



# Lent at Home

## **Lent at Home 2021** **Sterling Mennonite Fellowship**

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed so many things in our world, including how we live out our community life as a church. So much has already looked different, and as we enter the season of Lent, so much is still uncertain. We will not be able to gather for Ash Wednesday like we usually do, and we are unsure of what Easter will bring. But we also do not want to let go of the importance that this season brings into our lives.

Lent is the season of 40 days (6 weeks) before Easter. It is the season of the year where we anticipate and remember Jesus' ministry and journey to the cross. It is a somber time as we prepare to come to the cross to remember Jesus' death once again. In this time, we also remember and lament the suffering and pain present in our lives and world. But it is also hopeful, because we know that the joy of resurrection is just around the corner.

With this Lent at Home guide, we want to provide some ideas and resources that you can use to shape this season as we remain physically distanced from one another. Use what is helpful, and leave what is not. Join together as a family, or use this time to have personal reflection time. However you do it, open yourself up to the leading of the Holy Spirit in your life.

### **Lent and Easter Schedule for 2021**

**February 16:** Shrove Tuesday

**February 17:** Ash Wednesday

**March 28 - April 3:** Holy Week

**March 28:** Palm Sunday

**April 1:** Maundy Thursday

**April 2:** Good Friday

**April 4:** Easter Sunday

### **Spiritual Practices During Lent**

Lent is mostly known as a time for giving up indulgences or taking on practices in order to grow closer to God. These practices allow us to focus on what is most important in life. This can take many forms for different people. Consider fasting from something or taking on a new practice during Lent this year. Some ideas include:

- giving up meat, sweets, or a different kind of food.
- giving up social media, TV, or watching sports.
- giving away possessions or money to help others.
- committing to read your Bible on a regular basis. Perhaps the entire Gospel of John.

- committing to a set-aside time of prayer or going for a prayer walk each day.
- committing to a gratitude, prayer, or reflection journal.
- committing to regularly pray with another person or group of people.
- committing to read a book about faith or justice during Lent.

Maybe there is something specific that God is putting on your heart to do. Maybe none of these ideas resonate with you. That's okay. The goal is not just to pick something to give up or take on; but to grow closer to God in this time. And remember, Sundays are not part of the 40 day count, so if you want to take a break from your fast on Sundays, you can. Think of the Sundays in Lent as little Easters, building the anticipation for the resurrection.

### **Shrove Tuesday (February 16)**

Shrove Tuesday is the last day before Lent. Traditionally, this day is seen as a day for celebration and indulgence before giving up something for Lent. It can be seen in different ways, but one is to celebrate the goodness and provision of God. So if you are planning to giving something up during Lent, use Shrove Tuesday as a last indulgence and prayerfully prepare yourself for what is to come.

As a church, we also want to come together on Shrove Tuesday in order to pause from the stress of our weeks and laugh together. We will be hosting a comedy night with special guest comedian Matt Falk. Join us as we gather over Zoom with four other Mennonite churches.



### **Ash Wednesday (February 17)**

Ash Wednesday is the first day of Lent. It is also the day when the church gathers to remember our human frailty and mortality. On this day, we remember that:

- God is the source of all life.
- we are not God, and therefore we are dependent on God for life.
- we have come from dust, and to dust we shall return.

Ashes are traditionally used to make the symbol of the cross on foreheads during an Ash Wednesday service. It is a visual reminder of this eternal truth - that our bodies will not last in this form forever. We hope in the life that Jesus' death and resurrection brings.

As we will not be having an Ash Wednesday service this year, we invite you to participate at home. There are so many different ways that you can commemorate this day.

- Go on a prayer walk. Notice the contrast in nature between life, death, and new life.
- Take some time to look through old photo albums. Remember the family and friends who have passed away. Reflect on your own life and how you want people to remember you when your time on Earth comes to an end.
- Read through Genesis 1-4. Notice what God did for creation and how the world was made through peace. Ask yourself some of these questions:

- What does it mean for humanity to be created in the image of God?
  - What is the purpose of humanity in God's creation?
  - What is the result of Adam and Eve's disobedience to God?
  - What does the curse mean for us and this world?
  - Where is the hope in this story?
- Take some time to write down some of your laments. They could be things about this world and COVID-19 that frustrate you and make you sad. They could be things happening in your own life and relationships that you wish were different. They could also be your own personal sins that you want to confess to God. Offer them to God by burning the paper into ashes (outside or in a fire place). Take time to reflect on God's presence and forgiveness.
  - Spend some time in silence, turning off all distractions to give yourself space to meditate and pray. Try different prayers, like this corpse prayer. Pray it multiple times during the day.

### **Corpse Prayer**

Be not afraid.

I give thanks to God who created all things good.

In Christ, all things hold together.

I am not entitled to life without death.

I embrace sacred life. I embrace sacred death.

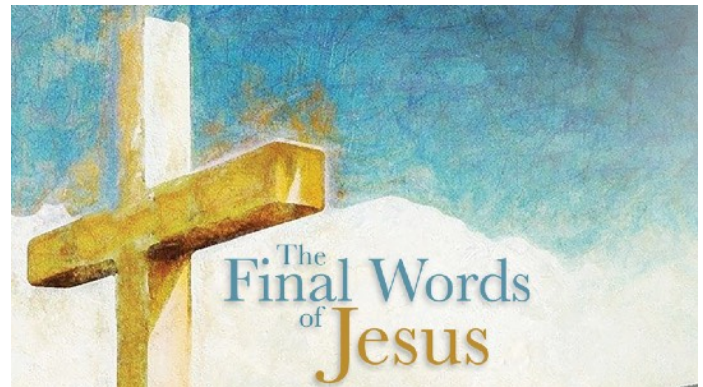
I embrace the growing and the crumbling in between.

Amen.

### **Our Lent/Easter Sermon Series**

Over the season of Lent and into Easter, we will be focusing on the Final Words of Jesus. We will spend our Sundays reflecting on Jesus' words on the cross, what they meant then, and what they mean for us now. We will also explore some post-resurrection stories and the significance of Jesus' words there.

We invite you to join us each Sunday as always. You can prepare yourself by reading the scripture text ahead of time, or reading through an entire Gospel throughout Lent.



### **Other Services**

Look out for more announcements about other services and resources, including our Good Friday, Easter Sunrise, and Easter Sunday services.