

A Lenten Journey with Jesus

What is Lent?

Lent is a season of forty days, not counting Sundays, which traditionally begins on Ash Wednesday and ends on the Saturday before Easter Sunday.

Our English word “Lent” comes from the Anglo-Saxon word for “lengthen” and refers to the lengthening days of spring. Lent is a season of preparation for the celebration of Easter. Lent is to Easter what Advent is to Christmas. Lent is a time to focus on the hope of Jesus Christ through his death on the Cross and his Resurrection.

Originally, Lent was a period of fasting and preparation for baptism by converts to Christianity. Over time, Lent evolved into a time of spiritual reflection, repentance, self-denial by Christians. Nowadays, many Christians (both Catholic and Protestant) prepare for the celebration of Easter through Scripture reading, prayer, and through acts of fasting, self-sacrifice (giving something up), and giving to those in need. Ultimately, Lent is not about what we do; these activities are meant to focus ourselves on what Jesus did.

Because Sundays are always “little Easters,” the penitential and self-denying spirit of Lent is tempered each Sunday with joyful expectation of the Resurrection!

As we ***Journey with Jesus through Lent*** this year, we encourage you to do three things to heighten your experience of Christ’s transforming power in and through your life:

1. **Read** a selected passage from the Gospel of John to tune your heart to discern Jesus’ presence and activity in and around you. *(See the Lenten Daily Reading Plan on the church website.)*
2. **Pray** daily for two things:
 - Ask God to search your heart and reveal any attitude or action in your life from which you need to repent (turn)
 - Ask God to draw one or more unbelieving friends who don’t know Christ personally into a real relationship with Jesus. Ask God to open doors for you to love, serve, and share the truth of Easter with them.
3. **Fast** from eating, a convenience, or pleasurable activity 1 day each week to heighten your attention toward, and deepen your love and devotion for, Christ and to aid you in praying for your unbelieving friend(s). *(If fasting is new to you, see the Fasting Guide on the church website.)*
4. **Engage in at least one act of charity** (kindness/giving) each week. *Give something to someone else in need. It could be a financial give, a gift of your time, an act of service, a note of encouragement, or help with a special project. Ask God to show you a need and meet it in Jesus’ name each week.*