

# FIRST NEWS

Vol. 33 No. 8 A Newsletter of First Congregational UCC Concord, NC [www.firstchurchucc.org](http://www.firstchurchucc.org)

# APRIL 2025

## Inspirations

THE GREATEST MIRACLE BY CATHERINE PULSIFER

**O**h glorious Easter Morn,  
Where tears of sadness turn to hope reborn  
So much joy it brought forth,  
The day Jesus rose from his tomb returning forth.

Hearts were filled with sorrow,  
It was amazing what followed.  
That morning saw the greatest miracle  
For the world is truly a pinnacle.

He banished our sins and death  
With one mighty breath  
The grave could not keep Him  
Captive no more.

Hallelujah! Gloriously we sing  
The gift of eternal life He did bring.  
The greatest miracle ever made.  
Praise be to His precious name!



## STANDING ON THE PROMISES

God's promises to believers can be found throughout the Bible. Will you claim this promise for the second quarter of 2025?

**“ If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.”**

**2 Chronicles 7:14 (NIV)**





13-Kamire Wade  
 17-Michael York  
 20-Annie Maxwell  
 30-Derrick Foard



**LENT/EASTER**

**Offering**—In remembrance of Lent, our Church collects a special Lenten/Easter offering. Envelopes are available in the vestibule. We ask that the envelopes be returned on or before **Easter Sunday, April 20, 2025.**

**Prayers**--The Deacons will hold **Prayer Hours** here at the church on Tuesdays and Thursdays from **6:00 pm - 7:00 pm.**, starting Tuesday, April 1, 2025 and ending Tuesday, April 15, 2025. The hours will be livestreamed for those who are unable to attend.

**Maundy Thursday**--We will observe **Maundy Thursday**, April 17, 2025 with our **Annual Poor Man’s Dinner** at 6:00 pm and a **Maundy Thursday Service** around 7:00 pm.

**APRIL HEALTH FOCUS: MENTAL WELLNESS**

The Edward L. Holloway **Health Cabinet** is focusing on **Mental Wellness** for the month. If you suspect **you** or **someone else** is having a mental crisis, which includes **suicide prevention**, please pray as you **Dial 988!**



Also, please see **the insert in this newsletter** that lists **8 Daily Habits to Boost Mental Health and Signs It May Be Time To Get Support.**

**A LOOK BACK AT MARCH**

**Brother Ricky Murdock** was welcomed into our church family. On the 9<sup>th</sup>, we had a Call Church Meeting. On the 16<sup>th</sup>, the Youth received their earnings from February’s Heritage Bowl. The amounts were considerable and we are all so proud of the contestants.



The following persons are under the weather/confined to their homes/recuperating/just in need of prayer. Please remember them with your prayers, visits, and calls:

- |                   |                    |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| John Barrett      | Michael Milo       |
| Viola Barrett     | Edith Russell      |
| Terry Baxter, Sr. | Vernon Russell     |
| Mary Bostick      | Congolese Smith    |
| Marva Cook        | Harold Steele, Jr. |
| Myrtle Edmond     | Harold Steele, III |
| Michael Edwards   | Letisha Steele     |
| Corine Foard      | Mazella Steele     |
| Dexter Franklin   | Michael York       |
| Annie Maxwell     |                    |

And don’t forget all our fellow earth dwellers living with disease, disasters and disharmony!



- April 1-15: **Prayer Hours on Tuesdays and Thursdays**
- April 13: **Palm Sunday**
- April 17: **Maundy Thursday**
- April 20: **Easter Sunday**
- April 22: **Earth Day**



Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Holy Week

## Word Search

**DIRECTIONS:**  
Find and circle the  
vocabulary words  
in the grid. Look  
for them in all  
directions including  
backwards and  
diagonally.

