

Lent 2021

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, because of notorious sins, 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 continually 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 the Liturgy for Ash Wednesday, Book of Common Prayer p 164-165.

Lent is an interesting conundrum. It is both a season that we focus on preparing for Easter and the joy of the Resurrection, but it is also lived in a context of Christians being a resurrection people. Our faith is founded on the knowledge that the tomb is empty on Easter morning and we work to strike a balance between honoring our seasons and long term growth as disciples of Christ. Lent is often marked by temporary actions, fasting, or giving up an item in a sacrificial nature, or taking-on, or adding a specific spiritual discipline to our daily routine. Both of these types of actions focus on the same purpose; we create change for 40 days to demarcate it differently from the rest of our lives, to make Easter feel additionally special, and to give ourselves a focal spot for our discipleship. However, Christian discipleship is a journey or regular growth, were we see our whole lives as opportunities to grow with Christ and rectify failings within our faith.

The question of Lent becomes not how do I change for 40 days, but instead, how do I use this time to build new routines, habits and faith practices that are sustainable in my day to day life, sustainable in my growth as a disciple and sustainable in a tangible life lived reaching for Christ.

Sustainability touches so many potential sources of error and growth, from the more literal realization that to be a steward of God's creation requires us to focus on our environmental effect in our daily lives on our planet, to a more personal directive to re-form our routines to be sustainable in our additions or omissions for the betterment of our long term growth.

As always, our lenten practices, while done in community support, are by their nature deeply personal. What hinders your faith-filled sustainability? What hinders your household's? What hinders our parish's?

This is the work of our parish-wide Lent, this year. We are exploring the process of discerning a more faithful way forward, as individuals, as households and as a parish. You can, too, include a practice of fasting or taking-on as a part of your personal discipline for lent. These things can be something connected to sustainability - environmentally, emotionally, faithfully- as makes sense for you. But also we will be walking a process as a parish to find fasts or additions (or both) that are meant to take us not through 40 days, but to help us walk a whole life time with Christ.

Ash Wednesday: Made of Dust

How is my faith and life not sustainable?

"See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation!"

2 Corinthians 6:2

For what am I sorry.

Places to consider: Regrets in thoughts, words and deeds, things done, things left undone, evil done on our behalf, and complacency

[illegible]

Lent Week 1: Discerning God's Intention

How is my faith and life not sustainable?

"You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

Mark 1:11

What isn't working?

Places to consider: time, talent, treasure, or environmental stewardship, habits, people dynamics, and attitude.

[illegible]

Lent Week 2: Vision Casting

What are my priorities?

“For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.”

Mark 8:33

What are the guiding principles?

Guiding principles for me personally?	Guiding principles for our household?
Guiding principles for St. John's Church	Guiding principles for God

Lent Week 3: Clearing the Clutter

What isn't serving my priorities?

"You shall have no other gods before me."

Exodus 20: 3

Places to clean and discern:

Household budget, Things or spaces in your home, vocabulary and assumptions, activities, duties or time usage, anger, resentments, and grudges

Places St. John's could clean and discern:

Lent Week 4: Building on Prayer

How can prayer structure my life?

“Let them give thanks to the Lord for his mercy, and the wonders he does for his children.”

Psalm 107: 21

Can I find a space for prayer four times a day?

Places to consider: while driving, during a workout, in bed, around meals, and with family or friends (possibly on zoom.)

The Daily Office, (prayer in the morning, noontime, evening and bedtime,) is included in the front of the Book of Common Prayer. However a more relaxed version should include:

A confession of sin and wrongdoing, (things done and things left undone)

