

Preparation for the Season of Lent and Notes on Worship at 10:00 a.m. on Sundays in Lent

An Invitation to a Holy Lent: Dear People of God: The first Christians observed with great devotion the days of our Lord's passion and resurrection, and it became the custom of the Church to prepare for them by a season of penitence and fasting. This season of Lent provided a time in which converts to the faith were prepared for Holy Baptism. It was also a time when those who had been separated from the body of the faithful were reconciled by penitence and forgiveness, and restored to the fellowship of the Church. Thereby, the whole congregation was put in mind of the message of pardon and absolution set forth in the Gospel of our Savior, and of the need which all Christians have to renew their repentance and faith.

I invite you, therefore, in the name of the Church, to the observance of a Holy Lent, by self-examination and repentance; by prayer, fasting, and self-denial; and by reading and meditating on God's holy Word. (from *Book of Common Prayer*, pp. 264-265)

Pastor Teresa's Notes:

The Season of Lent is a forty-day period before Easter. It begins on Ash Wednesday, this Wednesday, February 17. "40" is a significant number in the Jewish & Christian traditions. Moses and the Israelites wandered in the desert for 40 years. Jesus fasted and was tempted in the desert for 40 days between his baptism and the beginning of his ministry. We skip Sundays when we count the forty days, because Sundays commemorate the Resurrection of Jesus Christ at Easter. Sundays are always "Feast Days," so we refer to Sundays *IN* Lent, not Sundays *OF* Lent. Lent ends on April 3, 2010 - the day before Easter.

As individual Christians and as a corporate Christian community, we may observe Lent in a variety of ways. **As individuals, we may decide to engage in a discipline that brings us closer to God** – typically, taking on something or giving up something. Although most of us do need to exercise more and eat less, those types of changes in behavior are not necessarily Lenten disciplines unless they are accompanied by intentional sacrifice, prayer, and reflection. So, if you decide to give up chocolate or smoking for Lent, drop the money that you would have spent in the "Lenten Alms" basin for Jean Vil's family in Haiti. Or, if you decide to exercise more during Lent, learn a short prayer or hymn that you can meditate on while you walk, swim, bike, or jog.

As a corporate Christian community, our worship changes during Lent. We fast from "Alleluias" – which we will not proclaim or sing again until Easter.¹ We confess our sins at the beginning of the service, rather than after the Prayers of the People.

¹ The Fourth Sunday of Advent (like the Third Sunday of Advent) is an exception to many of the Lenten observances – it is a "Rose" Sunday, to honor Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and to give us a little more color in the midst of the Season of Lent.

Small Groups will meet for fellowship and study on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings during Lent. If you are interested in participating in a small group, please let me know by e-mailing me at teresa@towergrovechurch.org or leaving a message at 314-503-7415.

Lectionary Bible Study will continue at 5:30 p.m. in the Library every Thursday evening. Everyone is welcome at any time!

The Lenten Quiet Day has been rescheduled for Saturday, March 27, from 8:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. Please register by March 21 by e-mailing me or calling me (above). Suggested donation is \$10 for food and materials.

At the 10:00 a.m. service, we will observe Lent in several ways:

- (1) We will begin the 10:00 a.m. service with Canticle S-237, a Canticle of Penitence, rather than a hymn. The congregation will sing the antiphon. A member of the choir will sing the verses.
- (2) We will confess our sins at the beginning of the service and proclaim the prayer of absolution together.
- (3) Using techniques that Michael, Judith, and I learned at the “Music that Makes Community” conference two weeks ago, a member of the choir will lead us in proclaiming the Psalm. We will sing the antiphon (refrain) and verses together using a very simple tone. We will use the same antiphon for the Psalm every Sunday in Lent. ²
- (4) We will use Prayers of the People based on Form I in the *Book of Common Prayer* (BCP. p. 383). For the Response to each Petition, a member of the choir will lead us in the refrain, “O Lord Hear My Pray’r” – a simple song from the Taize community.
- (5) The hymns that we sing together after Communion will be “paperless” - simple, meditative rounds that we will learn to sing together. Perhaps, you will want to use these songs during your individual observances throughout the week – great for walking, biking, jogging or swimming!
- (6) Throughout the service, I intend to leave more space for silence, reflection, and meditation as we prepare, with Jesus, for the journey to the cross and beyond.

² http://www.allsaintscompany.org/projects/view/a_new_project/