

# *Preparing for New Life:*

*2019 Guide to Lenten Practices for Families and Adults*



## *What is Lent?*

Lent is a period of 40 days (excluding Sundays) between Ash Wednesday and Easter. It's a season of preparation, repentance, and renewal culminating in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

For us as followers of Jesus, it's a time to perform, deepen, and renew the faith practices and rituals that we strive to live out every day of the year. In particular, Lent is a time to:

- [Pray & Grow](#)—commit yourself to a new prayer or faith formation practice that will deepen your connection to God;
- [Fast](#)—choose to “give up” something during Lent that will yield more time, money, or space in your life to give to God and others; and
- [Serve](#)—find a way to love your neighbors that spreads the love of Jesus.

Below you will find some suggestions for different practices that you might consider taking on during Lent. These lists are by no means exhaustive, but they'll give you some guidance to get started. Ultimately, there are no “Presbyterian requirements” for Lent. Instead, think of Lent as a season to recommit your life to God. And if you decide to take on a Lenten practice or two, ask yourself one simple question: Will this practice help me to love God and love my neighbors more deeply?

## *Pray & Grow*

*“Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ.”*

*~2 Peter 3:18*

Lent can be a time for spiritual renewal and growth. It’s a good time to take on a daily or weekly spiritual practice that might be new to you or that fits the season. This practice can take many different forms—prayer, silence, meditation, devotions, Bible study, or creative arts to name just a few.

### Praying & Growing for Children+Families:

1. *Daily Family Prayer:* Gather as a family to pray together each morning and/or evening. You can choose your own prayers each day, or if you’d prefer some structure you can download a Lenten prayer calendar on our website.
2. *Video Devotions:* We’ve created four family devotions that you can do together at home. Each of these four devotions will center on a different day of Holy Week: Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter. They’ll incorporate a variety of learning methods, including reading, videos, games, and discussion questions. Download the devotions from our website.

### Praying & Growing for Youth+Adults:

1. *First Pres E-Devotions:* Each weekday during Lent, we’ll publish a brief devotion written by a member of our own congregation. On Saturdays we’ll send out different spiritual practices to try out, and on Sundays there will be a brief reflection based on the lectionary texts. You can [sign up here to receive these daily devotions by email](#), or you can find them posted on our church Facebook page each day.
2. *Presbyterians for Earth Care Devotions:* These Lenten devotions—written by Presbyterian pastors and leaders from across the country—center on

creation and earth care. There are weekly devotions throughout the season, with special devotions for each Holy Day during Lent. [Download it here.](#)

3. *Daily Office of Prayer*: The PC(USA) Book of Common Worship guides you through the daily “office” of prayer. It provides prayer and scripture for up to four times of prayer each day (morning, midday, evening, and close of day). You can [download a PDF of the Book of Common Worship](#) (daily prayers start on page 491), you can [purchase a paperback](#) of the BCW, or you can download the app on your smartphone (search “Daily Prayer PC(USA)”) for a user-friendly version of the daily prayers.
4. *D365*: These brief daily devotions invite you to slow down for a few moments and center yourself in God’s presence. In five simple steps—pause, listen, think, pray, go—these daily devotions can help create a new rhythm for your spiritual life. [Follow this link to the D365 website.](#)
5. *Books*: If you want to add a biblical learning experience alongside of a spiritual practice, you might consider reading [“The Last Week”](#) (Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan) or [“Jesus, the Final Days”](#) (N.T. Wright and Craig Evans). Each of these books are detailed accounts of Jesus’ final week written by renowned biblical scholars.

## *Fast*

*“Isn’t this the fast I choose...sharing your bread with the hungry and bringing the homeless poor into your house?”*

*~Isaiah 58:6-7*

One of the most common practices during Lent is fasting, which can take many different forms. To fast is to give something up—a food, a habit, or a way we spend our time or money. The point of our fasting is not simply to make us suffer, but instead to re-focus our attention on Jesus and our commitment to be his disciples. So, if we choose to give something up for Lent, we should ask ourselves: How will this fast help me love God and love my neighbors more deeply?

