

Dear friends,

Starting Wednesday, February 10th, we begin the season of Lent, that season that invites us to clear out our internal clutter and make room for God.

When I look back, I am not sure that I thought long and hard about Lent and why it mattered until I was trying to figure out how to observe a holy Lent in a way that my sons would gain in their knowledge and love of God and their compassion to neighbors.

I want to offer a few thoughts about how we might construct a holy and life-giving Lent for ourselves this year, whether we are single or coupled or widowed or separated or whatever word(s) we would use.

First, the season of Lent is NOT about simply giving up chocolate or xBox or coffee or Facebook. Lent mostly is not about giving up something. It is more about making room, making room for more faith, more hope, more love. While this analogy is imperfect, it is like cleaning out a closet, donating the items to someone who can use them and then putting in a replacement.

Lent is about making more room in our hearts for God. I don't mean just thinking about God or your favorite Bible story – that's ok and there is use in that practice. But Lent is not just about ideas. Lent involves practicing new ways of living that make us more like Jesus.

Second, there are three practices that help us become more like Jesus. They are fasting,

prayer and caring for the poor. And they are spiritual practices, or disciplines, that require something more than thought.

These practices help us to make room so that, as we put some things aside, we practice living in the image of God. We choose to act more like the image of God than anyone else. That takes practice.

We will have many opportunities throughout Lent to gather together to learn more about God, to build community and to connect with God and live out service to neighbor. Later in this newsletter, we detail Ash Wednesday and our Lenten Gatherings, offered on Tuesdays throughout Lent. We will also gather on Maundy Thursday in Holy Week. [Information about these will be in the March Parishioner.]

That reason is the only reason we DO Lent: it helps us practice becoming more like Jesus. We prepare ourselves for a holy Lent by making room. The more we practice making room for God, the more loving we become. My hope for all of us is that this Lent will be a time of making more room for Christ.

Pastor Lynn