

February 2018 Pastor's Page

Are you ready for a new season? I know that's a loaded question in Minnesota, where we find ways to enjoy every season even if we find ourselves longing for warmer, snowier, drier, or greener when we're in the grips of just the opposite! But what I'm asking is if you're ready for another season in the life of the church. It may seem that the Christmas decorations are barely packed away, but the season of Lent is right on the horizon.

Lent may bring up different thoughts or emotions for different people, but in general it is observed as a season of soul-searching and repentance, a season for reflection and taking stock in preparation for Easter. Anticipation may run high as Advent leads us toward the Christmas celebration, but each year we Christians should also look forward to the penitential season of Lent.

That may sound like a strange statement, but perhaps we should pause to understand the blessings that Lent offers us. Among these is time set aside that allows us to focus on our own sins and then to place them purposefully at the foot of the cross, knowing that Christ has already paid the penalty in our place. Another blessing comes from the chance to study the ways in which we ourselves symbolically journey toward Jerusalem during the Lenten season. The blessing is that we do not walk the path alone—we journey with Jesus, the very one who calls us into discipleship.

A while ago I was reading some passages related to the Apostle Paul, and rediscovered one of his most important personal faith statements, found in his Letter to the Philippians. In 3:10-11 he says, "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead." Now while we certainly are not called to physical death during Lent, we are challenged to give up the comfort of a favorite food, drink, or habit in order to gain a better understanding of our Savior's suffering, temptation, and ultimate death.

As we observe the forty days of Lent, we seek in some small way to become like Jesus—particularly following the example of his withdrawal into the temptation of the wilderness. Lent has often been called a journey, and this year I'd like to invite you to take part in a Wednesday evening sermon series entitled, "Journey of Stones," in which we'll look at the compelling metaphor of stones (and our willingness to throw them) as representative of our sins. I hope that you will join us!

Our Lenten services will start at 6:00pm on Ash Wednesday (February 14) in the sanctuary, and will continue each Wednesday evening through March 21 at 6:00pm in the small chapel. A service schedule for Holy Week (the last week of March) will be published in next month's newsletter. Bring your Bible and let us make the journey to Jerusalem together.

Yours in Christ's service,
Rev. Cory Germain