

My Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As I sit at my desk, enjoying the beautiful sunshine this afternoon, I realize that as that sun sets this evening, we will be plunged into the season of Lent which begins on Ash Wednesday and ends on Holy Saturday.



This penitential season is 40 days long (not including Sundays). It is no accident that we recall this season for this long as the number 40 is symbolic in both the Old and New Testaments, but during this time, it is representative of the 40 days Jesus spent in the wilderness.

This a time for us to recall our sinful nature and to seek forgiveness, and is marked by three key practices: Prayer, Fasting, and Alms giving.

While our prayer lives are to be a regular and faithful time with our Lord, it is during this season that we take extra time to focus our prayer life, becoming more aware of God's presence in our everyday, searching and striving to align ourselves with God's mission in our world.

This is also a season of fasting. For some, this means giving up something pleasurable such as a food item like coffee or chocolate, but more often we are witnessing a shift as people fast from the "things" of this life that distract us from our focus on God, such as television, parties, or social media. No matter what we choose "give up" for the season, in doing so we are reminded of our desire to fill our lives with empty things that do not bring us closer to our creator. Some people who chose to give up time consuming things, also chose to fill that time with a spiritual discipline such as meditation, prayer, reading or offering up that time to help others. Those who choose to give up food items, often choose to take the money that would be spent on those items and put that saving towards their alms giving.

Alms giving is a practice of this season where people donate monetarily to an organization or charity, such as increasing their givings to a ministry of the church, an outreach arm of the church, such as the PWRDF (<http://pwrdf.org>), or other charities of their choice, or by offering items to local outreach initiative.

This year Holy Trinity will be collecting funds for PWRDF to be taken to synod in May. To offer you alms to this, please use the special Lenten envelope for PWRDF that can be found at the welcome table

when you enter the church. We are also supporting a local initiative, the Wish Closet (<https://haldimand.cioc.ca/record/SIM2364>) (or a video link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OQGKe8XAJOU>). To donate to the Wish Closet, please bring your donations to the church on Sundays and they will be delivered by our outreach ministers to the Wish Closet! We are collecting the following: Feb 18: Toys, Feb. 25: Underwear (all sizes), Mar. 4 - Clothing (especially girls' 4-16), Mar. 11 - Books (all ages), Mar. 18 - Shoes (all sizes), Mar. 25 - Kitchenware (including small appliances).

Other practices that you may like to take part in can be found in the following links:

<http://lecfamily.org/lent/>

<https://www.letmeorganizait.com/declutter-for-lent-40-bags-in-40-days>

Although the season of Lent often times feels long and challenging, we are not being set up to 'fail', rather we are given a gift each week as Sundays in Lent are considered "mini-Easters" which is why we still celebrate the Eucharist. It is also a time to ease the fast, to let up slightly on our disciplines, or change how we observe the day thus the reverent spirit of Lent is tempered with the joy and anticipation of Easter.

However, you choose to observe lent this year, I pray that it will be a holy and blessed season for you as you strengthen your faith in your bond with our Lord and Saviour!

Rev. Sharla



