



SOME ASSEMBLY REQUIRED

St. James' United Church Christian Education Committee Newsletter

Welcome

From Pamela Norman, Chair of the Christian Education Committee

We miss you! We miss gathering for potluck and games, or a hot soup luncheon. We miss chatting over the din of the whirring sewing machines or the strum of the ukulele. We miss the fellowship and hot coffee of the writer's circle. We miss all the ways we gathered together in fellowship and simply took it for granted that we would.

Fellowship is a wonderful thing. It is, in many ways, an invisible source of nourishment that strengthens us and supports us. Just when we needed friends and family the most, however, we were once again thrust into bubbles of isolation. Yet we still managed to find ways to connect, to reach out and lift each other's spirits, console each other in uncertain times. Virtual church, outdoor gatherings and zoom meetings help us navigate this new normal.

As we enter another period of small bubbles, the CE Committee is reaching out with this newsletter in the spirit of fellowship. The season of Springtime and Easter will soon be upon us. We invite you to follow along in our Faith Formation Lenten newsletter with the inspiration and activities to prepare our hearts and our souls for Easter.

Longer, brighter days, with a stronger sun will bring us into a renewed season of growth. Above all it is a season of hope and of faith. Have faith that we will gather again in the not too distant future. We miss you.

Pamela

faith [feyth]

noun

1. confidence or trust in a person or thing: *faith in another's ability.*
2. belief that is not based on proof: *He had faith that the hypothesis would be substantiated by fact.*
3. belief in God or in the doctrines or teachings of religion: *the firm faith of the Pilgrims.*
4. a system of religious belief: *the Christian faith; the Jewish faith.*
5. the observance of this obligation; fidelity to one's promise, oath, allegiance, etc.: *He was the only one who proved his faith during our recent troubles.*
6. *Christian Theology.* the trust in God and in His promises as made through Christ and the Scriptures by which humans are justified or saved.

Reflections on a COVID Lent

From Rev. Ettie Murphy, Member of the Christian Education Committee

As a member of the Christian Education Committee I was asked to prepare a piece for our Lenten Newsletter and I am glad to do so. Over 14 months ago now the coronavirus was suspected in Wuhan - what seemed so far away was soon on our doorstep and today we are in our biggest outbreak to date. While meeting on zoom and attending worship virtually I miss the camaraderie of face-to-face interactions. With that in mind and with lots of hope I share the following words with you.

In the almost year since COVID-19 was first identified in our province - so much has happened. Just as we were preparing for our annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem we likewise began to live into the unimaginable that confronted us.

Communal Shrove Tuesday (pancake) suppers became quiet stay safe, stay at home affairs. Traditional Ash Wednesday rituals and Lenten Bible studies slowly changed venue to online information packages or gatherings via zoom. Church doors were closed as leaders quickly learned the art of live-streaming.

With so much more knowledge, understanding, and ways of adapting our life-style to pandemic times a year later, together, we prepare our minds and hearts to accompany Jesus and his other followers on our yearly journey to Jerusalem. As we visit familiar places and hear well-known parts

of our story (Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday), let us be alert to what is taking place. Let us be watchful for new insights into Jesus message for living. The message, that on the mountain top (at the Transfiguration) Jesus was pointing us toward another mountain - the mountain city of Jerusalem and the magnificent event of Easter Day Let us take the lesson of Easter Day - its joy and hope and apply it to our historical time. While we may not truly conceptualize the way through the murkiness that this pandemic is bringing about in our lifetime; let us trust with the conviction of the Easter Day blessing of resurrection that there will be new dawns and new beginning places.

As new pandemic challenges arise in our communities may God bless us with the grace of Jesus and the first followers to tread cautiously yet go boldly toward Easter Day and the future.

*Blessings for peace, safety,
wisdom, and love.*

Ettie



About Lent and Easter 2021

Adele Halliday and Suzanne L. Vinson

The Season of Lent – stretching from Ash Wednesday to just before Easter Sunday – is a six-week journey and preparation for the celebration of Easter. This year’s season is explored through the lenses of the gospels of Mark and John. On this path to Jerusalem, we also travel with our ancestors in the faith – Noah, Sarah and Abraham, psalm writers, and Jeremiah, and explore themes of life, love, community, and remembering.

