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First Reformed

By Paul Schrader

(BIRDS CALLING IN DISTANCE)

TOLLER:

to keep a journal.
Not in a word program
or digital file,
but in longhand,
writing every word out
so that every inflection
of penmanship,
every word chosen,
scratched out, revised,
is recorded.
To set down all my thoughts
and the simple events
of my day factually
and without hiding anything.
When writing about oneself,
one should show no mercy.
I will keep this diary
for one year, 12 months.
And at the end of that time,
it will be destroyed.
Shredded, then burnt.
The experiment will be over.
(DOOR OPENS)
Please rise.
What is thy only comfort
in life and death?

ALL:

with body and soul,
both in life and death,
am not my own,
but belong unto my faithful
Savior Jesus Christ,
who with his precious blood...

TOLLER:

and recollections
are not so different
from those I confide to God
every morning.
When it is possible.

When he is listening.
Bread of life.
The cup of salvation.
(COUGHING)
Bread of life.
The cup of salvation.
Bread of life.
The cup of salvation.
This journal
is a form of speaking,
of communication
from one to the other.
A communication
which can be achieved simply
and in repose without
prostration or abnegation.
It is a form of prayer.
Bread of life.
The cup of salvation.

ELDER:

in the men's restroom.

TOLLER:

No. I was just there.
It's still leaking.
Same place.
Under the hot faucet.

TOLLER:

the women's room?
The women's is fine.
Uh, do you want me to call
the plumber
from Abundant Life?
No, I'll have
another crack at it.
I hate always bugging them
for extra little costs.
They don't mind.
That's what they're there for.
And you're totally
within your budget.
Still, I don't want to.

Have you posted the sermon?

- Yes. I did it this morning.

- (KNOCK ON DOOR)

- **TOLLER:**

- Reverend?

Yes, uh... Mary, right?

- Mary Mansana.

- Yeah. Nice to see you again.

I wanted to talk,

if that's okay.

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Come on in, Mary.

I'll be right back.

Mary, how can I help you?

Um, I was wondering if
you would talk

- to my husband, Michael.

- Oh, sure. I...

Actually, not now.

He has to...

He has to go to work.

He has to fill in
at Home Depot.

Mary? What is it?

I'm worried about him.

He's involved
in the Green Planet movement.

- It's an activist group.

- Mmm-hmm.

And he was in jail in Canada.

And he just got out
two weeks ago.

He just sits around at home.

He doesn't...

He doesn't go out.

I got him

to fill out a temp form
for Home... For Home Depot.

- Okay.

- Um, so that's good.

Are you sure you don't want
to go to Abundant Life?

They have a whole team

of counselors over there,
who are trained and...
I know,
but he doesn't want to.
He thinks it's more of
a company than a church.
And so, he said
he would talk to you.
Uh, all right. Tomorrow?
- After lunch?
- Great. Great.
I'll just need the, uh...
I just need an address.
And, uh, can you tell me
a little more?
Oh, he applied for
Compassionate Release
when he found out.
He was at Fort Providence.
They let him out early.
Wait, now. Um, found out what?
That I... I was pregnant.
Oh. Hmm. Congratulations.
Thanks.
He... He thinks it's wrong to
bring a child into this world.
He wants to kill our baby.
(TICKING)

TOLLER:

the youth group
at Abundant Life.
The young people were
so excited, so full of life.
They were open.
They welcomed communion.
Maybe I shouldn't care
about whether people like me.
Did Jesus worry
about being liked?
I look at the last lines
I wrote with disdain.
Twelve months.
Can I keep up an exercise

that long?

(EXHALES DEEPLY)

When I read these words,
I see not truth, but pride.
I wish I had not used
the word pride.
But I cannot cross it out.
If only I could pray.

(COUGHING)

(EXHALES)

(KNOCKS)

Hi, Reverend.

- Hi. Is Michael home?

- Yeah. Come on in.

Okay. Yeah.

- Hey. Good to see you.

- Nice to see you.

Um, would you like
some coffee?

Yes. But, um...

We're... I...

I think we have some tea.

Yes. That would be better.

- Okay.

- Thanks.

- (SIGHS)

- Let me take your coat?

(CHUCKLES) Um, no, it's okay.

I got it.

Come on in.

Yeah. I don't know why Mary...

There's no need to apologize.

No, uh... She told me

that you've been up in Canada.

Uh, yeah. Uh, Fort Providence.

It's, uh,

in the Mackenzie Delta.

It's way in the north.

Yeah. Beautiful country,

I imagine.

Yeah, it is. (CHUCKLES)

Mary said things have been
getting you down?

(CHUCKLES) Uh, yeah, things.

Yeah, you could say that.

Yeah.

Oh! Thank you very much.

- It's hot.

- Perfect.

Thank you.

- Well, Mary is pregnant.

- Hmm.

Yeah. How far along is she?

Uh, 20 weeks.

- Congratulations.

- Thanks.

Hey, how old are you,

Reverend?

I'm 46.

Uh, 33.

That's... That's how old
our child will be in 2050.

- Mmm-hmm. Mmm-hmm. Yeah.

- You know, that's...

That's two years older
than I am right now.

Mmm-hmm.

- You'll be 81.

- (LAUGHS) Yeah.

Hey, you know what the world
will be like in 2050?

Hmm. Hard to imagine.

Yeah, you think?

I mean, Reverend...

Uh, the world

is changing so fast.

And right in front of us.

I mean, one third
of the natural world
has been destroyed
in your lifetime.

You know,

the earth's temperature
will be three degrees
centigrade higher.

Four is the threshold.

You know? "Severe, widespread,
and irreversible impacts."

And when scientists say
stuff like that, you know?
And National Center for
Atmospheric Research,
Lawrence Livermore,
the Potsdam Institute.
Uh, Reverend...

TOLLER:

for some time.
By 2050, sea levels two feet
higher on the East Coast.
Low lying areas underwater
across the world.
Bangladesh, 20% loss
of landmass.
Central Africa, 50% reduction
in crops due to drought.
The Western reservoirs
dried up.
Climate change refugees.
Epidemics. Extreme weather.

