



SAINT PAUL'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH FORT BENTON

NEWSLETTER

MARCH-APRIL, 2025

HOW THE SEASON OF LENT PREPARES US FOR EASTER

INTRODUCTION

The Christian liturgical calendar is rich with seasons that guide believers in their faith journey. Among these, Lent holds a unique and transformative place. A season of reflection, repentance, and preparation, Lent readies the hearts and minds of the faithful for the celebration of Easter. Spanning 40 days (excluding Sundays), Lent mirrors the time Jesus spent fasting and praying in the wilderness before beginning His public ministry. This period calls believers to deepen their relationship with God through prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, ultimately leading to a profound celebration of Christ's resurrection on Easter Sunday.

THE SPIRITUAL PURPOSE OF LENT

At its core, Lent is a journey—a pilgrimage of the soul. It is a time for self-examination, where believers reflect on their lives, acknowledge their shortcomings, and seek reconciliation with God. This season serves as a spiritual reset, allowing Christians to realign their focus on what truly matters: their relationship with Christ. The penitential nature of Lent fosters humility, encouraging individuals to recognize their dependence on God's grace and mercy.

Lent also serves as a reminder of the suffering and sacrifice of Jesus. Through fasting and self-denial, believers enter into a small share of Christ's suffering, developing empathy for those who endure hardship daily. This spiritual discipline fosters gratitude for God's blessings and cultivates a heart of compassion.

THE ROLE OF PRAYER IN LENT

Prayer is one of the three pillars of Lenten practice. During Lent, Christians are encouraged to engage in more intentional and contemplative prayer. Whether through structured prayers like the Liturgy of the Hours, spontaneous prayers of the heart, or communal worship, prayer deepens one's connection to God.

Many Christians turn to scripture during this season, meditating on passages that recount Christ's journey to the cross. Reflecting on the Passion narratives in the Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—enables believers to walk alongside Jesus, gaining a deeper understanding of His love and sacrifice. Additionally, participating in the Stations of the Cross, a devotional practice that retraces the steps of Jesus' suffering and death, enriches spiritual reflection and prepares the soul for Easter's joyous triumph.

THE PRACTICE OF FASTING AND SELF-DENIAL

Fasting is another integral component of Lent, rooted in both biblical tradition and spiritual discipline. Jesus fasted for 40 days in the wilderness, setting an example for His followers. In many Christian traditions, fasting involves abstaining from certain foods or meals, particularly on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, while also refraining from indulgences throughout the season.

However, fasting is not solely about food. Many believers choose to give up habits or distractions that hinder their spiritual growth, such as excessive screen time, social media, or other forms of entertainment. By willingly sacrificing these comforts, Christians make space for God, redirecting their focus toward prayer, scripture, and acts of charity.

The discipline of fasting also serves as a reminder of those who live with less on a daily basis. It fosters a sense of solidarity with the poor and marginalized, compelling Christians to respond with generosity and compassion.

ALMSGIVING: LOVE IN ACTION

The Third pillar of Lent is almsgiving—acts of charity and service to those in need. Lent calls Christians to move beyond personal sacrifice and extend love outward. Giving to the poor, volunteering time, and supporting charitable causes are all ways to embody Christ's teachings.

Almsgiving reflects Jesus' command to care for the least among us. It reminds believers that their faith is not merely about personal growth but about being a source of light and hope in the world. In this way, Lent transforms individuals, preparing them to embrace fully the message of Easter: that love conquers all.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF HOLY WEEK

The final stretch of Lent, known as Holy Week, is the most intense and spiritually significant part of the season. It begins with Palm Sunday, commemorating Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem. The week progresses through the solemn observances of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday.

- **Maundy Thursday:** This day recalls the Last Supper, where Jesus instituted the Eucharist and washed the feet of His disciples as an act of humility and service. It serves as a call to love and serve others in the same spirit.
- **Good Friday:** The day of Christ's crucifixion is marked by deep mourning and reflection on His sacrifice. Many Christians attend special services, pray the Stations of the Cross, or observe silence to meditate on the depth of Jesus' suffering and love.
- **Holy Saturday:** This day of waiting represents the time Jesus spent in the tomb. It is a period of quiet anticipation, leading to the ultimate joy of Easter Sunday.

EASTER: THE FULFILLMENT OF LENT

After 40 days of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, the Church erupts in joyous celebration on Easter Sunday. The resurrection of Jesus is the cornerstone of Christian faith, signifying victory over sin and death. Lent's purpose is fully realized in this moment, as believers emerge renewed, transformed by their spiritual journey.

Easter is more than just a single day of celebration; it is the fulfillment of God's promise of salvation. The disciplines of Lent prepare the heart to truly appreciate and embrace the joy of the resurrection. Through the sacrifices made and the spiritual growth achieved during Lent, believers experience Easter with a renewed sense of faith, hope, and love.

