

Lent is a season of discernment, a season of self-discovery and self-reflection. It is a season for appraisal and correction, as well as a time of preparation for joyful celebration. As the days get longer and the warmth of the sun returns (in the northern hemisphere), Christians focus their hearts and minds on an inner journey with significant implications for our choices and actions – we pray for integrity and sincerity; a union of mind, body and spirit; a matching of our inner life (being and thought) and our external life (doing and action); we place ourselves in the prayer our Lord taught us, *in earth as it is in heaven*.

There has been much to overwhelm and exhaust us over the past year, and our Lenten journey in 2021 needs be about honesty. Satan tried to deceive and tempt our Lord in the desert, and we deceive ourselves when we think we can solve all our own problems, go-it-alone and don't need help from anyone else. There is a need to grieve what has been lost – the special people, the time, the trust, the opportunities, the strength, the ordinary pleasures we often took for granted and now miss so much.

Lent is a time for Christians to remember our Calling – to love and serve the Lord in singleness of heart; to not fall away; to remember the needs of others. If you have been too angry or too afraid to reach out to your church family, please remember you are missed by people – and others need your presence and support too; sometimes what helps us the most is the simple wisdom of connection. No one can take your place.

Lent is a time of renewal; we are continually learning a language of prayer and sacrament, our understanding of our own unique God-given vocation. It takes time, focus and discipline – it is a practice. Christians are always starting again at the beginning – we are always learning what it means to be profoundly loved and to learn to love others in thought, word and deed. Of course we are also learning to acknowledge our failures and short-comings and to forgive others as we ourselves need to be forgiven.

Lent is about stewardship and tradition. The Easter Vigil, when we renew our Baptismal Vows, is the oldest Christian liturgy. This is a season reminding us of the importance of the generations of saints, when we remember the frailty of human life and its passing, but also the hope which is extended across the centuries through scripture, worship and prayer – the work of the holy people in each and every generation as we look after what is important to ensure its survival for future generations.

Lent is a season of oblation - when we offer ourselves and the lives we inhabit back to God.

Lent is a season of involvement and participation in the saving work of a loving God who calls us by name into a community of hope, forming us into the body of Christ in the World.

Please read the Lent Booklet 2021 and reach out to one another in prayerful conversations. The church is still gathering to celebrate the Sacraments and, in addition to Sunday mornings, there will be special services (with music too) in Lent and Holy Week.

Let us pray we will each hear the Call and observe a Holy Lent.

Love one another.