MICHAEL:

The bad times,
they will begin.
And from that point,
everything moves very quickly.
You know,
this social structure
can't bear the stress
of multiple crises.
Opportunistic diseases,
anarchy, martial law,
the tipping point.
And this isn't in some,
like, distant future.
You will live to see this.
You know, my children will
experience this unliveability.
This, uh...
Damn. I'm sorry. I just...
You know, I...
I thought things could change,

you know?

I thought... I thought
people would listen.

Do you have thoughts
of harming yourself?

No.

Why? Did... Did Mary say
something like that?

No. No.

No, I'm not worried
for myself. I just...
This world is gonna be
what it is.

Um... But can I ask you
a question, Reverend?

TOLLER:

How do you sanction
bringing in a little girl,
uh, for argument's sake,
let's just say that, uh,
Mary and I's, uh, child,
it's a little girl.

You know,
a child that's so full of hope
and naive beliefs,
into a world
where that little girl, uh...

She grows up
to be a young woman
and she looks you in the eyes
and she says that you knew
this all along, didn't you?

You see, that...

I mean, what? What are you
supposed to say then?

There's something
growing inside Mary.

Something as alive
as a tree, surely.

As an endangered species.

Something full of the beauty
and mystery of nature.

You said sanction?

You think Mary should have
an abortion?
This birth,
is that your right?
Is that your decision?
Have you asked Mary
what she thinks?
Look, this... This isn't...
It's not about your baby.
It's not about Mary.
It's about you
and your despair.
Your lack of hope.
Look, people have,
throughout history,
have woken up
in the dead of the night,
confronted by blackness.
The sense that our lives
are without meaning.
The Sickness Unto Death.
Yeah, but this is
something different.
Yeah, no.
Man's great achievements
have brought him to the place
where life as we know it
may cease
in the foreseeable future.
Yes, that's new.
But the blackness
that's not.
We are scientific people.
We want to solve things.
We want rational answers.
Right? And if...
If humankind can't overcome
its immediate interests
enough to ensure its own
survival, then you're right.
The only rational response
is despair.
But do you think that, that...
That there's any existence

apart from this?

This here, right now?

- Uh, yes.

- Yeah, right.

- Before us. After us.

- Yeah.

- Yeah.

- Yeah. Wait a second.

You're talking about

the next lifetime? Huh?

You really... You just, uh...

TOLLER:

I was Jacob

wrestling all night long

with the angel.

Fighting in the grasp.

Every sentence,

every question,

every response

a mortal struggle.

It was exhilarating.

MICHAEL:

in martyrdom, Reverend?

I'm not sure I know

what you mean.

You know, the Saints of God,

the early Christians who

wouldn't renounce their faith?

The missionaries

who were attacked

in the fields of the Lord.

Do you believe

that they died for a purpose?

- TOLLER:

- Well, every week,

activists are killed trying

to protect the environment.

A hundred-and-seventeen were

killed last year

for their beliefs.

All right, right there.

Uh, this is Jos Claudio
Ribeiro da Silva.
Huh? And that's his wife,
Maria.
(STAMMERS) They were
gunned down
in 2011 in the Amazon.
You know, they were protesting
free cutting
of the rain forest
(TOLLER SIGHS)
Hey, uh... This is
Dorothy Stang, 2005.
She was, um, a nun from Ohio.
And what, what was the purpose
of their deaths?
You know, in, uh...
In 2010, the IPCC predicted
that if drastic action
wasn't taken by 2015,
environmental collapse
would be irreversible.
And nothing was done.
And now it's 2017.

TOLLER:

you respected me.
What I...
What I've been through.
Yes.
So, you know my story.
- Yeah, you were a chaplain.
- Uh-huh.
My father taught at VMI.
I encouraged my son to enlist.
It was the family tradition.
Uh, like his father,
my father before me.
A patriotic tradition.
My wife, uh, was very opposed.
My son enlisted anyway.
And, uh...
Six months later
he was dead in Iraq. Right?

I talked my son into a war
that had
no moral justification.
My wife could no longer
live with me.
I left the military.
I was lost.
And Reverend Jeffers
from Abundant Life,
he gave me this position
at First Reformed
and here I am.
Now Michael, I can promise you
that whatever despair you feel
about bringing a child
into this world
cannot equal the despair
of taking a child from it.
Hey, what... What was his,
his name? Your son?
Joseph.
The boy thrown down the well.
- (CHUCKLES) Yeah. I remember.
- Mmm-hmm.
The dreamer.
The dreamer, yeah. Yeah.
(SIGHS DEEPLY)
And you were able
to just go on?
Courage is the solution
to despair.
Reason provides no answers.
I can't know
what the future will bring.
We have to choose
despite uncertainty.
Wisdom is holding
two contradictory truths
in our mind, simultaneously.
Hope and despair.
A life without despair
is a life without hope.
Holding these two ideas
in our head is life itself.

(SIGHS)

Are you a drinking man,
Reverend?

It doesn't help.

No, I suppose not.

Can God forgive us?

For what we've, uh,
done to this world?

I don't know.

Who can know the mind of God?

But we can choose
a righteous life.

Belief...

Forgiveness...

Grace covers us all.

I believe that.

Let's... Let's meet again.

Want to?

Tomorrow after lunch,
same time.

Okay yeah. It's a...

It's a plan.

TOLLER:

that was said,
what should have been said,
what could have been
said differently,
what could have been
said better.

"I know that
nothing can change
"and I know there is no hope."

Thomas Merton wrote this.

Despair is a development
of pride so great
that it chooses
one's certitude
rather than admit God is
more creative than we are.

Perhaps it's better
I didn't say that to him.

(GROANING)

- (SIGHS)

- (ZIPS PANTS)

(TOILET FLUSHING)

Who am I to talk about pride?

Well, to begin, the church

was constructed in 1767

in a style we now call

Dutch Colonial.

It was made by settlers...

Follow me.

Using local timber.

First Reformed

took seven years to build.

The Vei Plancks.

Uh, Effie here, her tombstone

dates back to 1787.

The church

was partially rebuilt

in 1837 following a fire.

This section

remains preserved.

If you look closely behind

the Continental Army Flag,

you'll find two bullet holes

from shots fired during

the Skirmish of Snowbridge.

In two months

we're celebrating

our 250th anniversary.

Here is an example of some

of the church's chinaware

brought over

from the Netherlands.

And the first chalice.

It's beautiful.

And here,

this is the original key

from the front door

before the fire.