Two strong threads weave through this Season of Lent: caring for God’s creation and working towards justice in the world. Lent is a time to re-orient towards God, and care for one another and Earth! It is a time when people might give something up. Perhaps, this year we might take something on – such as a commitment to care for Earth or to advocate for justice. The celebration of Easter Day could be a celebration of making a better world.

Planning for the Season of Easter brings the spirit of Easter into the now. Gardening and growth and new life are explored; we listen through doubt and anticipation. We imagine the early church gathering together, trying to figure out how to be a part of the movement of God. We ponder how we are to be a part of the movement of God. Easter comes, again and again, offering us a chance to ask these questions and discover the answers that unfold like blooms. How then do we live? How then do we die?

Eastertide is remembered in the way we spent the previous Easter, and we will remember how the world paused to care for one another through the health crisis of Covid-19. “How then do we live?”

We are called to live as the Body of Christ, offering ripples of love, kindness, care, and support to those who need God’s love the most. And we all need God’s love.





Ash Wednesday at Home

Susan Sheppard, DLM

With the new Covid restriction we will not be holding our annual Ash Wednesday service. Here is a brief service you can do at home, either by yourself or with family members.

Preparing Ashes

Privately or with members of your household, take a few minutes on February 17 to write down your concerns and fears on a piece(s) of paper. Find a small tin can, glass plate or bowl, then go outdoors and burn your paper in the can or plate. When the ash has cooled add a few drops of olive oil (vegetable oil will work too) and mix.

Service

CALL TO WORSHIP

The season of Lent calls us to journey along the edge,
to anticipate that final trip to Jerusalem.

Lent call us to the cutting edge,
when the wheat falls to the ground and new life
comes forth.

Lent not only calls us to give up something,
but also invites us to participate in the mystery
of God-with-us.

By your grace, call us from grief into gladness,
despair into hope,
estrangement into right relations with each other
and with earth.

(Light a Candle)

OPENING PRAYER

God our Creator,

You have formed us out of the dust of the earth.

As we are marked with the ashes of hopes and dreams,
may we also be marked with the ashes of your love.

Remind us that though we return to the dust,
you are never far from us.

Let us release what needs releasing,
and truly offer it to you as our fast or repentance.

Amen.

LITURGY OF THE ASHES

One: When we burn away all that we are and all that we have,
when we burn away all that we think and feel,
when we burn away all attachment and ego,
we are reduced to this (indicate ashes).

Carbon, dust, ash.

It has no form and very little substance.

It is virtually nothing.

And yet, out of the ashes can come new life.

Will I/you let it all fall away?

Will I/you let it burn?

Will I/you reduce myself/yourself to nothing,
so that God can do something new with me/
you?



PSALM 51:SPRING CLEANING FOR THE SOUL
(Everyday Psalms -James Taylor)

Scrub me clean, Lord

Rub me down gently;

By your touch, show how much you love me;

Flush away my failures;

Sponge off the stains of constant compromise;

Help me clean up my act.

You don't have to tell me-I know too well what I have been doing.

I know I have let you down;

I have betrayed your trust in me.

You warned me;

You have every right to be angry.

Don't blame yourself because I blew it;

I was born this way.

How can I help it? I'm only human.

So wash out my mind, and rinse out my heart.

New life starts on the inside, with knowing myself.

Scrub my spirit clean, and swirl my soiled nature down the drain;

Let me step out fresh and sparkling.

Mend my fractured spirits

Turn a blind eye to my faults,

And cherish the scars where I have fallen down.

A fresh start begins with a pure heart, oh God, so let me share your spirit.

I do not want to be cut off from you;

I do not want to live without you;

Take me back into your good graces.

Help me, Lord, for I really want to please you.

One: When we burn away all that have done that we ought not to have done,
when we burn away all that we have not done that we ought to have done,
when we burn away all that is not love,
our hearts are ready to return to God.

Dip two fingers into the ash and oil mixture and make a sign of the cross in the palm of your other hand. As you are making the sign of the cross, repeat the phrase from Psalm 51, "Scrub me clean, Lord." Let this be our prayer to begin the journey of Lent...the journey of our return to God.