CONCLUSION

Lent is a profound season of preparation, guiding Christians toward the celebration of Easter with a heart transformed by prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. It is a journey of introspection and renewal, an opportunity to draw closer to God and to live out the call to love and serve others. By embracing the disciplines of Lent, believers arrive at Easter with a deeper appreciation for the miracle of Christ's resurrection and a renewed commitment to living out their faith in daily life. In the end, Lent is not just about giving something up—it is about gaining a closer relationship with God and a greater understanding of the immense love that Easter represents.

In Christ's Love,

Tim+

WORSHIP SCHEDULE

March 2	Morning Prayer and Homily, 10 AM
March 4	Ash Wednesday Service, Noon
March 9	Holy Eucharist and Homily, 10 AM—Bible Study to follow service
March 10	Lenten Community Supper*
March 16	Morning Prayer and Homily, 10 AM
March 17	Lenten Community Supper*
March 23	Holy Eucharist and Homily, 10 AM—Bible Study to follow service
March 24	Lenten Community Supper*
March 30	Morning Prayer and Homily, 10 AM
March 31	Lenten Community Supper*
April 6	Morning Prayer and Homily, 10 AM
April 7	Lenten Community Supper*
April 13	Palm Sunday Service, 10 AM —Bible Study to follow service
April 14	Lenten Community Supper*
April 18	Good Friday Service, Noon
April 20	Easter Service, 10 AM —Bible Study to follow service
April 27	Morning Prayer and Homily, 10 AM

Please check *The River Press* for details and possible changes of service times

*Lenten program co-hosted with the United Methodist Churches in Fort Benton and Highwood.

Please see the attached flyer for details.

PRAYER REQUESTS

For solace, comfort, and healing for Ann, Celeste, Cole, Gena, Kirsten, Marcia, Sue, and Wyley.
For wisdom and compassion on the part of all our elected officials as they carry out their duties.

VESTRY MEMBERS FOR 2025

Senior Warden: Shirley Lenington

Junior Warden: Dean Glawe

Treasurer: Sue Lepley

Clerk: Gail Good

Ginger Harstad Glawe

Shawn Schumacher

Delegate to Convention: Dean Glawe

Alternate Delegate to Convention: Ginger Harstad Glawe

WINDOW REPAIR PROJECT

Following a meeting with architects Ken and Ellen Sievert to discuss the repair of the alter window, we learned that we need to investigate further the condition of building walls in the chancel area of the church. Once we obtain more information about the condition of that part of the building we will be able to determine how to proceed.

LENTEN SERIES: THE WAY OF LOVE

In addition to our usual services in Lent and Easter, Saint Paul's is co-hosting a series of soup dinners and discussions with the United Methodist Churches of Fort Benton and Highwood. The discussion topics originated with the Episcopal Church's program *The Way of Love: Practices for a Jesus-Centered Life*. Here is how The Rt. Rev. Michael B. Curry introduced it:

In the first century Jesus of Nazareth inspired a movement. A community of people whose lives were centered on Jesus Christ and committed to living the way of God's unconditional, unselfish, sacrificial, and redemptive love. Before they were called "church" or "Christian," this Jesus Movement was simply called "the way."

Today I believe our vocation is to live as the Episcopal branch of the Jesus Movement. But how can we together grow more deeply with Jesus Christ at the center of our lives, so we can bear witness to his way of love in and for the world?

The deep roots of our Christian tradition may offer just such a path. For centuries, monastic communities have shaped their lives around rhythms and disciplines for following Jesus together. Such a pattern is known as a "Rule of Life." The framework you now hold – *The Way of Love: Practices for Jesus-Centered Life* – outlines a Rule for the Episcopal branch of the Jesus Movement.

We hope you will join us for this six-part series to be held at the United Methodist Church in Fort Benton. Please see the attached flyer for dates, times, and other information (scan the QR code on the flyer to see a video describing the series).

Please send contributions for future issues to Dean Glawe, daglawe@earthlink.net, or call him (509) 332-9966, or mail to St. Paul's Episcopal Church, PO Box 463, Fort Benton, MT 59442.

The Way of Love: Finding Hope in Challenging Times

A dinner discussion series
with The Revs. Carl Ellis, Ross Rettig, and Tim Ljunggren



Scan QR code for
more information

What does Christianity offer us today, as we face unknown challenges, and major economic, technological and societal shifts? Can it help us resist the pull of our phones and our screens, along with manipulative and divisive narratives? Can it help us build solidarity, strength and resilience?

In this series of discussions we explore The Way of Love — a return to the ancient pathways and rules of life that followers of Jesus have observed for centuries. Whether you consider yourself a Christian or not, these practices may help you connect to community and find your footing in this brave new world.

Join us for soup dinner and discussion.
Families and children welcome

Beloved's Café at the Church with the Chimes
Fort Benton United Methodist Church - 1201 Chouteau

Mondays during Lent - 5-7pm
March 10, 17, 24, 31



Presented by:
St. Paul's Episcopal Church,
Fort Benton and Highwood United Methodist Churches,
and our Beloved Community

