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Encounter Christ...Grow in faith...Love as Christ loved...Tell the Story

Do something or don't do something but do something!

Inspired title, huh? Lent starts on the 6th of this month. “What are you giving for Lent?” is a question that has long been asked in the Roman Catholic church. Of course that would be in addition to giving up eating meat on Ash Wednesday and Fridays in Lent.

Giving up something for Lent has also become much more common in non-Roman Catholic traditions. In addition, there have been many suggestions for things to add to your routine during Lent...spiritual practices...serving...giving and so on. Several options are listed elsewhere in this newsletter.

In the early church, Lent was a 40 day period of penitence and very strict fasting in preparation for baptism on Easter. Meat, fish, butter and eggs were forbidden. This, by the way, is one theory why pancakes are so popular on Shrove Tuesday, aka Mardi Gras...they're a good way to get rid of butter and eggs, which wouldn't keep for 40 days.

The idea is that the 40 days of Lent correspond to the 40 days Jesus spent fasting in the wilderness before his temptation by Satan.

So do we have to give up something? Should we? Or should we add something? And why would we anyway?

Don't do something? Or do something?

First, let's say this. Lent disciplines or practices aren't something we do to earn God's favor. We already have that. The incarnation, death and resurrection of Jesus are our assurance of God's love, forgiveness and salvation.

But we also know that our lives can often go by in a blur of daily demands...demands of school, work, family, kids' activities, and other obligations. We can miss so much of the holy in the world by buzzing past it.

Changing things up a little during times like Advent and Lent can help us carve out a space where things are different and we are forced to pay a little more attention.

So maybe there is something you do which numbs you or helps you escape...shopping, alcohol, food, social media, frantic busyness, television...things that you know keep you from being connected to God or that keep you from meaningful real connection to others, or even connection to who you really are. Those are the things to consider giving up during Lent.

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Or maybe you are someone who can better connect by doing something you don't usually do...committing to daily meditation or spiritual practices...volunteering at an organization that contributes to the well-being of creation...human and non-human. Or try some of the things in the various opportunities listed below this article.

Maybe learning new things is important for your spiritual and emotional health, but you haven't taken the time. That might be your thing to add. Maybe you are out of shape and struggle to find energy to be more active. Maybe exercise is what you need to add.

And maybe you just need more rest and quiet.

So, maybe your call will be to not do something...to give something up. Maybe it will be to do something. But whichever it is, do something that will set this time of Lent apart....something that will help you focus on God's amazing grace and love, something that will help you connect to the Spirit in and around us, something that will help you connect you to others...and connect you to you.

In Christ's peace,

Pastor Kris

Lent Resources/Ideas for you

- Nebraska Synod [“We Are Church Together”](#) devotional. Scroll down and click devotional to download. I can also print copies
- Luther Seminary Lenten devotional based on [“I heard the voice of Jesus say”](#) I can also print copies
- Check out Pastor Nadia Bolz-Weber's [40 Ways to Keep Lent Holy](#). There are lots of other online lists if you don't find this one helpful. I can print copies if you want one
- Contemplative Monk is a Facebook page that will have a closed group called A Lenten Journey
- Check out some of the contemplative activities at [Contemplate Lincoln](#). I go to some of them so if you want someone to go with let me know
- Or dig out your Advent newsletter or find it on our website and explore the contemplative practices there
- Volunteer at Matt Talbot, City Mission, Center for People in Need, Humane Society or other animal shelter, or whatever seems to draw you
- Get outside—take a walk and name things you see to yourself as a way to stay in the moment

February Calendar

March 3	9:00 am—Worship with Holy Communion 9:45 am—Sunday school 12:00 noon—council retreat
March 6	6:30 pm—Ash Wednesday worship with Holy Communion and the Imposition of Ashes
March 10	9:00 am—Worship
March 13	6:00 pm—Lent midweek at Bethlehem
March 17	9:00 am—Worship 9:45 am—Sunday school
March 20	6:00 pm Lent midweek at Zion
March 24	9:00 am—Worship
March 27	6:00 pm Lent midweek at Bethlehem
March 31	10:30 am—Worship

Lent and Holy Week Schedule

March 6 Ash Wednesday—worship at 6:30 pm

Lent Midweek services begin Wednesday March 13 at Bethlehem.

Supper at 6 followed by discussion/reflection

After the discussion we'll move to the sanctuary for a time of worship and prayer

Palm Sunday—April 14

Maundy Thursday—April 18—worship at 8:00 pm

Good Friday—April 19—worship at 6:30 pm at Bethlehem

Easter—April 21—Easter Breakfast at 9:15 am, Worship at 10:15

If you have ideas or items for the newsletter, please let me know. I'd be glad to put in things of importance to you and your family, to our congregation and in the community around us.