- (BOTH CHUCKLING)

- Yeah.

And in that cabinet

we have, um,

souvenirs that are for sale.

We have mugs, caps, postcards,

key chains, pens, t-shirts.

What size are these?

Unfortunately,

they are all small.

I have some more on order,

but I'm waiting for them

to come in.

The caps are great, though.

It's a one size fits all.

(SIGHS)

The pulpit was donated in 1879

by William Mercer.

And the church organ,

which unfortunately

isn't working at this time,

uh, was manufactured

in England by A.G. Hill.

Did you hear the one about

the Choir Mistress

and the Minister?

No.

She chased him

around the church

and caught him by the organ.

(CHUCKLES HESITANTLY)

Oh. No, I, uh...

I hadn't heard that one.

All right. Come on. Follow me.

All right. Thank you all

very much.

- Be well.

- WOMAN:

TOLLER:

Drive safe.

Thanks.

(CHOIR SINGING)

(CONTINUES SINGING)

(CONTINUES SINGING)

Okay, take five.

Penny for your thoughts?

Oh. Joel wanted to talk to me.

- Nothing serious, I hope.

- Oh, I assume not.
You want to have lunch?
Well, I have something after,
but uh, yeah.
I could sit with you
for a second.

ESTHER:

What?
When everything
was ahead of you.
Yeah. But try
telling them that. (CHUCKLES)
See you then.
(CELL PHONE CHIMES)
Hello.
- Reverend Toller.
- Yes.
- Oh. Go right in.
- Okay.
He's expecting you.
Um, this is...
That's my wife's stuff. So.
- Go ahead and deal with it.
- (KNOCK AT DOOR)
Oh, good! Reverend Toller.
Come on in.
Roger, make sure
you get back to me
as soon as you can on that.
Hey Reverend.
Good seeing you. Why don't you
have a seat there?
Roger, okay to leave
that door open.
Can I get you a water
or anything?
Oh, no. I'm good. I'm good.
(GRUNTS) So, how are things
over at First Reformed?
Oh, busy. You know how it is.
You do one thing to the other,
next thing you know
it's Sunday again.

- Yeah, tell me about it.

- (LAUGHS)

Well, I brought you in,
I wanted to ask you
about the 250th
Reconsecration.

Now, that's just
around the corner.

Yeah, of course.

It's only eight weeks away.

And how's the planning
going on that?

Well, your office
is handling the invitations
and I'm a little worried
about seating.

I mean, because we have
your staff.

We have the Elders.

We have the Deacons.

We have the Governor,
his people.

The Mayor, his people.

We don't have any room
for spillover.

You know, it's the Sanctuary
and that's it.

You know what?

I think we'll simulcast
the ceremony here,
in the main room.

- All right.

- So that's 5,000 seats.

Yeah, okay. Well then...

We can do the reception
in the rotunda.

The, um...

The organ at First Reformed.

- Is that fixed?

- Oh right, yeah. No, it's not.

We're waiting on some pieces.

I don't... It was...

It's just more complicated
than we thought at first.

Well, we can't have
a reconsecration
without an organ. (CHUCKLES)
(IMITATING ORGAN PLAYING)
"A Mighty Fortress
is Our God."
- That's all organ.
- (LAUGHING)
Did you know that, uh,
Martin Luther wrote
that in an outhouse?
- (LAUGHING)
- Oh. Yeah.
(IMITATING ORGAN PLAYING)
"A Mighty Fortress..."
(BOTH LAUGHING)
I think every seminarian
knows that one.
Oh, man, I cannot get
that image out of my mind.
I mean, whenever I see
that song going
on and I can look around
the congregation
and know everybody's thinking
the same thing. (LAUGHING)
This man, oh, goodness.
Oh, makes me laugh.
Anyway, have you, uh,
prepared your remarks?
Ugh, no. Not yet. But, I will.
So, how are you?
Oh, I'm fine.
No, really.
I mean, it's been a while
since we've talked.
And you know,
even a pastor needs a pastor.
We should do it, okay?
I'd like that.
Good. And come by here
more often.
You should get out. Come on by
and be a part of things.

So many activities
you can do. And...
- And the kids like you a lot.
- Mmm.
They always speak
highly of you.
So you can get
out of that, uh...
What is the play? What do they
like to call it,
over where you are? The, uh...
The museum. (LAUGHS)
The souvenir shop.
They call it
the souvenir shop.
Well, good. Well, good.
You're doing a great job.
I'm grateful
for the opportunity.
(LOW INDISTINCT CHATTER)
How was Jeffers?

TOLLER:

to meet Ed Balq.
Balq Industries, Balq Energy,
Balq Paper, Balq Peanuts...
Why?
Well, it's all about
the Reconsecration.
And apparently Mr. Balq wants
to make sure he gets
proper credit for underwriting
the whole thing.
Well, he should.
First Reformed would be
a parking lot
- if it wasn't for him.
- I guess.
Did you see the doctor?
Yes. I made an appointment.
There was a bit of a hang up
with the insurance
company, but...
God, they make it

so difficult.
Yeah, well.
That's what they do.

TOLLER:

You need someone
to take care of you.
Esther, we tried that.
I'm not made for that.
(SCOFFS) For what? Love?
You're not made for love?
My marriage was a failure.
No marriage can survive
the loss of a child.
It's not right.
Is that what you think?
That what we did together
was a sin?
That we transgressed?
No. That's not what I think.
I've seen enough real sin
to know the difference.
It's just...
Okay?
Okay. I understand, I...
I care about you.
I want you to be happy.
Well, I am happy.

TOLLER:

for their gregariousness,
some are called
for their suffering.
Others are called
for their loneliness.
(GRUNTS)
They are called by God,
because through the vessel
of communication
they can reach out,
and hold beating hearts
in their hands.
They are called because of
their all-consuming knowledge

of the emptiness of all things
that can only be filled
by the presence of Our Savior.
(CELL PHONE RINGING)
- Yes?

- **MARY:**

- Oh!

- It's me.

Yes, Mary? I got your message
about rescheduling.

You must come over. Now.

Is Michael there?

No. He's at work.

You must come over. Now.

Okay. Okay.

(CAR ENGINE STOPS)

(CAR DOOR OPENS)

(CAR DOOR CLOSES)

(SIGHS) Thanks for coming.

Follow me.