ASH WEDNESDAY

CELEBRATION

CRUCIFIXION

EASTER SUNDAY

FASTING

GOOD FRIDAY

HOLY SATURDAY

HOLY WEEK

JESUS CHRIST



LAST SUPPER

LENT

LITURGY

MAUNDY THURSDAY

MOURNING

PALM BRANCH

PALM SUNDAY

PASSION

PRAYER

PROCESSION

REDEMPTION

REFLECTION

RESURRECTION

RISEN

SAVIOR

SCRIPTURE

SERVICE

TOMB

# APRIL 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday																																																																																											
		1  Prayer Hour	2	3  Prayer Hour	4	5																																																																																											
6	7	8  Prayer Hour	9	10  Prayer Hour	11	12																																																																																											
13 	14	15  Prayer Hour	16	17 	18	19																																																																																											
20 	21	22 	23	24	25	26																																																																																											
27	28	29	30																																																																																														
		<p>March 2025</p> <table border="1"> <tr><td>S</td><td>M</td><td>T</td><td>W</td><td>Th</td><td>F</td><td>Sa</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td><td>6</td><td>7</td><td>8</td></tr> <tr><td>9</td><td>10</td><td>11</td><td>12</td><td>13</td><td>14</td><td>15</td></tr> <tr><td>16</td><td>17</td><td>18</td><td>19</td><td>20</td><td>21</td><td>22</td></tr> <tr><td>23</td><td>24</td><td>25</td><td>26</td><td>27</td><td>28</td><td>29</td></tr> <tr><td>30</td><td>31</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> </table>		S	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa							1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31						<p>May 2025</p> <table border="1"> <tr><td>S</td><td>M</td><td>T</td><td>W</td><td>Th</td><td>F</td><td>Sa</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>1 2 3</td></tr> <tr><td>4</td><td>5</td><td>6</td><td>7</td><td>8</td><td>9</td><td>10</td></tr> <tr><td>11</td><td>12</td><td>13</td><td>14</td><td>15</td><td>16</td><td>17</td></tr> <tr><td>18</td><td>19</td><td>20</td><td>21</td><td>22</td><td>23</td><td>24</td></tr> <tr><td>25</td><td>26</td><td>27</td><td>28</td><td>29</td><td>30</td><td>31</td></tr> </table>		S	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa							1 2 3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	
S	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa																																																																																											
						1																																																																																											
2	3	4	5	6	7	8																																																																																											
9	10	11	12	13	14	15																																																																																											
16	17	18	19	20	21	22																																																																																											
23	24	25	26	27	28	29																																																																																											
30	31																																																																																																
S	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa																																																																																											
						1 2 3																																																																																											
4	5	6	7	8	9	10																																																																																											
11	12	13	14	15	16	17																																																																																											
18	19	20	21	22	23	24																																																																																											
25	26	27	28	29	30	31																																																																																											
						<a href="#">2025 Calendars</a> <a href="#">2026 Calendars</a>																																																																																											

## **8 DAILY HABITS TO BOOST MENTAL HEALTH --and SIGNS IT MAY BE TIME TO GET SUPPORT**

- 1. Get Restful Sleep** – 9 hours of sleep is recommended and try to avoid caffeine before bedtime. Wake up and go to bed at the same time each day.
- 2. Cut back on social media** – Disconnect from your phone at 7/8pm and place it outside your bedroom.
- 3. Strengthen your relationships** – Your relationship with God usually determines your relationship with others. Time is one of the most precious things you can give. Spend some time with Jesus first thing in the morning then with others, too.
- 4. Move your Body on your own terms** – Exercise offers a range of mental health benefits including – relieving stress; lifting mood; helping your sleep patterns; helps with managing depression and anxiety. A body at rest tends to stay at rest.
- 5. Savor foods rich in nutrients** – Berries; bananas; beans; whole grains; fatty fish, like salmon are great fuels for your body and drinking plenty of water will make you feel better.
- 6. Know when to take it easy** – Some days your body just wants to slow down – so slow down and don't force yourself to accomplish much of anything. Listen to your body and be still when it tells you to.
- 7. Make time for rest** – Give your mind and body time to unwind before you move from one challenge to the next challenge or activity. Meditate. Listen to scriptures on audio. Think about things that are good and pure and lovely. Clear your mind of negative thoughts and it will make you feel better. Rest is restoration.
- 8. Get some sunshine** – God's great and original sanitizer is the Sun! Sitting just a few minutes in the sun can lift your mood and energize your body and mind.

