need God's help to face the truth, to name the truth, to live into the truth. We rely on God to correct us when our vision is not God's vision. So we join the Psalmist in asking God to grant us wisdom since God desires truth for all people.

In John, Jesus declares he “has come to bear witness to the truth,” and “the truth shall set you free.” Again, a powerful reminder that truth is of God, from God, and is a liberating gift for all of God’s people. We do not have to be or stay bound to false ideas, false idols, or false claims. We do not have to stay bound to any false words of the world. The truth will set us free if we only name it, claim it, and tell others about it.

We are taught even Jesus has to defend himself against false accusations and claims against him. And Jesus remains true to who he is as God’s child. He embodies and personifies truth, and continues to inspire us to do the same. He continually reminds us that any accusations this world may throw our way will never be as strong as the truth rooted in our identity as God’s beloved.

May God grant our hearts and minds wisdom to seek and share the truth for the liberation of all people.

Explore

Dr. Maya Angelou wrote the poem *A Brave and Startling Truth* in 1995 on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the United Nations. You can find both the text and a video of Dr. Angelou reading it on the website The Black Arts Movement [here](#).

This website, created by students at the University of Maine at Farmington, offers us an exploration of the Black Arts Movement from the 1960’s to the present.

What is the truth - the “it” - that Dr. Angelou says it is possible and imperative that we must learn?

Discuss

1. Who are the truth tellers in your life? What characteristics do they embody?
2. How have you learned to be brave and tell the truth even when it’s difficult?
3. Describe a time you were startled in the best, positive way by hearing the truth.
4. How might we inspire others in our communities to tell their truths?
5. What might we change about our contexts to ensure truth telling may flourish?

Reflect

As an only child and a preacher’s kid, I grew up with three main rules: I was not to open any Christmas gifts until we sang *Happy Birthday* to Jesus, I was not to eat any Easter candy until I named why the one egg was empty like the tomb, and I was not to lie about

anything ever. That was it. Since I don't have siblings, there really was no great opportunity to try out lying anyway, since it was pretty obvious who broke the vase or didn't feed the cat. I thought this was a religious thing on my parents' part, and certainly that was a key component of it. Yet, the no lying piece was always much more of my mom's vernacular, and seemed to be rooted in more than our faith tradition of confession and forgiveness.

As I grew older, I learned why her "you can do anything but lie" rule was so prevalent in her parenting. She was a survivor of childhood traumas and one of her parents had the disease of alcoholism. She knew the pain of such diseases that often manifest in words that are untrue or promises not kept. She used all resources available to her to address and heal from that pain. And she was determined to break the cycle for herself as a thriving survivor and as a parent.

That's why it was our central household rule. We told the truth. Always. Because our household was a brave and safe space to tell the truth about mistakes, being broken, and ways we were working to be made whole.

As the family of faith, we tell the truth. Because truth telling helps break painful cycles and ushers in a new generation of liberation.

1. Where are the brave and safe spaces in your life where you can tell the truth about mistakes, being broken, and ways you are working to be made whole?
2. How do we create such brave and safe spaces?
3. How does living in such spaces form the truth in us? How does it feel to live in such a space?

Engage

- ❖ However you are safely gathered, divide into small groups either in person or in Zoom breakout rooms and create a prayer of confession and assurance of pardon in each group. What do we need to confess this day? What truths need to be said aloud? How have we missed the mark for being truth tellers for each other? Each small group may choose to share their prayers any way they choose-written, sung, visual art, drama, etc. Encourage them to be as creative and expressive in ways that feel most genuine to them. Be mindful that this activity may be especially difficult for some students depending on the content of what is shared, so ensure pastoral care time is in place after for anyone wishing to debrief this time of corporate confession.

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- ❖ Who are the people who have been beacons of truth in your life? How have they made an impact upon you? Share who they are and why you admire them with your group.

Going Forth

- ❖ As you continue to contemplate truth telling, **write a thank you note** or email to someone who has been a beacon of truth in your life. Thank them for the attributes you admire about them and thank them for the ways they make the world a more transparent and honest place.
- ❖ During your daily prayer practice, incorporate time **to intentionally ask God** for wisdom, guidance, courage, and discernment in your own truth seeking and truth telling. Prior to your prayer practice, **listen** to [All My Favorite People are Broken](#) by Over the Rhine. (Lyrics [here](#).) Consider the comfort, hope, and grace found in the verse, “All my friends are part saint and part sinner, we lean on each other, try to rise above...”
- ❖ As you continue to live into your true self and speak truth in the world, I leave you with the words of Brene Brown, “Stay awkward, brave, and kind.”

Prayers of the People

Here’s a reflection inspired by verses from Psalm 51. It was written by Jan L. Richardson.

[Prayer Reflection](#)
(based on Psalm 51)

“But you desire honesty from the heart,
so you can teach me to be wise in my inmost being.” Psalm 51:6

Not just in my heart
but in the secret space
it holds.

In the heart of my heart.
In the place where I am myself.
In the space that I protect the most
and share the least.

In the hidden chamber
that I sometimes close off

even from myself.

In the realm
where you wait
and watch,
where you see each thing
that lies in shadow,
where you know the names
of all that makes its home
in me.

Here
in my secret heart;
here
teach me to move
with your wisdom,
to open the doors
that will draw me deeper still,
to live in the truth
that you desire;
here
let me open
the windows wide
so that those who pass by
will see you
looking out.

~ written by Jan L. Richardson, and posted on [The Painted Prayerbook](#).