

Dear Friends,

As we move into this next Church season, the season of Lent, I thought it appropriate to once again revisit what Lent means and how we mark it as Anglicans. Lent is the season of preparation leading up to Easter. It is the forty days plus the six Sundays before Easter. For centuries it has been observed as a special time of self-examination and penitence. Lent is a time for reflection of our lives and our relationship with Christ... it is not a time for self punishment, as was often observed in the Middle Ages.

Throughout Lent, our worship services take on a simpler tone, appropriate to this season. There are usually limited flowers very simple decorations in our worship space, and the colour of the vestments worn by the priest are purple – a sign of solemnity. The word “Alleluia” is not used in hymns or services. You may remember from past years that we sometimes have hid the Alleluia banner in the altar during Lent. The last two weeks of Lent are known as *Passion-tide*, and during this period crosses showing the risen Christ are veiled. The last week of Lent is known as *Holy Week*, when we solemnly recall in “real time” the final events of Our Lord’s earthly life. These practices help the worshipping community to mark this as a special season of renewal in the Church’s year.

As Anglicans, our custom in marking the season of Lent is often the practice of giving up something... like those things we may really enjoy such as chocolate or sweets or taking on some extra things such as extra prayer time or doing special outreach practices such as assisting at the food bank or giving up smoking and then offering the money saved to a charity. Both can help to mark the season as a holy time of personal reflection and preparation.

Note that the season of Lent is forty days, plus the six Sundays. This is because Sundays are always celebrations of Jesus’ resurrection, and are an appropriate day to relax the restrictions of Lent. So, for example for some, if you have given up alcohol for Lent, you could indulge in a glass of wine on Sunday.

Lent is also an especially appropriate time for the sacrament of confession. While confession to a priest is not essential to receive God’s forgiveness, many find it helpful for reconciliation. You can ask Rev. Deborah more about confession and you may wish to set up an appointment with her to experience a private confession. This year St. Peter’s will offer a special healing service on March 25 so we can prepare for Holy Week the following week.

In addition, some find it helpful to visit the **Stations of the Cross**. These are depictions of the 14 incidents in the Gospel accounts of Jesus’ passion (suffering) and death, starting at Pilate’s house and ending with his body being laid in the tomb. They are used in a form of prayer in which we visit each station in turn, and using a brief reading, response, collect or meditation on the event depicted. It is our practice at St. Peter to do this each Good Friday. Our Stations of the Cross are permanently installed in the Church Yard and we are inviting the Anglican Churches of the Cowichan Valley to join us in our Good Friday Service.

**Special Days and Services we observe at St. Peter's. Please join us for some or all of these:**

***Shrove Tuesday, February 17, 5:30 to gather, dinner at 6 PM***

This is actually the day before Lent begins. It was a time for eating up the things from which one would abstain during Lent such as sugar, candy, perhaps other sweets. Eating pancakes became traditional as they were a way of using up some ingredients not needed during Lent. We will host this evening of feasting. Please invite your friends and sign up in the hall.

***Ash Wednesday, February 18, Holy Communion with Imposition of Ashes: 11:00 AM & 7:00PM***

The first day of Lent is marked with a special liturgy. In the Old Testament, ashes were a sign of penitence (feeling regret for one's sins) and mourning. The words, "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return" are said by the priest and remind us that that we live only by the grace of God. On this day fasting is also suggested.

This evening also begins a special book study: "Forgive and Get Your Life Back". This program is limited to 12 participants. If you have sleepless nights because of another's painful behaviour or a betrayal, I encourage you to sign up for this healing and freeing experience of learning to deeply forgive and "get your life back." Sign up in the office.

***Mothering Sunday March 15***

The fourth Sunday in Lent has long been observed as a day for completely relaxing the disciplines of Lent. For this reason, it is also known as *Refreshment Sunday* or *Mid-Lent Sunday*. Because the readings and prayers for this day focus on the role of Jesus' mother, Mary, in God's plan for our salvation, it is the day on which we especially celebrate and pray for mothers, and all who exercise maternal care in any way, including the Mother Church. We celebrate Mothering Sunday with Seminal Cake and posies. This Mothering Sunday will have the extra joy of the Celebration of Holy Matrimony for Roger Williams and Liz Pollack.

***Healing Service March 25, 7 PM***

God is the healer of the whole person. This responsive service of prayer, song and Scripture can be a means of great blessing to God's people. Using a variety of prayers, and Holy Communion, this service will include The Laying On Of Hands and Anointing With Oil & Prayer. This healing service will offer the participants the opportunity to feel the healing power of God to wash over them.

***Palm Sunday, March 29 Procession of Palms***

The Sunday before Easter is the last in Lent. The day commemorates Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, when the crowd threw palms in his path, but subsequently abandoned him to be crucified. The service starts with the blessing of the palm crosses made by our Altar Guild, and a procession in which the whole congregation carries palms. The day is also marked by the reading of the Passion Narrative (the Gospel account of Jesus' suffering). Some of the palm crosses are kept and used to make the Ash Wednesday ashes for the following year.

***Maundy Thursday April 2 5:30 Agape Dinner, Foot Washing and Stripping of the Altar***

Thursday in Holy Week is a commemoration of the Last Supper which Jesus shared with his disciples on the night before he died. The name comes from the Latin word *mandatum* meaning "mandate" or "commandment" as Jesus said at the Last Supper: "I give you a new commandment: that you love one another". At the end of the Maundy Thursday evening service, the altar is stripped, and the ornamentation of the church removed, as a sign of our desolation in the face of Jesus' betrayal. Afterwards a silent vigil (watch) may be kept in church, and sometimes at home, in response to Jesus' plea to his disciples in the garden of Gethsemane before his arrest: "Will you not watch with me one hour?".

***Good Friday April 18 11:00 AM Stations of the Cross and Liturgy of the Day***

The Friday in Holy week is a solemn day, on which we recall Jesus' death. There is no celebration of the Eucharist between Maundy Thursday evening and the first service on Easter Sunday morning. This is the other day of special observation on which fasting is recommended for those who are able.

***Easter Day April 5, 8:00 and 10:00 The Celebration of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ***

This day is the most joyful of the Christian year, as it celebrates Jesus' resurrection from the dead, his appearance to his disciples, and the fact that his victory over death means that we who believe in him are promised eternal life. The church looks especially beautiful with flowers and other decorations. The services on this day are full of joy and hope. Easter Day marks the beginning of a bright new season in the Church's year; but more importantly, it marks the new beginning which God gave the human race by raising his Son to new life, and opening the way to glory for his faithful people.

Friends, we are offering a great variety of worship and fellowship opportunities this Lenten Season. I hope you will join us and invite your friends as we walk our journey of faith together.

May this be a wonderfully Holy Lent for you and please remember that if you would like to make a special confession or you are in need of special prayer during your journey, I am available to walk with you.

Yours in Christ,

Rev. Deborah