### **WHEN TO REACH OUT...**

The strategies above can help improve mental well-being, but they cannot “cure” any mental health conditions. Making changes in your habits may not always relieve persistent mental distress and you might need to see a professional therapist. You don't have to have a professional diagnosis to seek help and support so reach out when it seems nothing changes and although the sun is shining you tend to feel dark and gloomy. God doesn't want you to be torn, troubled, terrified, turned-inside-out-He wants you to be Trusting and Terrific and seeking His guidance and dealing with your feelings in the presence of a professional therapist could be your ticket to better mental wellness. Prayer does change things so no matter how bad it may seem---always pray...and always trust God to guide you through.

***The Edward L. Holloway Health Cabinet is always here to support you!***



Fifth Sunday in Lent, April 6, 2025

## Scripture Reading: Psalm 126

*Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all of the darkness.*  
—Archbishop Desmond Tutu

Are you familiar with your state flag? A number of state flags lack words. Arizona, Alabama, Alaska, Hawaii, Tennessee, Maryland, New Mexico, South Carolina and Texas have no text whatsoever (The C and the O on the state flags of Colorado and Ohio, respectively, count as text.)

Some states have words, but the words simply identify the state: Kansas, Idaho, Wisconsin, Oregon, North Dakota and others.

But most do indeed have words. Take Connecticut, for example. Its flag features the Latin phrase, *Qui transtulit sustinet*, which means, “He who transplanted still sustains” — referring to the early settlers who believed that God guided them to the new land and would continue to sustain them.

Georgia’s flag cites the motto not only of the state but of our federal union, “In God We Trust.” Vermont’s flag bears the words, “Freedom and Unity.”

My favorite, however, is the state flag of Rhode Island, which proclaims the word “Hope,” which is also the state motto. The motto has been a part of Rhode Island’s identity since its early colonial days, symbolizing the hope of religious freedom and new opportunities that led to the state’s founding.

Can you imagine what it’s like to live without hope?

Hope is often described as the anchor of the soul, providing stability and direction even in the midst of life’s storms. It is the belief in the possibility of a better future, a brighter tomorrow, and the potential for change. But what happens when this essential human quality is absent?

It is possible that some of you dear readers feel there is no hope. You are burdened by despair, trapped in a cycle of pain, with no possibility of escape. Every challenge, no matter how small, can seem insurmountable. Perhaps you also live in fear, think your life has no purpose, that you are living in a world without color.

Fortunately, we serve a God of hope, and this God wants you to experience hope — *abundantly!* “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (Romans 15:13).

—Timothy Merrill

*Prayer: O God, like the psalmist David, I sometimes wonder, “Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me?” Then I remember his response: “Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.” Thank you for being my salvation! Amen!*

## Daily Bible Readings

**Sunday:** Luke 1-3

**Monday:** Deuteronomy 23-25

**Tuesday:** Deuteronomy 26-28

**Wednesday:** Deuteronomy 29-31

**Thursday:** Deuteronomy 32-34

**Friday:** Joshua 1-3

**Saturday:** Psalm 33

## Verse to Remember

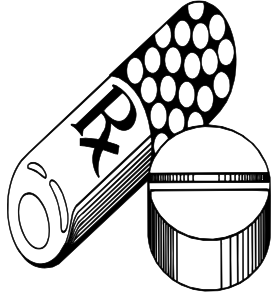
*This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth; you shall meditate on it day and night.* —Joshua 1:8

## April 2025

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

## A Taste of Your Own Medicine

You take a pill every half hour. You have three pills to take. How long will the pills last?



## Scramble Fun!

Unscramble the following words and then use the letters in the circles to reveal the hidden word.

ROSSC    \_ ○ \_ \_ ○ \_ \_

MTOB    ○ \_ \_ \_ \_

GANLE    ○ \_ \_ \_ \_ ○ \_ \_

TNEOS    \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ ○



**Answers to A Taste ...:** One hour. Take the first at 4 p.m., the second at 4:30 p.m., and the third at 5 p.m. **Answers to Scramble Fun:** cross, tomb, angel, stone. **Hidden word:** Easter. **Answers to Double Up:** SPARK, ALIKE, SPOIL, OFFER. **Answers to Your Guess ...:** 1. b; 2. c; 3. a.