I was, uh, looking
for some batteries,
'cause we were out.

And I thought maybe
there'd be some in here,
you know?

And then something
just didn't seem right.

Okay, I put everything back
the way I found it,
'cause I wanted you to see
how it was.

Explosives?

It's a suicide vest.

And there's other elements
in there too.

There's batteries
and, um, detonators
and tubes of jelly.

You know, he'd been working
in the garage lately.

And he said he was
fixing a motor.

And I didn't question him.
Cause I... I was just happy
that he was doing something
that made him happy.
But you had no idea
that he was thinking of...
No. No suspicions.
Nothing like this.
All right. Well. I'm gonna
take this. All right?
This cannot remain here.
I'm gonna take it
and dispose of it. And...
You're not gonna
go to the police?
No, I won't... Do you...
Do you want me to?
No! No, no, no.
I don't think it'd help.
I don't think anything good
will come from him
feeling threatened.
I think I'm gonna
come over tomorrow.
Tomorrow.
Somehow,
through our conversation,
I will address this.
I'm so frightened.
You don't mean that he,
you're afraid of him?
That he's gonna
hurt you, right?
No. No, no, no.
- I'm afraid for him.
- No? Okay. All right.
You know, are there
other activists,
- like coming around, calling?
- No. There's nobody.
He has no friends.
He's barely even sociable, so.
All right, but he has you.
- Yeah.

- You'll stand by him?
- Yeah, absolutely.
- All right. Well, so will I.

TOLLER:

with Christian life
at every moment.

Discernment.

Listening and waiting
for God's wish
what action must be taken.

My petty ailments
have made me bad-tempered.

I fight the urge
not to write down

the thoughts
which come to my mind.

The desire to pray itself
is a type of prayer.

(RETCHING)

How often we ask
for genuine experience
when all we really want
is emotion.

(CONTINUES RETCHING)

(COUGHING)

My hands shake
as I write these lines.
I wasn't expecting you
for another couple weeks.

Uh, we got a message
from the boss.

He said it was a top priority.

You're having
some kind of big event here?

Yeah, the church is having
its 250th anniversary.

Abundant Life is planning
quite the ceremony.

(ORGAN PLAYING)

Hmm. A Mighty Fortress.

- (CELL PHONE CHIMES)

- Oh.

(CAR ENGINE STOPS)

(CAR DOOR OPENS)
(CAR DOOR CLOSES)
(PLANE PASSING OVERHEAD)
(BREATHING SHAKILY)
(CROW CAWING)
(CELL PHONE DIALING)

TOLLER:

I mean, he had been
fighting with depression.
That's why I was
supposed to meet him.
I never imagined
anything like this.
Were you in touch with
the immediate family?
Well, his... His wife, Mary.
She's the one who first
asked me to meet with him.
Did she know about your text?
No. But she was concerned.
We... We both were.
Have you notified her?
No.
I guess that's where
I'm headed.
All right. Okay.
All right, do you mind if I
follow behind you? All right.
I knew his father.
Really? What's he like?
A businessman.
Morbid son of a bitch.
I guess it runs in the blood.
(ENGINE REVVING)

SHERIFF:

Mrs. Mensana, again
I'm sorry for your loss.
If there's anything else that
we can do, please let us know.
- Thanks.
- Thank you, Officer.
Reverend. Thank you.

(SIGHS)

You didn't tell
the police, right?
About?

No. No.

If you find anything else
like that, get rid of it.
As long as it's safe, I mean.
Burn it, bury it.

Michael was troubled,
but his cause was just.
There's no reason to bring
disrepute on that cause.

Yeah.

Are you an activist as well?

I share Michael's beliefs.

But not his despair.

I mean, I wanna live.

- I wanna be a mother.

- Right.

I wanna have this child.

Do you have family nearby?

My... Yeah, my sister.

She's in Buffalo.

- You might want to call her.

- I will.

So, he...

He went into the garage?

Yeah.

What did he say?

Nothing.

(SIGHS)

Well, from a police
point of view,
I imagine this is
a pretty cut-and-dry case.
Still, I'd probably clean up
the office,
maybe get rid of his laptop.
You...

MARY:

(SIGHS)

(SNIFFLING)

I'd sensed it.
What?
He was absent.
He was becoming someone
I didn't know.
Like, before I was
pregnant even.
And he was just so full
of anger, you know?
Think I should probably call
my parents. My sister.
They should...
They should know.

TOLLER:

while she called her sister.
Her sister was going
to drive down.
And her parents would come
for the final rights.
Uh, hey, Bill.
Chicken or beef?
- Uh, beef.
- Beef. Okay, great.
How've you been?
- I'm all right. Yeah.
- You okay?
Is that enough for you?
Thanks a lot, Reverend.
Did you want
the chicken or the beef?
Uh, the beef. Thank you.
Beef? Yeah. Cool.
There you are.
Careful, it's hot.
Reverend,
I wanted to ask you...
- Oh, shit!
- Ow!
Damn. I'm sorry, Joseph!
I'm so sorry.

TOLLER:

No sooner than I shut my eyes,

desolation came upon me.
What is one's last thought
as you pull the trigger?
"There goes my head."
Or, "Jesus, watch over me?"
Or neither?
I'm going to tear
these pages out.
This journal
brings me no peace.
It's self-pity. Nothing more.
(KEYBOARD CLACKING)
I awoke at three with a cry.
It's been five months
since I sensed
the first warning signs.
I went into the church
and fell asleep on a bench.
How easily
they talk about prayer,
those who have never
really prayed.

WOMAN:

Oh, my goodness!
Well, since I made
my commitment, I...
I have felt the Lord
moving in my life.
If happiness
came in pill size,
it would have JC
stamped on it.
(LAUGHTER)
Continuous release size.
I wake up feeling better.
My relationships are better.
And I got a raise last week.
I find myself in prayer
without even thinking
about it.
Thank you, Jason.
That is very inspiring.
Praise Jesus.

