

## A Word from Interim Pastor Kim

We are just a few days away from the beginning of our Lenten Journey. **Ash Wednesday, March 5<sup>th</sup>** is the beginning of the 40 days of Lent for 2025. If you've ever tried to count the 40 days, you have to remember that Sundays are not counted in Lent. We have Sundays in Lent but not of Lent. (Semantics)

From the earliest days of the Christian faith, people have followed the Theophany of God, what we call the Epiphany of Christ, with fasting and praying. They choose 40 days because it lines up with Jesus going into the wilderness for 40 days right after his baptism. Epiphany, the baptism of Jesus, 40 days of fasting and prayer – then the new Christians were baptized. The trouble was it didn't line up with Easter.

In these early years, decades, centuries, of the Christian faith, it was very hard to have a set calendar as everything they did was illegal. Christians were being rounded up and put to death quite frequently. So any activities, any church liturgies or traditions that were being formed were all very clandestine.

That is, until 325, AD, after Constantine, the Emperor of Rome, granted Christians the right to practice their faith without threat of death, a Christian calendar year of Liturgical Seasons began to take shape.

Where do you begin? What's the most important Festival Day in the Christian Church? The most important day in all of our liturgical seasons? Easter! The day of Jesus' resurrection. (This is why Sundays are not counted in Lent. All Sundays are considered "little" Easters.) You have probably noticed over the years that Easter is not the same day every year, as is Christmas, or even Epiphany, January 6. Those dates are always those dates. Easter, not so much.

We had to align Easter with Passover. It was during Passover that Jesus shared a meal with his disciples and instituted our Sacrament of Holy Communion. So, it was determined that Easter would be the first Sunday, after the first full moon after the Spring Equinox. Got that? Easter can be at the end of March or any of the first three weeks of Easter. That's it. Just wait til you play Bible Trivia again! You've got this!

40 days of Lent line up with Jesus being in the desert for 40 days. 40 days of temptation. How much do we align ourselves with that? We do not fast for 40 days and nights. We do come to church midweek and share a simple soup supper in remembrance of the fasting of Jesus. Tradition has been that Christians give up something for Lent. (Chocolate was a biggie when I was a kid.) Do you remember the 25 cent folders you used to get during Lent? Oh yes! I'd tape my quarters in those things so tight nobody was getting them out! 40 quarters was \$10.00. That was a lot of money when I was a kid.

When I was in Seminary, they introduced the idea of adding something to our Spiritual journey during these 40 days. Bible readings. Extra Prayer. Taking on a project – like volunteering at a food bank, or nursing home. It's hard to do those sorts of things anymore because of health regulations and liability laws. What other ways can you add to your spiritual footprint?

When I was growing up Roman Catholics didn't eat meat on Fridays – ever, not just in Lent. They don't follow that practice anymore. However, fasting for one meal a week in Lent, or giving up meat one day every week in Lent is something to consider.

I pray that these 40 days will be a time for you to walk with Jesus. Lean on him. Learn from him. Draw close to him.

Blessings.