



Saint Andrew's Anglican Church

A newsletter ❧ *February 2010*

Dear Friends,

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ!

On Ash Wednesday we begin the season of Lent (Lent consists of the 40 days before Easter, not including Sundays). Lent is a season of seeking to draw close to the Lord by means of altering our daily routine and by fasting.

How have you approached Lent in the past? In what follows I would like to recommend some ways that you might observe Lent this year.

Fasting in Lent: *Food*. There are a number of different ways that we can approach the Lenten fast. If your health permits it, I encourage you to take this fast seriously. You might choose to decrease the amount of food you eat during the day (eating 2 half meals and 1 full meal, for instance) or you might fast from a particular food (like meat or dairy).

Be careful not to take on a fast that is so stringent that it is beyond your reach. Likewise, resist the temptation to fast from something so superficial that your deprivation doesn't really cost you anything. It goes without saying that some of us choose petty and inconsequential things from which to abstain. I am reminded of a fellow who took it upon himself each year to fast from whale meat. Needless to say, that fast did not much affect his life.

We are meant to miss that from which we are fasting. We should notice its absence daily (and preferably throughout the day). This is why (if your health permits) it might be preferable to reduce the total amount that you eat or to choose a major food category from which to fast rather than choosing something relatively superficial.

Whatever you choose to do, try to keep in mind that the fast is a means not an end. That is, we are fasting for a purpose – so as to draw closer to God. Because our ultimate aim is to draw closer to Him, it is a good idea that in addition to your dietary fast you also choose to refrain from some activity (something that occupies time daily) that is a normal part of your daily routine.

Fasting in Lent: *Time*. When I think about fasting from an activity, I like to use St. Paul's phrase "put off & put on" as a guide:

... put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness

(Ephesians 4:22-24).

For instance, you might abstain from watching the television or from listening to music when you're in your car (that is the "put off" aspect). As the "put on" compliment to this, choose a Christian discipline to do instead. For instance, you might use the time and the quiet to pray, or read a Christian book, or to memorize a passage of Scripture or to meditate on some aspect of our Lord's work. Or you may simply give that time to God for Him to do with as He pleases. (In summary, what I'm suggesting is that you choose something that you do everyday and commit to not doing that thing during Lent. With the space that its omission creates, make a commitment to some spiritually helpful discipline.)

Lent is a time of learning. You will likely find that your attempt to keep a holy Lent is a mixture of failure and success. Our failures illustrate to us our weakness and our lack of discipline. We should ask for God's forgiveness when we fail to keep our fast and we should also ask Him to use our failures to teach us what He wants us to learn about ourselves and our need for Him. When we succeed in our disciplines we are reminded that it is when we are weak that we are strong. Our deprivations teach us that the way of Christ (the way of the Cross) is the way of self denial and continual striving after holiness. *Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord* (12:14).

Plan ahead, prayerfully. I encourage you to begin to think about how you will modify your regular day-to-day routine during this season. By planning ahead you may not only find that your Lenten observance is more meaningful but, by God's grace, you may be better prepared to be faithful to your Lenten disciplines.

However it is you decide to seek to draw closer to our Lord this Lent, it is important that you not take on more than you can handle (which can be overwhelming and lead us to give up). Choose something that is sacrificial and costly while at the same time being doable. And above all, be certain to be prayerful throughout your fast.

Attached you will find some further suggestions about keeping a holy Lent.

Finances

God continues to provide for our needs as a mission and we are thankful for the generous and regular tithing of those who are committed to this mission work. Please continue to pray that God would give each of us sacrificially generous hearts and also that the outside support we need would come in each month.

On the Calendar

- **Ash Wednesday** is February 17th. Please join us for the celebration of Holy Communion and the imposition of ashes, 5:30pm.

- Other important dates coming up: Passion Sunday – March 21, Palm Sunday – March 28; Maundy Thursday – April 1; Good Friday – April 2

- **Easter** is April 4th and God willing we will have a morning service that day. Time and location TBD.

Let us pray for one another

- Let us give thanks to God for all the ways that He has been gracious to us and has provided for our needs.

- Let us continue to pray for those of our fellowship who are ill or who have been ill: Luke, Pauline, Sharon, Jonathan, Kate, Dave and Eleanor. Let us also pray for Joe Spink's sister Sontina (her husband is Reggie) who is having a very difficult pregnancy.

- Let us commit the financial needs of our mission to God.

In Christ,
