

Lent

*Background &
Practices*



Why do we celebrate Lent?

“Lent” (*spring season*) refers to the 6-week period leading up to Easter in the Church calendar, beginning on Ash Wednesday and concluding the Saturday before Easter. This is a period for reflection upon the sacrifice Jesus made in both entering into the pain and plight of the human condition and ultimately laying down his own life to reconcile us to God. But being forgiven and reconciled to God is not all that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus is about. Jesus came to reorient us to a new way of living, opening the way for us to live out his Spirit amid the brokenness and depravity of this present world.

This Lenten season, we want to direct our hearts toward the Spirit who enlivens and empowers us. As a man, Jesus himself rested in and lived out of the empowering presence of the Spirit. Jesus’ wisdom, insight, miraculous works, and sacrifice and resurrection issued from his communion with the Father through the Spirit (*Isaiah 61:1-2; cf. Luke 4:18-19; Mark 1:10; Matthew 12:15-18, 28; Hebrews 9:14; 1 Peter 3:18; John 14:6-14; John 17:20-23*).

As you prepare to step into Lent, we encourage you to consider areas of your life where you are struggling and striving to live life out of your own strength.

Where do you feel weak, weary, vulnerable, or burned out?

Where do you find yourself consumed with fear, frustration, anger, or anxiety?

Where are you overwhelmed with worry or despair?



You are not alone. Christ has gone before us and remains with us in every moment of our lives (Isaiah 53; Hebrew 12:3).

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28-30)

Jesus invites us into his rest. Jesus invites us to release control over every facet, endeavor, situation, and relationship in our lives; to instead draw our strength and resources from our life with him.

Lent is about both releasing and reorienting our hearts, minds, and the whole of our lives to Jesus, in learning to live as he lived—by the Spirit.

As you enter into this Lenten season, spend at least 15-30 minutes to prayerfully consider what activities you will abstain from for the next 40 days in allowing for dedicated time and space for you to engage more intentionally with God. As you present yourself to God through this time, ponder the questions provided, asking God to reveal areas where you are striving to live life in your own strength.

As you sit with these questions, ask God to reveal what releasing control to him might look like for you in these areas. How will you draw from the life of the Spirit as you move forward?

As you develop your personal plan for observing Lent, write down what you purpose to sacrifice and how you will choose to engage with God during those times. Share your plan with a friend who can walk alongside and support you along the way.