My every breath is a prayer.
Uh, thoughts? Reactions?
Yes? Cynthia.
Three months ago,
my father got laid off.
He can't find any work.
Nobody loves the Lord
more than my father.
He is always testifying,
he volunteers.
Did he do something wrong?
Um... (CLEARS THROAT)
You all know Reverend Toller
from First Reformed.
- (ALL GREETING)
- Hey, yeah. Hi. Yeah.
How... How do
you answer this, Reverend?
Well, Cynthia. I'm sorry
that happened to your father.
There's a lot
of church people,
good Christians,
who see, uh, a connection
between godliness
and prosperity.
But that's not
what Jesus teaches.
That's not what Jesus lived.
There's no dollar sign
on His pulpit.
There's no
American flag either.
I think, Cynthia, what your
father is experiencing is...
Christians shouldn't succeed.
That's what he means.
Christianity is for losers?
Jake, Jake! (LAUGHS)
I just get tired
of turn the other cheek.
Jesus didn't turn
the other cheek.
Why stand for anything?

Take prayer
out of the schools.
Give money to people
too lazy to work for it.
And whatever you do,
don't offend the Muslims.
I mean, no sooner
do I mention the poor,
and this teenager
jumps down my throat
like I just took a shit
on the American flag.
Forgive my language. Oh, God!
Oh, Roger told me.
He was great. He was terrific.
He's a good man.
Well, he said
you kept your cool,
and he admired you for that.
There's just no middle ground
with these kids.
Everything is so extreme.
It's the times. These are
frightening times. These...
These kids,
they grow up in a world
that, you and I,
we wouldn't even recognize.
Global warming,
a sea of pornography,
hyper violent video games.
It's a world without privacy.
Each kid isolated,
communicating on media.
It's a world without hope!
You don't know what it's like
to raise a kid in this...
No, I did raise a kid.
I didn't mean it like that.
I know you didn't.
They're just frightened.
These kids,
- they want certainty.
- Mmm-hmm.

You know, don't think, follow.

Uh...

But they fall prey

to extremism.

Jihadism is everywhere.

Even here.

It's just... That's not

the church that called me.

Nor me.

It's up to us. We have

to listen and guide

and encourage

our young members

to express themselves

without judging them.

We have to lead by example.

We have to be patient.

(PLAYING ORGAN)

Oh, this sounds great.

I'm gonna have to sharpen

my chops

for the Reconsecration.

Do you know

what they want to play?

No, I have no idea.

Abundant Life

is handling everything.

Invites, the seating.

Basically,

I just introduce Joel.

And then he does his spiel,

introduces the Governor,

maybe Ed Balq.

Oh, why him?

It's sort of his whole deal.

I mean, he's underwritten

the whole thing,

paid to have the organ fixed.

I do have another

musical question for you...

Oh. Take it from the top.

(PLAYING)

(CHUCKLES) It's actually

a kind of sad bit of business.

- Hm?
- The Michael Mansana memorial.
The scattering of his ashes.
He's asked me to arrange it.
He's asked you?
Well, he wrote a letter.
He had some requests.
Then the Lord spoke to Job,
stepped from the storm.
He said, "Where were you
"when I laid
the Earth's foundations,
"marked out its dimensions,
laid its cornerstone,
"when the morning stars sang,
"and the angels shouted
with joy? Where were you?"
These surroundings
were chosen by Michael
as the repository
for his physical remains.
I say physical
because his memories
and spirit live on with us,
as does his mission.
Michael cared
about this world.
Perhaps too much.
The Abundant Life Youth Choir
will now sing for us, uh,
a song chosen by Michael.
(HARMONICA PLAYS NOTE)
(SINGING) Protect the wild
tomorrow's child
Protect the land
from the greed of man
Take out the dams
stand up to oil
Protect the plants
and renew the soil
Who's gonna stand up
and save the Earth?
Who's gonna say
that she's had enough?

Who's gonna take on
the big machine?
Who's gonna stand up
and save the Earth?
This all starts
with you and me
End fossil fuels
Draw the line
Before we build
one more pipeline
End fracking now
let's save the water
And build a life
for our sons and daughters
Who's gonna stand up
and save the Earth?
Who's gonna say
that she's had enough?
Who's gonna take on
the big machine?
Who's gonna stand up
and save the Earth?
This all starts
with you and me
- I'm good.
- All right.
- Mr. Balq!
- Hey!
- Hello!
- How are you?
- Very good! Very good.
- Very good. Good, good.
Hey. Sorry I'm late.
I got, uh... I got held up.
Oh, good. You know
Reverend Toller, right?
Well, only by sight. Ed Barq.
- Good to meet you.
- It's nice to meet you.
Just bring me a coffee
- and the apple pie. All right?
- Okay. Thank you.
Uh, the apple pie.
I know it's a clich,

but they make it right here.
It's organic. It's local.
I have a surprise for you.
I, uh... I stopped by
the printer on the way over.
Oh. Ooh, nice. Nice.
They did a great job.
Yeah. All the guests
at the reconsecration
will get a copy.
And then, uh, there will
also be a mailing.
And... And of course it will
be available at the bookstore.
So how are the plans coming?
Is the organ repaired?
Oh yeah. It sounds beautiful.
Better than ever.
Okay. Um, we drew up
a little seating chart.
Now, Mayor Wilson
will be there,
as well as the Governor.
Well, at least
he's going to try...

TOLLER:

mighty men of God,
servants of the cross.
Years of service, baptisms,
confessions, funerals,
sermons.
The hours in prayer,
the afflictions suffered.
Did God give them strength?
Reverend Toller will
introduce me. I'll go up,
I'll introduce the Governor.
There'll be a song selection.
Now, the main...
There won't be anything
political though, will there?
No. No, why would there be?
Well... Oh. Sorry.

Do you mind?

- Here you are.

- (CHUCKLES)

- Thank you.

- You're welcome. Enjoy.

Well, I... I ask, uh,
only cause, um, this came
to my attention.

It's a printout
from a website.

Well, both First Reformed
and Abundant Life
are mentioned by name.

It was a political event.

And a Neil Young protest song?

I was just respecting
the wishes

of the deceased and... And...

And his widow.

It was their instructions
for the memorial service.

At a toxic waste site
with the press in attendance?

There was no press invited.

No. This is just

Mensana's friends.

It was a political act.

You and the choir represented
the Abundant Life Church.

And the Hanstown site,
by the way,

isn't even polluted.

It was cleaned up
with EPA superfunds.

- Well, Hanstown...

- No, no, of course not,
but just give me some credit,
all right?

I'm in the energy business.

It's my business
to stay informed.

(SIGHS) Look, sorry.

