

# A Guide for the Discipline of Lent



## Beginning and Keeping Your Discipline

Begin with prayer, asking the Holy Spirit for guidance in choosing those disciplines which will help you to grow in faith. Prayerfully dedicate all your choices to God as a commitment for the six weeks of Lent and ask that your discipline enriches your relationship with God.

After beginning your discipline, it is not necessary to share your choices, unless doing so would help you to be more accountable. But don't be too hard on yourself or too legalistic. The goal of Lenten discipline is to grow closer to God, not self-flagellation or self-glorification. If you break your discipline, you will certainly not be condemned. But breaking promises to God is not to be taken lightly, so quietly repent and start over again. Even the disciples abandoned Christ. Yet all repented and were welcomed by Jesus after the resurrection.

## Prayer

Daily prayer might include:

- Make the sign of the cross on yourself and speak the words of invocation (“*In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen*”). Then simply be quiet for a moment in God's presence.
- To the above, you can add one or more of the following:
  - a reading from a Lent devotional book, *OR*
  - a reading from Luther's *Small Catechism*, *OR*
  - a reading from the daily lectionary beginning on p. 1123 (ELW) *OR*

- The gospel reading from this past weekend, *OR*
- A confession from the ELW p. 240, p. 252 or p. 258, *OR*
- A favorite hymn (sing or meditate on it)
- Close your prayer time with the Lord's Prayer

### Fasting

Fasting comes to us from Judaism and was recommended by Jesus both in example and teaching. It is a practice that is designed to strengthen the spiritual life by weakening one's attraction to the pleasures of the senses. Fasting is always coupled with prayer.

Since ancient times, the season of Lent has been marked by fasting and abstinence. Fridays in particular have been a special day of fasting because it was the day of Christ's death. Fasting does not necessarily mean giving up all food. More frequently, it is the giving up of a particular kind of food or food group (sweets, fatty foods, meat). Water is never given up in a fast. In addition, children under 16, people over 65, those who are ill, on medication, or pregnant are traditionally excused from fasting.

Abstinence from some activity (watching TV, movies, technology) on certain days, at certain times or throughout the season is another way to observe a Lenten fast. This is designed to give more time for prayer and spiritual work.

Here are some suggestions for fasting:

- Fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, with only one simple meal, without meat.
- Refrain from eating meat on all Fridays in Lent, substituting fish or vegetables.
- Eliminate a food or food group for the season.
- Fast before receiving communion in Lent.
- Abstain from or limit a favorite activity for the season and spend more time in prayer, Bible study, meditation reading devotional material, or helping others.
- Don't just give up something that you would have given up anyway for your health or diet. Make your fast a voluntary self-denial that you offer to God in prayer.

## Almsgiving and Works of Love

The intention of this discipline is to connect our faith in God's love for us with actions that demonstrate love for others in the world. Consider one or more of the following works of love:

- Collect your loose change or put aside a dollar (or other amount) each day and donate what you collected to ELCA Hunger Appeal or to your local food pantry.
- Go out of your way to do something nice for someone at least once a week during Lent.
- Sponsor a third-world entrepreneur through [Kiva.org](http://Kiva.org) or another organization.
- Make an extra donation to your favorite charity.
- Volunteer some time at a local charity.
- Make a donation to the Blessing Box.
- Visit a homebound person and/or offer to run errands for them. If you need a name, contact the pastor.

When doing these or other works of love, meditate upon Christ's words: *"As you do it for the least of these, you do it for me"* (Matthew 25:40)

## Prayer Station

Throughout Lent, while the building is unlocked, feel free to avail yourself of the prayer station set up in the main sanctuary. Each week the prayer station that focuses on a portion of the Sermon on the Mount. See the back page for specific readings.



## 2019 Lent Schedule, Gospels & Midweek Prayer Themes

- March 6**            **Ash Wednesday**  
7 a.m., Noon & 7 p.m.  
Imposition of Ashes & Communion  
Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21
- March 10**           **Lent 1** - Luke 4:1-13
- March 13**           **Midweek Worship:** Matthew 5:1-16  
Noon        Worship & lunch in Fellowship Hall  
7:00 p.m. Worship & snacks in Fellowship Hall  
*The schedule is the same each week.*
- March 17**           **Lent 2** - Luke 13:31-35
- March 20**           **Midweek Worship:** Matthew 5:17-48
- March 24**           **Lent 3** - Luke 13:1-9
- March 27**           **Midweek Worship:** Matthew 6:19-34
- March 31**           **Lent 4** - Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32
- April 3**             **Midweek Worship:** Matthew 7:1-12
- April 7**             **Lent 5** - John 12:1-8
- April 10**           **Midweek Worship:** Matthew 7:13-29
- April 14**           **Palm/Passion Sunday** - Luke 23:1-49
- April 15**           **Holy Monday** - John 12:1-11
- April 16**           **Holy Tuesday** - John 12:20-36
- April 17**           **Holy Wednesday** - John 13:21-32
- April 18**           **Maundy Thursday** - John 13:1-17, 31b-35  
Worship at noon and 7:00 p.m.
- April 19**           **Good Friday** - John 18:1-19:42  
Worship at noon at First Methodist Church  
Tenebrae at 7:00 p.m. at St. Peter
- April 20**           **Easter Eve Worship** at 5:30 p.m.
- April 21**           **Resurrection Day** - Luke 24:1-12  
Worship at 6:30, 8:00 and 10:30 a.m.