



# All Things New

## Moving Forward During Difficult Times

### All Things New: A Path to Freedom

God announces a new thing to the exiles in Babylon — freedom, liberation, a chance to go home. Like exiles, we can get so stuck in the old that we stop believing anything is possible. We have to let go of the old (both the good and bad) in order to embrace the new thing God is doing in our lives.



#### PRAY: All Things New Prayer

*O God, to what new thing are you leading me right now? Open my heart and give me courage to embrace it. Amen.*



#### STUDY: Acts 2:1-21 Isaiah 42:1-9, 43:18-19, 48:6

1. God tells the exiles to “forget” former things. Pastor Glenn suggests this doesn’t mean literally forgetting, but rather not getting stuck in the past. What things have you had to “forget” or let go of (both bad things and good things) in order to embrace something new?
2. Pastor Glenn suggests some “new things” he sees God doing right now. What new things do you see God doing in your life and in the world?
3. Why do people get to the place where they don’t believe new things are possible, that things can’t change? How does one get out of that place?
4. Why are “new things,” even potentially good new things, often scary and uncomfortable?





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### All Things New: A Church for Everyone

On Pentecost, the Holy Spirit fell on people from all over the world. From its inception, the church has been multicultural and diverse. This push to inclusivity was not the disciples' idea — the Spirit compelled them. And the Spirit is still compelling us toward a more inclusive community today.



#### PRAY: All Things New Prayer

*O God, to what new thing are you leading me right now? Open my heart and give me courage to embrace it. Amen.*



#### STUDY: Acts 2:1-21 REFLECT AND DISCUSS

1. How do you think the disciples felt, being compelled by the Spirit to tell about Jesus to strangers, in languages they didn't know? Have you ever been pushed out of your comfort zone by the Holy Spirit?
2. When and in what ways has the church failed to live up to this original vision of an inclusive community? Why do you think being an inclusive community proves to be so difficult for nearly all of us?
3. To some extent, northwest Columbus is like Jerusalem on Pentecost — there are people here from all over the world. How could we communicate with them and get their positive attention for the gospel?
4. One group our church longs to be more inclusive of is young adults. What "language" do we need to speak to communicate effectively with young adults?





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## All Things New: A Covenant with God

In Jeremiah, we see the prophet's mind and heart change over time. Early on, he believes the people will change their ways and avoid disaster. Then, he sees that isn't true and knows disaster is inevitable. It's here that we see a new relationship between God and Israel emerge. If the people cannot keep the covenant, then God will keep it for them. Our relationship with Jesus is similar. If people cannot remain in good relationship with God, then God will send Jesus to do it for us. This is a difficult and costly transition for God.



### PRAY: *All Things New Prayer*

*O God, to what new thing are you leading me right now? Open my heart and give me courage to embrace it. Amen.*



### STUDY: Jer 31:31-34 + 1 Cor 11:23-26 REFLECT AND DISCUSS

1. Do you believe God is willing to forgive everything and anything? Will God always be willing to start over with us? Or is there a limit?
2. Should parents be willing to forgive everything and always to start over with a son or daughter — or should there be a limit?
3. If God is willing to make a new covenant when we break the old one, what incentive do we have to keep any covenant with God?
4. What feelings are stirred in you by Jesus offering his body and blood for you?
5. The New Covenant, at least as portrayed by Pastor Glenn, seems to replace rules and spiritual striving with mercy and spiritual trusting. Are you okay with that? How does that affect daily Christian life?





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### All Things New: A Shift in Perspective

A theology professor recently wrote, *“The lesson is that life, in the end, is about loss, and suffering itself is the teacher.”* Paul says he has given up everything for Christ, and that it has been more than worth it. The point is not that this crisis is good or that God wills it, but that through the losing and suffering involved in it, we might learn to cherish more deeply the surpassing value of Christ.



#### PRAY: All Things New Prayer

*O God, to what new thing are you leading me right now? Open my heart and give me courage to embrace it. Amen.*



#### STUDY: Philippians 3:7-11 REFLECT AND DISCUSS

1. *“The lesson [of the pandemic] is that life, in the end, is about loss, and suffering itself is the teacher.”* (Leonard DeLorenzo) What do loss and suffering teach us?
2. What have you sacrificed for the sake of God or loved ones? Career opportunities? Money? Time? What makes sacrifices feel worth it . . . or not worth it?
3. Philippians suggests that even the best and brightest things in life pale in comparison to knowing Christ. How might this truth change your life, or at least your attitude about life?
4. Read and discuss Elizabeth Bishop’s famous poem, *“One Art.”* Is losing something you intentionally practice every day? Or is it *“disaster”*? Or both?





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### All Things New: A World in Change

It is supposed to be a great time of celebration — laying the foundation of the new temple after returning from exile. And many people do rejoice. But not everyone. Some old-timers who remembered (or had heard stories about) the old temple, wept—presumably because the new temple could not match the old one. After a hard time, better times come—and we celebrate. But some of us also mourn what's been lost. *The new normal is a mixture of win and lose, joy and sadness.*



#### PRAY: All Things New Prayer

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#### STUDY: Ezra 3:10-13 REFLECT AND DISCUSS

1. Are you a “glass half-full” or a “glass half-empty” person? Why is that? How does that affect the way you live and feel about life? Can you change that built-in inclination?
2. As you think about life as we emerge from the pandemic, what makes you feel like weeping? Like rejoicing?
3. Which is easier for you—the weeping or the rejoicing? Which do we seem to make more space for in worship?
4. What is the foundation on which we can build a new life together after this pandemic? As individuals and families? As a congregation? As a nation? As a global community?





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### All Things New: A Commandment to Love

This is the only commandment Jesus actually gives in John — *to love one another*. Not to love our neighbors, or our enemies, as in the other gospels. Just “one another.” Granted, we need all four gospels for the fullness of love. But this is how the world will know we are Jesus’ people — if we have love for one another.



#### PRAY: All Things New Prayer

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#### STUDY: John 13:34-35 REFLECT AND DISCUSS

1. In this week’s sermon, Pastor Glenn suggests it can be easier to love strangers and even some enemies than to “*love one another*” – the people with whom we live, worship, and serve on committees. Why might that sometimes be true?
2. Pastor Glenn quotes a teacher as saying, “The church’s greatest witness is the quality of its life together.” What might the church need to adjust in order to take that seriously? What might you need to adjust in order to take that seriously?
3. In recent years the United Methodist denomination has been known mostly for our conflict over excluding LGBTQ persons from marriage and ordained ministry. What might happen if we focused all our energy on being known for loving one another? What would it take to make that happen?
4. The Hebrew Scriptures, which Jesus knew well, are said to contain 613 commandments. Why did Jesus, at least in John’s gospel, pare it down to just one: “*love one another as I have loved you*”?