PRAYER

Loving God,
gracious and merciful,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love,
we return to you with all our heart.
See, we have marked ourselves with a sign.
We are the ones who will loose the bonds of
injustice.
We are the ones who will undo the things of the
yoke.
Let your light break forth like the dawn,
and your healing spring up quickly.
Guide us, satisfy us, make us strong. Amen.

BLESSING

Go into this holy Lent as people of God.
You have considered what is yours to cling to,
and what you need to release.
You have received a sign of your mortality,
and a sign of your faith.
Go into this holy Lent as the people of God.
Seek reconciliation.
Discover the promises of God, and live into them.

Amen.



Lenten Weekly Readings

Lent 1 - February 21, 2021

Signs of Promise - A rainbow and Jesus' baptismal waters provide signs of new beginnings and God's sustaining presence.

- Genesis 9:8-17
- Psalm 25:1-10
- 1Peter 3:18-22
- Mark 1:9-15

Nature is full of promise-rainbows amid clouds promise the sun has emerged, buds promise new life, every morning is full of the promise of new beginnings. Imagine yourself surrounded by promise and look for signs of it in the world around you.

Lent 2 - February 28

From generation to generation - In God's covenant with Abram and Sarai, a psalmist's cry for help, and teachings from Paul and Jesus, we experience God's grace reaching across generations, and are invited to respond to God's faithfulness in our time.

- Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16
- Psalm 22:23-31
- Romans 4:13-38
- Mark 8:31-38 and/or Mark 9:2-9

Think about ways you create signs of promise. Think about the things you make - meals, art, repairs to objects, gardens. What promises do they convey? How do your interactions with others bring promise to the world? Choose one thing you usually do and do it intentionally as a sign of promise to the world.

Lent 3 - March 7

Faithful Living Together - As the psalmist praises and delights in God's law, we receive ten rules for living in a loving community, watch Jesus turn over tables, and consider how we faithfully relate to God and each other.

- Exodus 20:1-17
- Psalm 19
- 1 Corinthians 1:18-25
- John 2:2-9

It is so easy to just fire off an email or Facebook update or Twitter "tweet" or text message without thinking much about it. Challenge yourself to be mindful of your words in these contexts. Take a deep breath before you respond to anything and make space in your heart before you start typing. Notice how this mindfulness affects your sense of connection to others.





Lent 4 - March 14

Choose to Give Thanks - Through the words of a psalmist and a story of wilderness wanderers, we empathize with a people who call to God in distress and, with them, give thanks for a God who hears our cries.

- Numbers 21:4-9
- Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22
- Ephesians 2:1-10
- John 3:14-21

Spend an entire day being thankful for everything that happens, no matter what happens. Take a digital camera with you throughout your day and photograph moments of gratitude. Post them to social media or your personal blog with your reflections on what it was like to be intentionally thankful throughout the day.

Lent 5 - March 21

A Heart for God - We hear the prophet Jeremiah speak words of assurance that, deep in our hearts, we will know God's words and ways.

- Jeremiah 31:31-34
- Psalm 51:1-12 or Psalm 119:9-16
- Hebrews 5:5-10
- John 12:20-33

What has God written on your heart? Make a list of what you hold most dear. Cut out a heart shape on a piece of paper - it doesn't have to be very big. Write on it a favorite quote, a word of encouragement, something you love. Leave it at a coffee shop, post it on the bulletin board at work, put it in a book your loved one is reading...

Palm Sunday - March 28

Palms/Passion - On Palm Sunday, we celebrate with Jesus, reflect on counter-protests and challenges to authority, and consider how we tell stories of the protests in Jesus' day and today.

- Mark 11:1-11 or John 12:12-16
- Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29

What does it mean to come in someone else's name? Think about the various responsibilities you have throughout the week; in whose name do you come in each of them? How might it change what you do or how you approach what you do if you understood yourself to be coming into each situation in the name of God?