Scripture

Intercessions and Thanksgivings

The Lord's Prayer

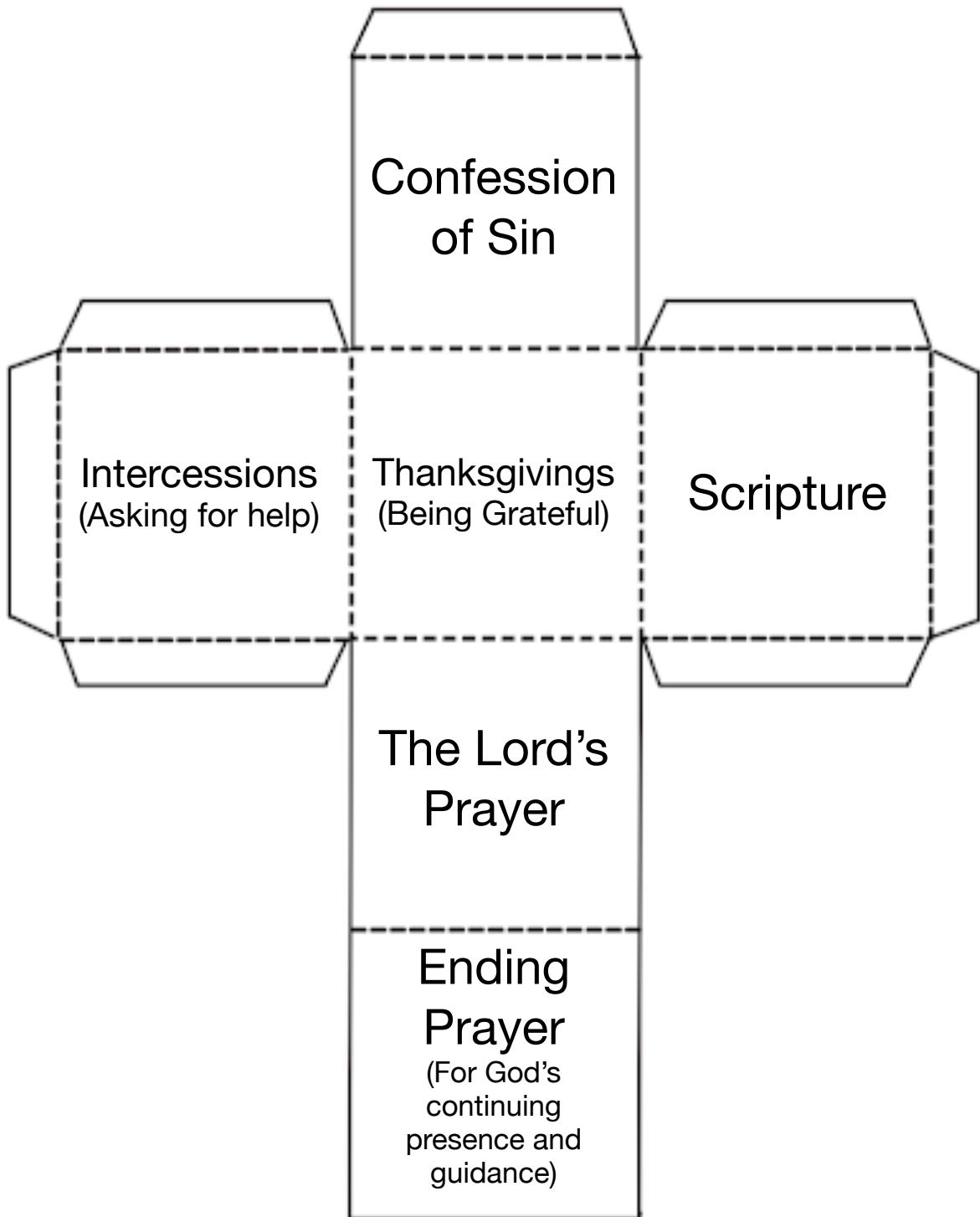
Prayer for God's continued presence and guidance

It can also include music, time of reflection, and the Apostles' Creed.

(Attached is a prayer dice, with these elements included. To shake up worship, role the dice and pray accordingly.)