## Your Guess Is as Good as Mine!

1. America's first automobile parking meter was installed in Oklahoma City in

a) 1835, b) 1935, c) 1899, d) 1765.

2. The world's first postage stamp was issued in the U.K. in

a) 1653, b) 1753, c) 1840, d) 1904.

3. The first American policewoman began work in

a) 1908, b) 1760, c) 1955, d) 1980.

## DOUBLE UP

This puzzle consists of four five-letter words that use 10 different letters exactly twice. Since there are already two S's, you cannot use another S. But there is only one F. Try to think of a word that has an F in it.

1. S \_ \_ A \_ \_ K      2. \_ \_ \_ L \_ \_ K \_ \_

3. S \_ \_ O \_ \_ L      4. \_ \_ \_ F \_ \_ E \_ \_

Palm Sunday, April 13, 2025

## Scripture Reading: Luke 19:28-40

*In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies,  
but the silence of our friends. —Martin Luther King Jr.*

If, perchance, a contemporary rock star — let's say Taylor Swift — were to arrive in midtown New York City for an outdoor concert in Times Square or Washington Square, she'd very possibly arrive in a stretch limo, followed by several other vehicles, as well as her personal entourage and staff. Of course, the stage and equipment has already been set up, sound checks are done, everything is ready. She just needs to show up. And when she does, the crowds are there and are going wild — smartphones in the air. People are clamoring for her attention. Everyone wants a piece of her. The crush is incredible.

In Jesus' day, Jerusalem was a big city, but if someone important entered the city, it was likely a military man, or governmental figure of the Roman Empire. He'd likely enter on a large war horse, befitting the powerful man that he was.

But the people didn't care.

But on the day we call Palm Sunday, they care. Enormous crowds were on hand to greet Jesus as befitting the ("Rock of Ages") rock ("Morning") star he was. He entered Jerusalem riding on a colt, fulfilling the prophecy from Zechariah 9:9 that the King would come in humility. The mob shouted and hollered: Hosanna! Hosanna! They gave him the red cloak treatment, casting off their outer garments to create a carpet of cloth as the tiny beast clopped by. The crowds sang like a song might swell in a football stadium, waving palm branches like rally towels, "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!" (Luke 19:38).

Yet, as we know, only days later, thanks to some machinations of his political enemies and a lot of fake news, Jesus would be jeered and ridiculed by a crowd demanding his crucifixion. This stark contrast challenges us to examine the sincerity of our own faith. Following Jesus means more than moments of celebration; it requires a life of commitment, even when the path becomes difficult.

—Timothy Merrill

*Prayer: Lord Jesus, as we remember your entry into Jerusalem, we welcome you into our hearts as our Lord and Savior. Help us to follow your example of humility and servanthood. And may our commitment to you remain steadfast, not just in moments of celebration but in every season of life. Amen.*



## Daily Bible Readings

**Sunday:** Luke 4-6

**Monday:** Joshua 4-6

**Tuesday:** Joshua 7-9

**Wednesday:** Joshua 10-12

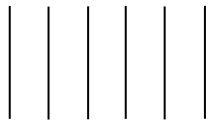
**Thursday:** Joshua 13-15

**Friday:** Joshua 16-18

**Saturday:** Psalms 34-36

## BRAIN DRAIN

You are given the following:



Add five line segments to make 9. See answer below.

## PALM



## SUNDAY

### ANSWERS to Test

Your Bible IQ: 1E, 2C, 3C, 4C, 5D, 6C, 7E, 8A, 9A, 10D

### ANSWER to BRAIN

DRAIN: NINE (Add a slanting segment twice, and three horizontal segments to get NINE.)

## TEST YOUR BIBLE IQ!

Knowledge is acquired in many ways. One approach is to review what has already been mastered. See if you remember the correct responses to the questions below. These questions review and connect with many well-known stories in the Bible. Answers below.

