

From the Council President

I have spent many years observing Lent by giving up something that I saw as a luxury or vice: drinking soft drinks, eating desserts, saying negative things. I often wondered if I was truly participating in this act of “fasting” as a way to deepen my own reflection on my faith, practice self-discipline and remember the sacrifices Jesus made during his time in the wilderness, or if I was just going through the motions.

Then about 10 years ago, I was introduced to the concept of adding a new spiritual practice to my life during the 40-day Lenten journey by a good friend. She was planning to add a daily devotion to her routine in hopes of making a new habit that she would continue after Lent. I really liked this idea, and I tried it a few times over these last few years, but it never really stuck with me. It felt more like a New Year’s resolution that I always started strongly but ended up dropping after a week or so.

I have given quite a bit of thought to this over the last week or so as I have begun to think about the coming Lenten season. Selfishly, it feels like we have already given up an awful lot the past 11 months. We have given up seeing friends and family, spending holidays with those we love, gathering together for worship and fellowship. Many have lost jobs, incomes and loved ones during this time.

We have also added a lot of new roles and responsibilities to our normal routines during this pandemic. We have become teachers to children learning virtually, caregivers to family members who were ill, digital event and meeting coordinators for work, holiday, and family Zoom gatherings. Most days I am so exhausted and overwhelmed by it all, I just want to crawl into bed, pull the covers over my head and hibernate until this is all over.

As tempting as hiding away is, this reminds me of a life-changing conversation that I had with my mom as a young adult. She shared with me that sometimes when life feels hard and overwhelming, it helps her to change her perception to focus outside herself and look for ways to help others. This is a lesson that I have tried to live by and model for my own children.

Therefore, this year instead of fasting or adding in a new spiritual practice for Lent, we have decided to find ways to give back. And **I would love to invite you and your family to join my family as we reflect during Lent on how we can be of service to our neighbors and community.** There are many opportunities in our community for giving back, but if you would like some ideas here are a few.

- 1. Give your time** - Volunteering your time isn’t just good for your community; it’s good for your soul.
- 2. Take the Generosity Challenge** - Commit to completing one generous act each day during Lent.
- 3. Donate your resources** - Make a gift to help support programs in your community that give a hand up to neighbors who are struggling.
- 4. Declutter for good** - Each day during Lent put aside one item you no longer need, and after the 40 days is up donate them to an organization that can use it.
- 5. Get educated** - Use Lent as an opportunity to take time and educate yourself on prominent social issues that your community might be facing from hunger and homelessness to human trafficking.
- 6. Find your cause** - Want to do good but aren’t sure where to begin? Here are some projects and organizations that could use your support.

- **The ELCA World Hunger's 40 Days** invites congregations and individual supporters to pledge to end hunger together this Lent. *"As the world has reeled from the effects of a deadly pandemic, we have seen the number of hungry people around the world rise, watched as food pantries and soup kitchens expanded to serve an ever-growing number of guests, and longed together for the time when we "will hunger no more, and thirst no more ... and God will wipe away every tear from [our] eyes"(Revelation 7:16-17)." Visit ELCA.org/hunger for more information and resources.*
- There are also many opportunities to serve others through **outreach ministries at St. Andrew**. During the pandemic many of our ministry partners have seen an increase in the need for support. These include: Habitat For Humanity; Room at the Inn; Christmas Baskets; ELCA World Hunger; Animal Welfare Ministry; Inspiritus (formerly Lutheran Services of Tennessee); WELCA; Navigators; GraceWorks; Meals on Wheels; Saint Paul's Breakfast Ministry; My Friend's House; and Trinity/HOPE.

For information about how to get involved with these ministries visit www.saintandrewchurch.com or contact Zach Harris at zgharris@yahoo.com.

In Christ,

Jen Fisher