Reverend Toller
didn't understand

the implications here.

- May I ask a question?

- **BALQ:**

Will God forgive us?

Will God forgive us for what
we're doing to his creation?

That's what Mensana asked me
when I visited him.

This... There's been
a lot of loose talk
about environmental change.
There is scientific consensus.
Ninety-seven percent...

The man who says nothing
always seems more intelligent.
Why couldn't I just
keep silent?

It's a complicated subject.
Not really.

I mean, who benefits?

Cui bono? Who profits?

That's what I keep
asking myself.

Besides the Biblical call
to stewardship,
who profits when we soil
our own nest?

What's to be gained...

Can we just agree
to keep politics
out of
the reconsecration service?

- Yes.

- Yes, but this isn't politics.

I mean, what God wants
is for...

Oh, you, you, you, you...

You know the mind of God?

You spoke to him, personally?

He told you His plans
for Earth?

Look, I understand,
you're upset.

I mean, you found the body,
correct?

Yes.

How?

I was supposed to meet him.

And he texted me, and...

A change of location.

BALQ:

And I went there

and he was dead.

So you counseled him,

Reverend?

Yes.

You counseled him,

then he shot himself?

JEFFERS:

Yes.

Well, I think you need

to step back, Reverend,

and take a look

at your own life

before you criticize others.

Hmm?

TOLLER:

rode the park trail.

I had not ridden a bicycle,

I think, in 20 years.

I was afraid I would fall.

It's amazing the simple

curative power of exercise.

It's God given.

Thank you again.

Michael and I used to cycle

twice a week,

and I've missed it so much.

No. I enjoyed it.

It's been a long time.

(CHUCKLES)

But it was under protest.

- I... I asked my doctor.

- Really? Still.

Um, can I ask you
another favor?
Sure.
Could you box up
Michael's things?
Or find somebody to do it?
You sure you want to give them
away so quickly?
Not, like... Not give it away,
just, you know.
Just box them up.
It just... You know, I feel...
It's just difficult
to be around
so many smells and memories.
You know?

TOLLER:

I can do it.

MARY:

TOLLER:

what's next?
Um, the rent's paid for
for two months,
so there's no hurry.
But, um, I'm gonna stay
with my sister
and my brother-in-law.
- Hmm. Are you?
- Until the baby is born.
So you'll relocate there?
Yeah. I think so.
She contacted an obstetrician.
Are we talking pink or blue?
- Blue!
- Blue.
Blue!
- Ah! Congratulations.
- Thanks.
- That's wonderful.
- Yeah.
Oh, hey, uh... I have

a question for you,
if, uh... If it's not
too painful.
Do you think he, uh...
He really would have
harmed someone?
Um, he'd been a part of some
non-violent protests.
We both had.
He'd been put in jail.
He had a temper. I mean,
he'd start yelling at police,
but no, I don't
think he was...
No. I don't think
he was violent.
I just, um...
I can't help
but keep wondering
what I should have
done differently.
He didn't want to live.
He was not a religious man,
you know.
He didn't care for the church.
That was me.
I was the one
who asked him to come.
I was raised in the church
and I never
could quite let it go.
I'd be in a strange city,
and I would just go
to a church and sit down,
you know?
I was the spiritual one.
Thanks.
Yeah. I'll, uh... I'm gonna
go get some boxes.
I'll come back
for the clothes.
Okay.
Uh, Reverend? Um,
would you pray with me?

I just... I find it difficult
to do it alone.
Just, the words,
just don't come.
Are you uncomfortable
with me asking you that?
No. No, no, no.
Of course not. Yeah.
Okay.
Dear Heavenly Father,
we invite you into this room,
into our heart...
I held her hand, I spoke,
and the words came
out of my mouth.
"By thy words,
you shall be justified,
"and by thy words,
you shall be condemned."
I can no longer
ignore my health.
I have postponed
my checkup too often.
Yesterday I could literally
barely stand.
No, I have not lost my faith.
(AIR HISSING)
(COUGHS)
"And the rich man said
I will pull down my barns,
"and build greater..."
(COUGHING)
"And I will say to my soul,
"take thine ease, eat, drink,
and be merry.
"But God said
unto his disciples,
"take no thought
for your life,
"what ye shall eat..."
(LABORED BREATHING)
"Neither for the body,
what ye shall put on.
"The life is more than meat,

"and the body
is more than raiment."
Thus ends the reading
of the Lord. Praise be God.
When did
he come back?
Well, he was out
most of Friday.
So he went to Albany
for his checkup?
I asked him, but he didn't
give me any details.
Uh, you know how he is.
Perhaps I can check.
Esther.
It's just...
- I know. I know.
- (SIGHS)
- Okay. All right. Bye.
- See ya.
We'd like to do
a gastroscopic exam.
We lower a fiber optic camera
down the throat and esophagus,
and take a look around.
It's an outpatient procedure,
local anesthetic.
You should be able
to leave by mid-afternoon.
Still, that doesn't...
That doesn't sound too good.
Well, we'd like to check
for evidence of malignancy.
Cancer.
Cancer's not the fearsome
medical foe it once was.
Mmm-hmm.
What's the...
The treatment for that?
It depends on how far advanced
the tumor is.
But...
You stated you've been
experiencing discomfort.

Uh-huh. Yeah.

Six months?

Well, diet, medication, chemo,
even surgery.

We have a variety
of diagnostic tools.

Have you had
any bloody stools?

Recently?

Okay. I'd like to schedule
the gastroscopy
as soon as possible.

We have an open slot
week after next.

Okay.

What's your diet?

My diet?

Um, I'm hungry, I eat.

- You smoke?

- No.

Drink?

Mmm, in moderation.

That needs to end.

I'm gonna call in
a prescription to help
- with the stomach pain.

- Huh.

And I want you to take
nutritional supplements.

Okay.

Are you in pain now?

No. No. I feel good.

We tend to think
that anxiety and worry
are simply an indication
of how wise we are,
yet it is
a much better indication
of how wicked we are.

Fretting arises
from our determination
to have our own way.
Our Lord never worried
and was never anxious.

I'll be back in a bit.

JEFFERS:

was to accomplish
not his own plans...

Reverend?

Hi Esther.

I... I didn't know
you were coming.

Well, Joel's office called.

They want to talk to me about
the Reconsecration program.

