

Liturgy Notes

Lent



For the next forty days, the Church observes the season of **Lent**. Lent is forty days (excluding Sundays) that the Church sets aside for prayer, penitence, fasting, and preparation for Holy Week and Easter. The length of Lent has varied in the history of the church. Our forty-day practice reflects both Jesus' time in the desert (our Gospel for the first Sunday in Lent) and the forty years that the Israelites spent wandering in the desert.

Instead of the colorful hangings we use during the rest of the year, the altar is vested in purple, the traditional Lenten color. The effect is to create an environment where we can focus on prayer and preparation and make a marked difference between this season and all others. The return of our regular hangings and vestments will mark the joy and solemnity of Easter.

Fasting is central to Lent. Many people undertake a discipline of fasting or abstinence during the season, especially on Fridays in Lent. We also fast symbolically from some of the beauty of our worship environment and liturgy.

The Lenten themes of simplicity and repentance are also expressed in our Lenten liturgy. We will begin the Eucharist with **The Great Litany** on the first Sunday in Lent. The Great Litany is part of our Anglican heritage as it was the first liturgy produced in English during the

Reformation. Thomas Cranmer compiled the litany for King Henry VIII in 1544, predating the first *Book of Common Prayer* by about five years.

We will use the traditional version from the Book of Common Prayer. The Litany is penitential, which makes it particularly appropriate for Lent. In the Litany, we remember and pray for the Church, the world, our nation, and those who are sick and suffering.

Litanies were traditionally sung in procession. A procession is an enacted symbol: drawing our minds to the pilgrimage of the Christian life, the movement from distraction to mindfulness, and the journey to the Kingdom of God.

The most noticeable part of our Lenten observance is the **absence of alleluias**. We fast from alleluias during Lent, and they return triumphantly at the Easter Vigil, where Jesus' resurrection is proclaimed.

Our music also reflects the penitential nature of the season. Instead of the *Gloria*, we sing the more penitential *Kyrie eleison* (Lord have mercy. Christ have mercy. Lord have mercy.)

This year, we will use **Eucharistic Prayer One** from the inclusive language liturgy *Enriching our Worship*. This prayer is penitential, emphasizing the crucifixion and redeeming power of Christ's inclusive love.

For our **fraction anthem**, we will sing the *Agnus Dei*, or Lamb of God. The fraction anthem was originally purely functional: The bread was broken into pieces for the faithful, and the wine was poured into chalices. Music was composed to cover the action.

Some ways you can observe Lent during the week at St. Anne's

Book Study and Compline: We will meet at 6:00 pm on February 26th, March 12th, March 19th, March 26th to read and discuss *Being Christian*, by former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams. At 7:00 pm we will have Compline by Candlelight in the church—a quiet prayer service to end the day. All are welcome to attend one or both of these offerings.

Stations of the Cross: The Stations of the Cross is a traditional devotion that remembers the passion and death of Jesus. There are several different versions. The ones on the church walls are the “Scriptural Stations of the Cross.” These stations were hand-colored by Kevin during the Covid-19 lockdown in March-April 2020. You may pray the stations of the cross individually or in groups.

Fasting: Many people undertake some kind of fasting or abstinence during Lent. Fridays in Lent are particularly penitential. In the Roman Catholic Church, meat is forbidden on Lenten Fridays. In our tradition, there are two fast days: **Ash Wednesday** and **Good Friday**.

Fasting and abstaining from food help us reorient ourselves to God, but there are other ways to fast. Are there things you can give up for Lent to focus on what is truly important? Are there things you can take on to help reorient your mind to God?

Prayer: A renewed dedication to prayer is a fruitful Lenten discipline. You can spend some time in quiet personal prayer or study. Perhaps you may want to disengage from some of the distractions that are so common in our modern lives: phones, social media, the evening news—and spend just a few moments in quietness, listening to God’s voice or praying Morning or Evening prayer (you can find both services online.)

Almsgiving: In Lent, we remember those in need and offer alms to relieve suffering. You could donate the money you save from eating out during Lent to CAP or volunteer at the Shepherd's Table. Episcopal Relief and Development is a ministry of the Episcopal Church that helps those affected by disaster.

I wish everyone a blessed and holy Lent, and may our observance this year remind us that God is merciful and loving and welcomes all. May we work to reflect God's grace in our own lives and in our community during this holy time.

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