Lenten Spiritual Journey 2021

Wednesday, February 17 - Saturday, April 3

1. Find a clean, empty jar.
2. For each challenge that you complete, drop a quarter, loonie or toonie into the jar.
3. At the end of the challenge, convert the contents of your jar to paper money or cheque, and donate them to your congregation. (Remember to include your name and envelope number)

There exists a tradition of dedicated spiritual practices during the forty days of Lent to reflect Jesus' time in the wilderness. Often people give up something for Lent but we are offering you the chance to take on something. We invite you to accept our 40 day challenge by incorporating some of these practices into your daily life.

What will happen during the process is that you will find your awareness expands to realise that in fact, all of life can be lived as a spiritual practice. Don't feel you have to stick to the practice of the day - but do practice them all, then choose the ones that benefit you the most and don't stop after the challenge ends!

- Service to others and the environment brings a feel good moment.
- Forgiveness: "Holding on to anger is like grasping a hot coal with the intent of throwing it at someone else; you are the one who gets burned." (Quote attributed to the Buddha.)
- Reading scripture: The spirit is awakened bringing wisdom and strengthening faith.
- Gratitude and giving thanks: Thankfulness is an essential ingredient for joy. It is impossible to rejoice without giving thanks; that's why ungrateful people are so grumpy! Joy is an inner sense of contentment, which flows from a deep assurance that all God's purposes are good and He is in charge.
- Deep breathing: The parasympathetic nervous system is activated, allowing for the repair and refueling of bodily systems and a peaceful, happy and loving mind. Count your breaths to make your exhalations a bit longer during this practice.
- Smiling: Endorphins are released when you smile; they make us feel happy and reduce our stress levels.
- Singing lowers stress levels by releasing stored muscle tension and decreasing the level of the stress hormone, cortisol, in the blood.
- Dancing: gets the body moving and releases joy.





Lenten Spiritual Journey 2021

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			<p>Feb 17</p> <p>Ash Wednesday</p> <p><i>Remember you are stardust and to stardust you will return</i></p>	<p>Feb 18</p> <p>Give Someone a hug</p>	<p>Feb 19</p> <p>Leave a note for someone to find to brighten their day</p>	<p>Feb 20</p> <p>Contemplate forgiveness</p>
<p>Feb 21 Lent 1</p> <p><i>Mark 1:9-15</i></p> <p>Pray for those who are in power.</p>	<p>Feb 22</p> <p>Give thanks to all responsible for the food you eat today.</p>	<p>Feb 23</p> <p>When you begin to think that someone else should do something, stop. Do it yourself.</p>	<p>Feb 24</p> <p>Create a paper-free kitchen. It's easy. Substitute cloth towels cloth napkins instead of paper.</p>	<p>Feb 25</p> <p>Talk about a life lesson you have learned.</p>	<p>Feb 26</p> <p>Take time to make a meal from scratch</p>	<p>Feb 27</p> <p>Treat yourself in some way today</p>
<p>Feb 28 Lent 2</p> <p><i>Mark 8: 31-38</i></p> <p>Pray for health care and essential workers</p>	<p>March 1</p> <p>Get up early and spend 15 minutes sitting quietly and breathing deeply</p>	<p>March 2</p> <p>Check in with someone who lost a loved one in the last year.</p>	<p>March 3</p> <p>Take a walk in a park -invite a friend.</p>	<p>March 4</p> <p>Give thanks for all the people who harvest the fields, mill the flour and bake the bread you consume.</p>	<p>March 5</p> <p>Talk with someone at work or play whom you haven't talked with before.</p>	<p>March 6</p> <p>Refresh you memory of which items your community allows for curbside recycling.</p>
<p>March 7 Lent 3</p> <p><i>John 2: 13-22</i></p> <p>Pray for the work of women around the world.</p>	<p>March 8</p> <p>Have a meatless meal with your family and discuss what you can do to decrease your family's carbon footprint.</p>	<p>March 9</p> <p>If you see someone without a smile today, give them yours.</p>	<p>March 10</p> <p>When you find yourself starting to complain, STOP.</p>	<p>March 11</p> <p>Give someone a genuine compliment today.</p>	<p>March 12</p> <p>Shop at local shops or farmers' markets.</p>	<p>March 13</p> <p>Don't accept a plastic straw when dining out. Bring your own paper or reusable straw.</p>