Did... Did they talk to you?

Uh, I'll be at First Reformed.

And Stanley will be
with the full choir here
for the simulcast.

Mmm-hmm. Nice.

The acoustics will
be wonderful. I mean...

Stop.

Really wonderful.

Did you hear from Albany?

Yeah. I did.

Well, what did they say?

Nothing. Just some more tests.

A gastroscopy.

And you know this how?

I called.

- I'm worried about you.

- Leave me alone.

- I just want to try...

- I know what you want!

All right? And I cannot bear
your concern,

your constant hovering.

Your neediness.

You, you're

a constant reminder

of my own personal

inadequacies and failings.

You want something that never
was and never will be.

Don't make me do this,

'cause I...
Esther. Esther. Esther.
Pull yourself together. Okay?
Look at yourself.
You don't take care
of yourself.
I despise you.
I despise
what you bring out in me.
Your concerns are petty.
You are a stumbling block.
(SIGHS)

TOLLER:

much better.
I awoke early, clear-headed
and immediately set about
my daily tasks.
"The nations raged..."
(TOLLER COUGHING)
"But your wrath came,
"and the time for the dead
to be judged,
"and for rewarding
your servants,
"and prophets and saints,
"and for those
who fear your name,
"both small and great,
"and for destroying
the destroyers of the Earth."

Revelations 11:

I have removed
the previous pages.
They were written
in a delirium.
But I am determined
to continue.
It's hard to struggle
against torpor.
I must set pen to paper.
(KNOCKS ON DOOR)
Shit.

(SIGHS)

TOLLER:

MARY:

Yeah, of course. Come on in.
Come on, come on.
Come on, come in.
Do you need anything?
Um, do you want...
Um, can I take your coat?

- MARY:

- Hey, are you all right?
- Um...
- Let me get this.
Uh, no.
I'm just,
I'm really frightened.
I'm like I'm frightened
of everything.
Uh, I woke up
and my heart was pounding
and I... I thought,
like, the roof,
the ceiling,
was just gonna fall in.
Um, so I... I had to get out.
Yeah. Mary?
And I just drove around,
and... And I...
I didn't put any make-up on.
Sorry.
I'm glad you came.
Do you want some, uh...
Some water, some tea...
Without warning,
this dark curtain just fell.
I'm... I'm scared
of everything.
Well, you did the right thing
coming here.
I just can't stop my thoughts.
They just keep

going on and on.
They repeat and repeat.
Did this ever happen
before Michael's death?
A little. Yeah.
Not like this though.
I read online that, um,
they used to believe
that pregnancy made you happy,
but now they feel like
it just makes your feelings
more extreme.
Michael...
He was just really strong.
How so?
Um, he listened. He was kind.
We used to do this thing
called
the Magical Mystery Tour.
It sounds silly. But, um...
We would, uh, share a joint
and lay on top of each other
fully clothed.
We would try to get as much
body-to-body contact
as possible.
We'd have our hands out and...
We would just look straight
into each other's eyes
and move them in unison,
like right, left, right, left.
And then we would breathe
in rhythm.
You want me to do this?
(CHUCKLES)
No. I didn't mean that.
All right.
I mean, I...
Yeah. I mean, yeah.
I guess I...
Yeah. I guess I did.
Okay. Uh, show me.
Well, you lay on your back,
and with your arms

and your legs stretched out.
Do we need music?
No, we just listen
to the breaths.
Just lie down?
Yeah. And then, yeah.
(BOTH BREATHING DEEPLY)
(HORNS BLARING)
Go, go, go, go! Come on,
come on, come on!
Come on, Benny.
Hey, guys.
Let's all get seated
in the first pew right here.
All the way down.
All right. Good job, guys.
Okay, so last week,
we read The Patchwork Path
about
the Underground Railroad,
which was not a railroad,
but... Rosa?
It was a slave trail.
It was an escape route
from the South to the North.
And this church,
First Reformed,
was one of the stops on
that route. Reverend Toller?
Yeah. Slaves, uh,
fleeing north to Canada
were often helped, fed, hidden
by homes and churches
along this route.
Calvin Verlander
was the dominee, the minister
here at First Reformed.
And he was very active
in the Abolitionist Movement.
He assisted in...
No. Miss Suriya,
let me try this.
Uh, why don't you all stand up
for a second?

Take a look right here.
Do you see one part of wood
that seems different
than the other part
of the wood?

KIDS:

You all see that, don't you?
But does this seem
a little bit
- like a secret door? Hmm?

- KIDS:

- Yeah. What's your name?
- Benny.

Benny, will you give me
a hand?

- Come on over here.
- Mmm-hmm.

You see, there used to be
a pew over this.
And they would move it, and
then they would lift this up.
Can you do it? Help me.
Yes! Oh!
Come around everybody.
Slaves would hide in here.
Sometimes whole families.
Be really careful. All right.
Can you imagine that?
In the dark. The air hot,
shaking with fear.
The sound of the slave
hunter's horses outside.
On their knees,
holding each other's hands,
praying for God to save them?

TOLLER:

to pack up
anything here in the kitchen?

MARY:

Thanks.

(SIGHS) I'd love to meet
your sister sometime.

- You wanna come to Buffalo?
- If I'm invited. I'd love to.
- You gonna visit me?
- I would, yeah.

I'd love to meet Michael Jr.
You've been such a help to me.
My great-grandfather
was a pastor
in Muskegon, Michigan.
The Saint of God.
And, uh, the bank in town
was a two-story building,
the first building
to have an elevator.
And one Monday,
Granddad, uh,
got the boys all together
and they went into town
to deposit church funds,
as they did every Monday.
And they needed to go talk
to the managers.
They got on the elevator.
And he had a heart attack.
And he... He took off his hat.
Apparently he always
wore a hat.
And he took off his hat
and he said,
"Boys, take off my shoes.
"I'm standing on Holy Ground."
And then he died.
Somewhere between
the first and second floor.
Um, I think about that story
when I think about Michael.
'Cause I believe
he was standing
on Holy Ground when he died.
(SIGHS)
Thank you.
So I'll see you in Buffalo?

I think I'm gonna go
to the, uh, Reconsecration.

Oh. No, you...

You don't need to do that.

- But, I... I want to.

- Yeah, but it's not necessary.

