



Lent

In the following pages, you'll find three things:

1. Background information about Lent
2. A guide to some spiritual practices you may wish to try
3. A calendar with ways you might experiment with different spiritual practices each week of Lent leading up to Easter

We pray God's blessings on our whole church as we journey towards Easter.

Part 1 Background Information about Lent

What is Lent?

Lent is the 40-day period before Easter. The 40 days reflects the 40 days of Jesus' fasting in the desert (Luke 4) or the 40 years of the Israelites wandering in the desert (Exodus-Deuteronomy). Traditionally, Lent is a season of intentional spiritual practices like prayer, fasting, and giving money to those in need. You could think of it as a 40-day exercise program, but instead of physical exercises, we're engaging in spiritual exercises to welcome Jesus' life and presence.

We think of Lent as a season to be really intentional about *connecting* - connecting with God, ourselves, and the world around us. Sometimes we notice things in our lives that seem to be getting in the way of connecting, and the season of Lent invites us to consider putting aside those things and leaning into connection.

So what can I do for Lent?

The whole point is to engage in practices that are meaningful and life-giving. These practices will be different for everyone. Like physical exercises, everyone has a different zone of comfort and development. And also like physical exercises, sometimes we can stretch ourselves a bit, which may not feel pleasurable in the moment but it leads to good growth. So we recommend experimenting and seeing

Church tradition lists “**Three Pillars of Lent,**” which are from Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 6:

- 1) Prayer
- 2) Fasting
- 3) Giving to those in need

what happens. If you’re stuck, check out the calendar below for more practical ideas. Finally, if you have young children, invite them into a practice with you. They will likely have their own ideas of how to meaningfully connect with God and others during Lent.

So what does our church do all together for Lent?

This year, we’re doing a few things:

1. We will be using Sunday teachings to talk about Sacred Pathways and exploring ways we know God and make Him known to those around us.
2. We also will have an online Bible guide available for daily reading on our church website. We are using a guide created by some Blue Ocean Faith leaders.
3. We will be taking a special offering for our church to start a scholarship fund to provide resources to college bound students of minority culture &/or students with limited resources

Part 2 Spiritual Practices

Below is a short list of the many spiritual practices people in our community enjoy as meaningful ways to connect to God and others. We suggest trying one or two throughout Lent. Check out the Lent Calendar below for more practical ideas.

Prayer

- Listening Prayer - listening to what God might be saying alone or with others
- Immanuel Prayer - a type of inner-healing prayer done with others
- Intercessory Prayer - praying for other people’s needs
- Contemplative Prayer - thinking about God while being near God
- Silent Prayer - being silent while being near God
- Breath Prayer - Meditating on a particular word or phrase with each breath

If you need a template or a place to start with prayer, you might try some of these prayers from the Bible:

- Matthew 6:9-13 (The Lord’s Prayer)
- Ephesians 3:14-21
- John 17
- Psalm 130

- Liturgical/Fixed Hours Prayer - praying the historical prayers of the church (e.g. the “Our Father” or the “Lord’s Prayer”), sometimes at particular times of the day (e.g. Vespers, morning office, etc) See this website for more information: <http://www.explorefaith.org/prayer/fixed/hours.php>

Fasting

- Skip one or more meals and use the time for prayer, reflection, or serving others
- Lay aside technology and use the time to connect with others in person (e.g. put away the phone and computer in the evening)
- Do not consume a particularly enjoyable food or beverage for some time and observe what is made possible, or impossible, by this (e.g. abstain from chocolate or coffee or beer during Lent)
- Do not make any unnecessary purchases during Lent

Giving

- Gift of money to those in need (e.g. skip one coffee or latte each week and give the cash to the local food pantry)
- Gift of encouragement (e.g. write an encouraging letter each Saturday of Lent to a friend or loved one or stranger)
- Gift of time (e.g. volunteer to serve in the church or another non-profit organization)
- Gift of presence (e.g. visit a friend for no particular reason, or visit a nursing care facility)

Tips for choosing Spiritual Practices during Lent:

- 1) Pick one or two
- 2) They almost always work better with others, so invite a friend or family member to do it with you
- 3) If you have young children, involve them in the process. They will have great ideas - trust them!

Bible Reading

- Study - spend an hour (maybe with others) on a short passage of scripture, looking up words and historical information
- Lectio Divina - listening for God’s voice as you read a passage of scripture several times
- Savoring and Listening - dwell on a single word or phrase from the passage you’re reading
- Reflective - reading the bible and looking for how it may be meaningful
- Memorization- memorizing particular Bible passages that help you

Sabbath

- Setting aside one day of the week to rest, play, and pray

Some other resources for spiritual practices:

- *A Celebration of Discipline* by Richard Foster
- *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook* by Adele Ahlberg Calhoun (the table of contents alone should indicate how many spiritual practices are out there to explore!)

Journal Writing

- Reflections on life
- Commonplace book - jot down sermon notes, meaningful quotes, bible passages
- Goal-oriented - write out goals and record progress toward the goal
- Dreams - process through troubling or inspiring nighttime dreams
- Prayer - record of all kinds of prayers and interactions with God (see *Prayer* above)

Grieving

- Reflect on losses you've experienced this past year and bring them before God
- Meet with a friend or loved one to name losses together