### Fasting for Children+Families:

1. *Technology Fast*—give up or cut back from different forms of technology. For example:

- a. Fast from screens on a certain day of the week, or during a certain hour each day during Lent
- b. Fast from specific apps during Lent
- c. Fast from video games during Lent

*Wonder: How can we spend the time this “extra” time in a way that honors God?*

2. *Spending Fast*— pick something(s) you regularly spend money on that you will give up buying during Lent. For example:
  - a. Don’t buy desserts/sweets during Lent
  - b. Cut back on eating out at restaurants during Lent
  - c. Suspend your Netflix account for Lent

*Wonder: How much money did we save from not buying this item, and how can we spend that money in a way that spreads God’s love?*

3. *Fast of Things*— During Lent, decide which possessions you could give away to others. For example:
  - i. Each night (or at the end of each week), bring the possessions you’re giving away. Each person go around and share what they’re giving away and how they hope someone else can use it.
  - ii. Set a family goal for how many boxes or bags of items you can give away. Then, take a family trip to an organization to donate these items together.

*Wonder: Where/to whom can I give these possessions that will bring others joy and bring these possessions new life?*

### Youth+Adults:

1. *Technology Fast*—give up or cut back from different forms of technology. For example:
  - a. Fast from social media (or a particular social media platform)
  - b. Fast from screens on a certain day of the week, or during a certain hour each day during Lent
  - c. Fast from specific apps during Lent

d. Fast from video games during Lent

*Reflect: How can I spend the time this “extra” time in a way that honors God?*

2. *Energy Fast*—Follow the “Tread Lightly” Lent calendar and take one small action each day during Lent that helps you become more aware of your energy usage and limit it where possible. [Download the calendar here.](#)

*Reflect: How can I live more sustainably and better care for God’s creation?*

3. *Spending Fast*— pick something(s) you regularly spend money on that you will give up buying during Lent.

*Reflect: How much did I save from not buying this item, and how can I spend that money in a way that spreads God’s love?*

4. *Food Fast*—Fast from eating during daylight hours on a certain day of the week.

*Reflect: What steps can I take to better love my neighbors who don’t have enough food to eat?*

## Serve

*“This commandment we have from God: Those who claim to love God ought to love their brother and sister also.”*

*~1 John 4:21*

As Christians, we are called to love and serve our neighbors in everything we do. Lent is a season when we double down on our commitment to serve. When we serve our neighbors, not only do we share the love of Christ, but we also open our hearts to receiving the love of Christ in return.

Serving for Children+Families:

1. Lake County Haven—Join forces with a few other First Pres families and kids on Sunday, April 7 to prepare meals for our homeless neighbors. [Email Emily Summers](#) to RSVP.
2. Bernie’s Book Bank—Volunteer to sort, tag, and bag books that will be given to children who may not have many books at home. [Sign up to volunteer](#) online.
3. Food Drive—Collect one non-perishable food item every day in a box, pray for the person who will receive it, and then at the end of Lent donate the food to a pantry or shelter (e.g. the [Libertyville Township Food Pantry](#) or the [COOL Food Pantry](#));
4. Feed My Starving Children—Families with children ages 5+ can pack meals that will be shipped around the world to help feed hungry children and adults. [You can sign up online.](#)
5. PADS Donation—Donate an item on the PADS “wish list”: a play kitchen and accessories (or similar item); play baby strollers; area rugs; bean bags. These items will help make a fun and inviting play space for the children who stay overnight with their families at our church. [Email Kathy Matlin](#) if you’d like to make a donation. There are also [hands-on ways to serve at PADS.](#)

#### Serving for Youth+Adults:

1. PADS—There are many ways to serve at PADS. [Read more on our website and sign up to volunteer.](#)
2. Mobile Food Pantry—[Read more on our website](#) and [email Sue Ellen Skeens](#) to volunteer.
3. Group Service Opportunity—If there’s an organization or a service project that you feel passionate about and you’d like to coordinate a group from the church to participate, [contact Pastor Ryan](#) with your idea.