As a way to remain connected during this time apart, I will be putting together a weekly newsletter with a reflection based on the upcoming Sunday scripture passage. I hope that by taking a few moments to reflect on the Word of God and pray, we can feel grounded and connected to God and to one another during this uncertain time. -Pastor Jill

The scripture for this week is Jesus' ascension from the Book of Acts. The Ascension of Jesus happens 40 days after the resurrection. Jesus is gathered with the disciples and while they are talking, Jesus rises up and disappears into the clouds. I can't even imagine the emotional state of the disciples. In the last 40 days they watched in horror as their beloved leader was crucified, were bewildered at the empty tomb, and were filled with joy by spending time with the resurrected Jesus. And now, Jesus has disappeared again, never to return. What might we learn from the emotional experiences of the disciples?

Take some time to reflect on Acts 1:6-11 on the following pages.
Acts 1:6-11

So when they had come together, they asked him, ‘Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?’ He replied, ‘It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.’ When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. While he was going and they were gazing up towards heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. They said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up towards heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.’
Reflect:

1. Even after experiencing a wide-range of emotions, the disciples continued to trust in God. How do your emotions impact your beliefs about God's love and care?

2. If you were standing up there on that hill with Jesus, what would your questions be?

3. What is this passage calling you to do today? This week?

Pray:

God, we identify with the disciples staring up at the skies wondering where you have gone. Help us to experience your presence especially when we feel afraid and alone. Amen.
The church leadership has been working on a plan for eventually returning to worship based on guidelines from government, health, and wider church officials. We anticipate it will be some time before we are able to worship in person together. And even when we are able to reopen, worship will look different from what we have been used to. In this time apart, there are many ways for us to continue to be the church. Tune in to online worship, Zoom coffee hour, and various online educational opportunities. Continue to serve your family, neighbors and friends. And we can even worship God from our homes until we are able to be together again.

**A Prayer by Nadia Bolz-Weber**

I do not know when we can gather together again in worship, Lord. So, for now I just ask that: When I sing along in my kitchen to each song on Stevie Wonder’s Songs in The Key of Life Album, that it be counted as praise. And that when I read the news and my heart tightens in my chest, may it be counted as a Kyrie. And that when my eyes brighten in a smile behind my mask as I thank the cashier may it be counted as passing the peace. And that when I water my plants and wash my dishes and take a shower may it be counted as remembering my baptism. And that when the tears come and my shoulders shake and my breathing falters, may it be counted as prayer. And that when I stumble upon a Tabitha Brown video and hear her grace and love of you may it be counted as a hearing a homily. And that as I sit at that table in my apartment, and eat one more homemade meal, slowly, joyfully, with nothing else demanding my time or attention, may it be counted as communion. Amen.