Cube Pattern

Cut on solid lines • Fold on dashed lines



Lent Week 5: In Service to Purpose

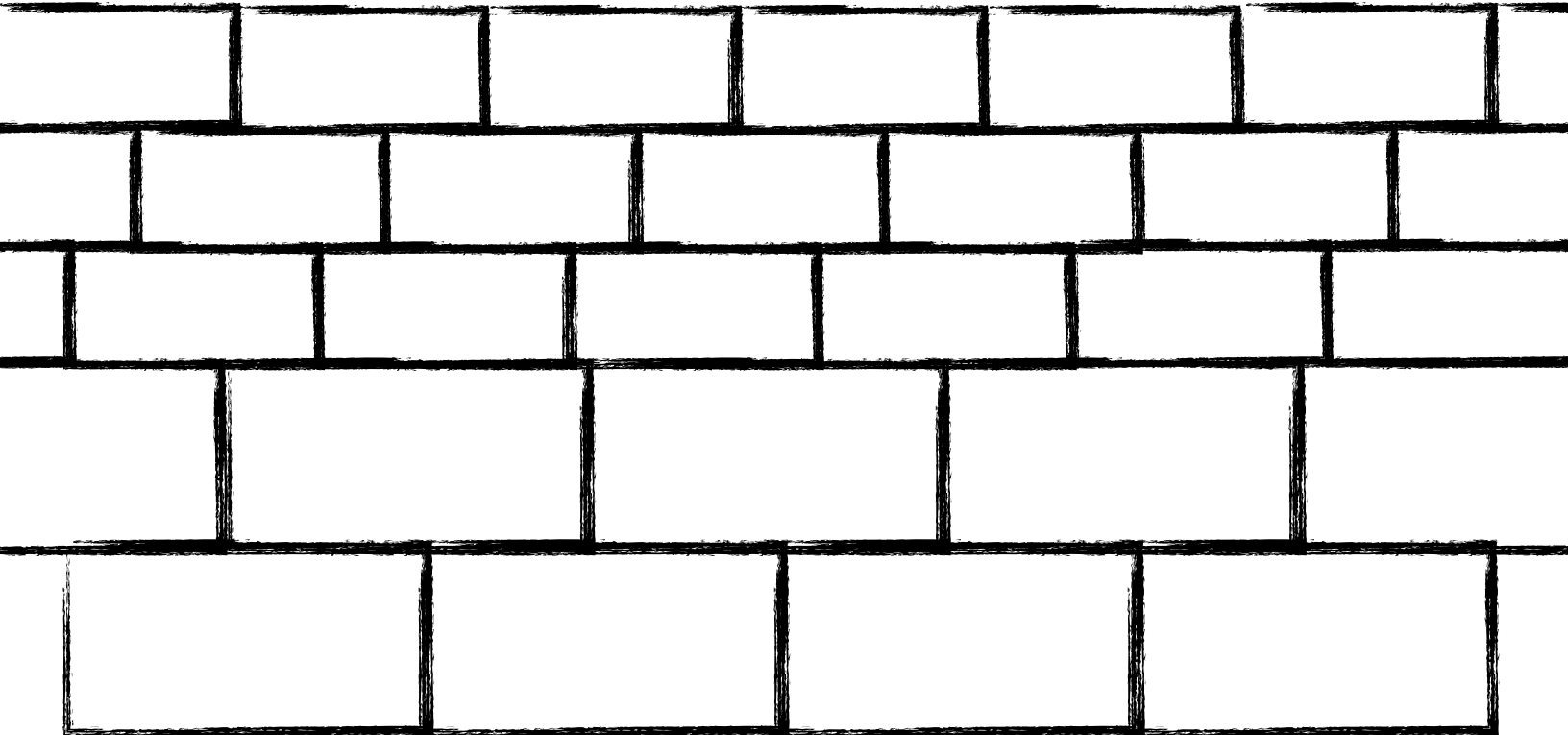
Where do God's priorities shine?

"Whoever serves me must follow me..."

John 12:26

What are the natural places to build from your priorities? What already exists in your time, job, skills, passions? What are extensions that could be attainable and sustainable? What are extensions that St. John's Parish could build from the priorities and strengths for the parish?

Use the big blocks for priorities and the smaller blocks for activities and ministries that build from them.



Lent Week 6: Bearing the Cross

How am I a part of God's developing Gospel?

"They compelled a passer-by, who was coming in from the country, to carry his cross"

Mark 15:21

Take aways - What clutter needs to stay cleared?

Take aways - How can prayer stay foundational?

Take aways - Into what ministries are you called to serve?

What additional steps need to be taken for you to do the work God has called you to do?
