

This year during Lent we will explore the greatest commandment of Jesus- to love God, and your neighbour as yourself. We are known to be a friendly church- and I see evidence of that every Sunday. But how well do we really know what is going in the life of the person sitting next to us? As Christians we are called to gather in community, to be brothers and sisters in Christ. This means that we are called to get to know each other deeply. During our worship services we will get to know each other by hearing from members of our church family about the joys and challenges of their lives. We will hear about what it is like to be a refugee, a teenager, a member of the LGBTQ2 community, a newcomer to Canada, a single person and what it is like to live with grief. Join us each Sunday as we take the commandment of Jesus seriously.



In his 2016 Lenten message, the pope writes, “Indifference to our neighbor and to God also represents a real temptation for us Christians.

Describing this phenomenon he calls the globalization of indifference, Pope Francis writes that “whenever our interior life becomes caught up in its own interests and concerns, there is no longer room for others, no place for the poor. God’s voice is no longer heard, the quiet joy of his love is no longer felt, and the desire to do good fades.” He continues that, “We end up being incapable of feeling compassion at the outcry of the poor, weeping for other people’s pain, and feeling a need to help them, as though all this were someone else’s responsibility and not our own.

But when we fast from this indifference, we can begin to feast on love. In fact, Lent is the perfect time to learn how to love again. Jesus—the great protagonist of this holy season—certainly showed us the way. In him, God descends all the way down to bring everyone up. In his life and his ministry, no one is excluded.

## † LENTEN PRAYER

God of love,  
As in Jesus Christ you gave yourself to us, so may we give ourselves to you, living according to your holy will. Keep our feet firmly in the way where Christ leads us; Help our lips speak the truth that Christ teaches us; Fill our bodies with the life that is Christ within us. In his holy name we pray, Amen.

## † LENTEN PRACTICES

### Plug into the Power of Prayer

Use scripture for your reflection and prayer time. Each week we will offer you a “prayer vitamin”, a short verse from scripture to take home with you. Look for the purple heart on the candle table. Use the verse in your quiet time. Repeat it silently or out loud. Ponder how it makes a difference to you.

**Extra challenge:** memorize the verse, it will come back to you when you need it! A Jewish rabbi said, “We are to write the scripture on our hearts so that when our hearts break, God’s word falls into them.

### Plug into the Power of Fasting

“What are you giving up for Lent?” It’s a question a lot of people will get these next few days. If you want to change your body, perhaps alcohol and candy is the way to go. But if you want to change your heart, a harder fast is needed. This narrow road is gritty, but it isn’t sterile. It will make room in ourselves to experience a love that can make us whole and set us free.

Choose ONE thing to fast from this Lent. Choose only one. That will give you 6 weeks to anchor the practice. Spend some time in prayer so that God can help you decide what to choose. This may take a few days.

Once you have chosen, begin by identifying one behavior that you will put in place to help you with your fast. You might:

- set aside some time each day
- wear something to help you remember your fast
- keep a journal
- each evening, take time to review your day
- expect to make mistakes, the point is not in being perfect but to see where the practice takes you

**One Suggestion:** The practice of fasting from food is ancient and wide spread in religious traditions. Try fasting from one meal a week. Give the money you would have spent for the food to someone who needs it more than you do. Or bring it to the church and we will send it to First United Mission on the downtown eastside to help provide food for their ministry.