1. All of these are part of the story of Noah except: A. a dove, B. a rainbow, C. an olive branch, D. a raven, E. an apple. (Genesis 6-9)
2. Hagar was the handmaid to this matriarch: A. Bathsheba, B. Ruth, C. Sarai, D. Rebekah, E. Rachel. (Genesis 16)
3. King David succeeded: A. Solomon, B. Samson, C. Saul, D. Isaiah, E. Jeremiah. (1 Samuel 18)
4. Which person is mismatched? A. Gideon/trumpet, B. Moses /burning bush, C. Joseph/slingshot, D. Daniel/lions. (1 Samuel 17)
5. Which biblical figure's faith was tested by many trials? A. Adam, B. Moses, C. Noah, D. Job, E. Solomon.
6. Jacob saw angels going up and down a: A. highway, B. bridge, C. ladder or stairway, D. mountain, E. tree. (Genesis 28)
7. Elisha healed the waters of Jericho by putting this into the spring: A. blood, B. an olive, C. wine, D. sand, E. salt. (2 Kings 2:19-22)
8. In the Old Testament, Zion refers to: A. a city, B. heaven, C. a prophet, D. a name for God. (Psalm 48:1-2)
9. The Bible says that all but which river flowed through the Garden of Eden? A. Jordan, B. Tigris, C. Gihon, D. Pishon, E. Euphrates. (Genesis 2:10-14)
10. Nebuchadnezzar was responsible for the destruction of: A. the hanging gardens, B. the wall of Jericho, C. the city of Sodom, D. the temple at Jerusalem. (2 Kings 25:8-12)

Easter Sunday, April 20, 2025

## Scripture Reading: Luke 24:1-12

*Our old history ends with the cross; our new history begins with the resurrection. —Watchman Nee*

---

It's Easter Sunday when we are reminded that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the very heart of our faith. More than that, Easter triumphantly proclaims that God is always at work, bringing life amid death, hope amid despair.

To that end, let's think of a metaphor. In a peaceful meadow, there was a caterpillar who lived a simple and content life. She was unaware that a great transformation awaited her.

One day, she entered a deep sleep, all while weaving an intricate cocoon around herself. She remained there for many days, hidden away and quiet. The other creatures of the meadow wondered if she had died, and some even grieved their loss.

But after some time, the cocoon began to move, and shortly thereafter, a monarch butterfly emerged. The transformation had not been easy, and the butterfly's gossamer wings were weak and fragile at first. She struggled to fly, and for a time, she remained on the branch to which the now-discarded cocoon was still attached.

Then, slowly, the butterfly's wings grew stronger. With the sun shining down on her and the wind encouraging her, she spread her wings and took to the sky. The other creatures of the meadow marveled at how death had been transformed into life; how the earthly had been transfigured into something beautiful; how what had been old had miraculously become new — dazzlingly new!

There are parallels to what is going on at Easter. *Theologically*, like the butterfly's cocoon, the tomb seemed like a place of death and loss. But in the resurrection of Jesus, what seemed like an end became the ultimate beginning — a new life for all believers. Just as the butterfly was transformed, we, too, are transformed by the power of the resurrection, given new hope and life.

But *experientially*, the message of Easter is that even in the darkest moments, when all seems lost, there is always the promise of renewal and resurrection, just as the butterfly emerges from its cocoon to soar into the sky.

—Timothy Merrill

*Prayer: Loving God, we thank you for the victory of life over death, hope over despair, and love over fear. Through Jesus, you have given us the promise of eternal life, and the assurance that no darkness is too great for your light to overcome. We thank you for the new beginnings you offer us, for the power of your redeeming grace. May we live in the joy and freedom of your resurrection, sharing your love and hope with a world in need. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.*

## Daily Bible Readings

**Sunday:** Luke 7-9

**Monday:** Joshua 19-21

**Tuesday:** Joshua 22-24

**Wednesday:** Judges 1-4

**Thursday:** Judges 5-8

**Friday:** Judges 9-12

**Saturday:** Psalms 37-39

## EASTER WORD HUNT

**Directions:** Look for ten (10) words related to the Easter season. Words can be read forwards or backwards or either direction vertically. Answers below.