Yeah, but you've
been there for me,
and I want to be there
for you.

It's very nice of you
to offer,
um, but it's just
a bunch of rich guys
patting each other
on the back.

- But you're gonna be there.

- But I have to be there.

- So I'm gonna go.

- Please don't come.

Okay? I don't want you
to come. You understand?

Okay.

Right. Have a nice evening.

(SIGHS)

"Be strong in the Lord
and in His mighty power.
"Put on the full armor of God,
"so that you can
take your stand
"against the devil's schemes.
"For our struggle is not
against flesh and blood,
"but against the rulers,
"against the authorities,
"against the powers
of this dark world."

(SIGHS)

(SIGHS)

Balq Home Products,
makers of paper goods,
fertilizers,
everyday items
for the household,

was among the first companies
to realize the need to address
environmental concerns.

Sir? Are you joining us?

This unit makes
recyclable plastic markers.
Balq has facilities
or production arrangements
with 18 countries
around the world.

TOLLER:

I had Miso and fish.
Such simple pleasures.
Why do we deny ourselves?
(MEN LAUGHING)

Every act of preservation
is an act of creation.
Everything preserved
renews creation.

It's how we participate
in creation.
I have found another form
of prayer.

(KNOCKS ON DOOR)
Reverend Toller. Come on in.
Close the door.

Why don't you take a seat?
We're concerned about you.
Who is?
How's your health?
I'm having some tests.
Hmm? Have you got any results?
No. No.

What about your diet?
You know, I'm gonna be honest,
you just don't look so good.
I've had some...

Some stomach issues.
And I understand
you've been drinking.
Hm. What? (CHUCKLES) It's just
a little wine with dinner.
- Wine?

- Yeah. Yeah.

Well, that's not recommended
for someone who has
stomach problems.
I understand, all right?
I'll... I'll start taking
better care of myself.
You're always in the Garden.
Even Jesus wasn't always
in the Garden,
on his knees, sweating blood.
He was on the Mount.
He was in the marketplace.
He was in the temple.
But you,
you're always in the Garden.
For you every hour
is the Darkest Hour.
I wasn't aware
that I had offended.
Jesus doesn't want
our suffering.

- He suffered for us.

- Mmm-mmm.

He wants our commitment
and our obedience.
And what of His creation?
The Heavens declare
the glory of God.
God is present everywhere,
in every plant, every river,
every tiny insect.
The whole world
is a manifestation
of His Holy presence.
I think this is an issue
where... Where the church
can lead.

But... But they say nothing.

- The...

- (SIGHS)

The U.S. Congress still denies
climate change?
Where were we when

these people were elected?
The, the, the...
We know who spoke
for big business. Right?
But who spoke for God?
"The creation waits
in eager expectation
"of liberation from bondage."

That's Romans 8:

You understand?
So, we should pollute
so God can restore?
We should sin
so God can forgive?
I don't think
that's what the Apostle meant.
I think we're supposed to look
with the eyes of Jesus
into every living...
You don't live
in the real world.
You don't.
You, you are a minister
at a tourist church
that no one attends.
Do you have any idea what
it takes to do God's work?
I'm trying to...
To, to maintain a mission
of this size?
The staffing, the outreach,
the amount of people
that we touch each day.
Who's that priest
that you like so much?
- Thomas Merton?
- Thomas Merton. He didn't live
- in the real world either!
- Yes, he did! He would...
No. He was a monk who lived
in a monastery in Kentucky
and wrote books!
Well, somebody has

to do something!
It's the Earth that hangs
in the balance.
Well what if this is His plan?
What if we just can't see it?
You think God wants
to destroy his creation?
He did once.
For 40 days and 40 nights.
Look, Abundant Life,
we're with you.
Okay? We care.
We do. And I know,
this is a hard time for you.
But we're gonna help you
with that.
Once we get through
the reconsecration service,
you, you need to go to rehab.
You need to go check yourself
into a medical institution.
All right?
Maybe go to Nicaragua
and preach the gospel
or build houses.
But do something
in the real world.
And if you can't
do the ceremony,
I'll understand that.
You're expected to be there,
but look.
We can just say that
you were sick, which is true.
No. No. It's not...
It's not about the ceremony.
All right? I can... I will...
I... I want to be there.
I have to be there.
It's my church.
It's 250 years.
I want to be there. I want
to introduce you. Please?
Well, Ed Balq has decided

that he would like
to make comments,
so the Governor
will introduce him.
Will that be a problem?
Not at all. Not at all.
Well good. Good.
Listen. We'll get through
this reconsecration.
It'll be special.
And then we'll deal
with these other issues.
Thank you.

(TICKING)

(ALARM RINGING)

Thanks.

- (MUSAC PLAYING ON SPEAKERS)

- (INDISTINCT CHATTER)

(INDISTINCT CHATTER)

(ORGAN PLAYING)

Where is, um...

Where is Reverend Toller?

I'm not sure, ma'am. Inside.

(WHIMPERING)

(MUFFLED SCREAMING)

(ORGAN CONTINUES PLAYING)

(INDISTINCT CHATTER)

(GRUNTING)

(BREATHING HEAVILY)

- Have you seen him?

- No.

- Where is he?

- I don't know.

Toller!

- (BANGING ON DOOR)

- Toller! You in there?

(BREATHING HEAVILY)

(SIGHS)

Begin the service.

(GRUNTING)

(GROANING)

(WOMAN SINGING)

(SINGING) What a fellowship

What a joy divine

Leaning on
The everlasting arms
What a blessedness
What a peace is mine
Leaning on
The everlasting arms
Leaning
Leaning
Safe and secure
From all alarms
Leaning
Leaning
Leaning on
The everlasting arms
Oh, how sweet to walk
In this pilgrim way
Leaning on
The everlasting arms
Oh, how bright the path
Grows from day to day
Leaning on
The everlasting arms
Leaning
Leaning
Safe and secure
From all alarms
Leaning
Leaning
Leaning on
The everlasting arms
What have I to dread
What have I to fear
Leaning on
Ernst?
The everlasting arms
I have blessed peace
With my Lord so near
Leaning on
The everlasting arms
Leaning
Leaning
Safe and secure
From all alarms
Leaning

Leaning
Leaning on
The everlasting arms
Leaning
Leaning
Leaning on
The everlasting arms
Leaning