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>March 14 Lent 4 Pie Day <i>John 3: 14-21</i> Pray for a world of inclusion.</p>	<p>March 15 Give a thank you for at least 5 blessings in your life.</p>	<p>March 16 Switch off all lights as you leave the room</p>	<p>March 17 Sing a song out loud with all your heart.</p>	<p>March 18 Just say no to bottled water and Styrofoam cups. Bring your own mug or water bottle.</p>	<p>March 19 Purchase 5 items for the local foodbank</p>	<p>March 20 Go for a walk and pick up litter</p>
<p>March 21 Lent 5 <i>John 12: 20-33</i> Pray for clean water.</p>	<p>March 22 Call someone and tell them you are thinking of them today</p>	<p>March 23 Grow plants indoors. Did you know house plants improve indoor air quality?</p>	<p>March 24 Learn something about another country or culture</p>	<p>March 25 Put on some music and dance in your kitchen!</p>	<p>March 26 Purchase some pet food for a local animal shelter (or make a monetary donation)</p>	<p>March 27 Celebrate Earth Hour today! Turn off your lights for one hour at 8:30 pm. <i>Earthhour.org</i></p>
<p>March 28 Palm Sunday <i>Mark 11:1-11</i> Pray for those who are ill.</p>	<p>March 29 Reflect on the beauty and goodness of creation. Consider your place in the cycle of nature.</p>	<p>March 30 Reuse, repair donate or sell your belongings. Reusing is better than recycling</p>	<p>March 31 Take an electronic fast. Disconnect from your phone, facebook, etc</p>	<p>April 1 Plant a tree or plan you garden for this summer</p>	<p>April 2 Good Friday Participate in a prayer walk or church service</p>	<p>April 3 Before you go to bed, think of 5 things you are grateful for.</p>

HOLY WEEK

Easter Sunday!

He is Risen!

5th Sunday of Lent

34 Celebrate Earth Hour

33 ∞ Read Philippians 4:13

32 Help put away laundry

31 No Ketchup today

30 Read Matthew 5:14

29 Say something nice about everyone in your family

28 sit in silence for 15 minutes

27 ∞ Read Isaiah 43:5

26 do something for a stranger

35 choose 5 toys to give away

36 Read Luke 6:31

37 No youtube or tic tok today

38 Holy Thursday

39 ∞ Good Friday

40 Holy Saturday

Lent

Prayer, Fasting, & Almsgiving

4th Sunday of Lent

19 No TV today

20 Call someone and tell them you love them

21 ∞ Read Matthew 28:19-20

22 No juice today

23 Help your parents prepare supper

24 Read Psalm 46:10

25 clean your room

18 Read Psalm 145:9

17 draw a picture for someone

16 Do not eat sweets today

15 ∞ Read Matthew 5:16

14 write someone a thank you note

13 Drink only water today

12 Read Philippians 4:13

11 find 5 items for the foodbank

40 days

Walking the Lenten Path...

3rd Sunday of Lent

10 Try a new food today

9 ∞ Read 1 Corinthians 10:13

8 No computer games today

7 Wear Pink to School today

6 Read Joshua 1:9

5 Help with the dishes today

4 no singing today

3 choose 3 books to give to charity

2 Read Psalm 103 verses 11-12

1 ∞

1st Sunday of Lent

Ash Wednesday

1 ∞

Find the following words hidden in the puzzle.

Lent	remember	season	love	ashes
cross	prepare	follow	pray	Jesus

A large cross-shaped puzzle grid containing the following letters:

S	Y	P	G	D	P	S	Q	L	A
L	E	G	R	H	W	U	R	E	S
O	O	A	T	A	W	S	E	N	H
V	K	G	S	O	Y	E	B	T	E
E	O	E	L	O	Y	J	M	F	S
I	C	L	O	L	N	N	E	G	I
R	O	S	S	O	R	C	M	M	T
F	Y	Q	M	A	H	K	E	B	B
P	R	E	P	A	R	E	R	J	V
C	E	H	I	Y	X	S	X	C	Z