T	D	W	M	H	H	T
E	Y	D	N	A	C	E
N	E	C	H	I	C	K
N	Q	T	N	U	H	S
O	L	I	L	Y	G	A
B	U	N	N	Y	G	B
P	A	R	A	D	E	F

## NAME THE STATE

In the space provided, write the names of the states in which the following three-letter words are found:

**EXAMPLE:** OUT/ SOUTH DAKOTA

**ASK:**

**SIP:**

**ORE:**

**EGO:**

**WAS:**

**ASH:**

**TON:**

**GIN:**

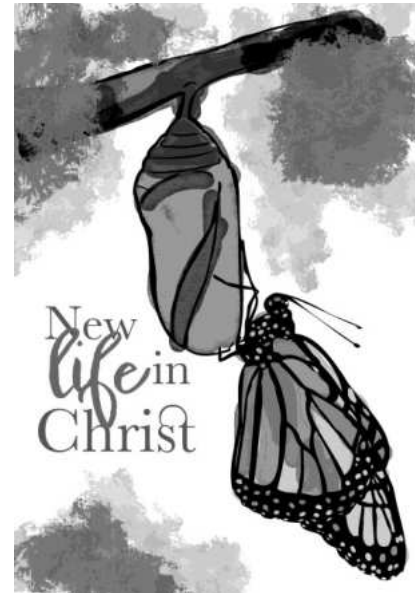
**CUT:**

**SEE:**

**INN:**

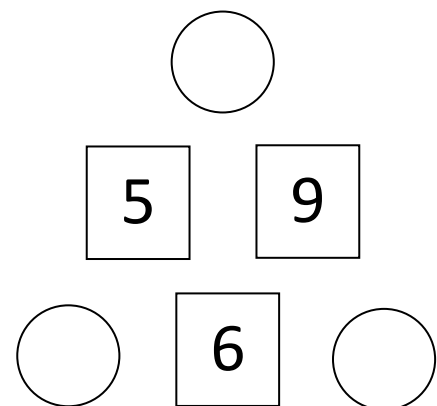
**USE:**

**SET:**



## ARITHMOGRAM

Place a number in each of the circles on either side of the squares so that the sum of the numbers in the adjoining circles equals the number in the square.



### ANSWERS TO NAME

#### THE STATE:

ASK=Nebraska, or Alaska

SIP=Mississippi

ORE=Oregon

EGO=Oregon

WAS=Washington

ASH=Washington

TON=Washington

GIN=Virginia

CUT=Connecticut

SEE=Tennessee

INN=Minnesota

USE=Massachusetts

SET=Massachusetts

### ANSWER TO

#### ARITHMOGRAM:

Clockwise from the top circle — 4, 5, 1

### Answers to Easter

#### Word Hunt:

lily, parade, chick, bunny, candy, hunt, dye, basket, egg, bonnet

Sunday, April 27, 2025

## Scripture Reading: John 20:19-31

*To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover that the prisoner was you. —Lewis B. Smedes*

---

### The Parable of the Two Brothers

Once upon a time, there were two brothers: James, the older; and John, the younger. They lived on neighboring farms. They had always lived in harmony. One day, however, a conflict arose. It began with a small misunderstanding and soon snowballed into a major dispute. Words were exchanged, and they stopped speaking to one another. Years went by.

One day, there was a knock on James' door. It was a carpenter looking for work. "What's your name?" James asked.

"Manuel," said the carpenter.

"Well, Manuel," James said, "I want you to build a fence on my property. Build it so high that I won't have to see my brother John again."

Manuel nodded and went to work. But instead of building a fence, he built a bridge that spanned the stream between the two farms. When John saw the bridge, his heart was touched. He realized that his brother James still wanted to reconcile, despite their differences. James, for his part, was astonished. When John walked across the bridge, James was there to meet him, and they embraced in a tearful, joyous reconciliation.

"Thank you, Manuel," said the brothers in unison.

"My pleasure," said the Carpenter. "Some people call me Immanuel, but I also go by Jesús."

The Carpenter gathered his tools to leave. "Stay, stay!" the brothers cried in unison. "We have more work for you!"

But the Carpenter smiled and said, "I have many more bridges to build elsewhere," and went on his way.

—Timothy Merrill

*Prayer: Loving God, thank you for the gift of reconciliation. Through your grace, you restore broken relationships, and heal wounded hearts. Thank you for the peace that comes from forgiveness and for the unity found in your love. Help me to be an instrument of reconciliation in the world. Amen.*

