



CHRIST
THE REDEEMER

-PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH-

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT
February 26, 2023

Welcome to CHRIST THE REDEEMER...

We're glad you've joined us. Whether you have followed Jesus your whole life or you can't remember the last time you stepped foot in a church, we want you to feel welcome to come as you are and worship with our church family. If you have any questions about our church or where to find something, please don't hesitate to ask. We're excited about what God is doing among us as we seek to live, grow and serve as followers of Jesus in Portland and in our surrounding neighborhoods. So, welcome to CTR, we'd love to have you as part of our family.

During our service, our nursery is open for babies who are crawlers through 3-year-olds. If you need help finding the nursery area, please ask any of our greeters!

Children's Church is in session. After the blessing each week, children age 4 and up are welcome to go to Children's Church. They will re-join their families after the sermon.

THE RHYTHM OF OUR WORSHIP

On the road to Emmaus (Luke 24), when Jesus' disciples found themselves troubled and confused, Jesus met them along the way. When they confessed their troubles and doubts to Him, His words and presence began to change them. He unfolded God's Word to them, pointing to His own person and work. He dined with them, giving thanks and breaking bread. The disciples recognized their Lord's presence with them and hurried to tell others the good news.

In the Emmaus story, we recognize the pattern of historic Christian worship as it began to take shape. Our worship liturgy at Christ the Redeemer moves through a specific rhythm: God **SUMMONS** us as His people, God **SANCTIFIES** us to Himself, God **SPEAKS** to us in His Word, God **STRENGTHENS** us at His table, and God **SENDS** us into the world to share His grace.

The emphasis throughout our worship is upon God's action and our appropriate response. In worship, we rehearse the gospel message of Jesus' death and resurrection and are caught up into the mission of the Triune God. The flow of our liturgy aims at drawing us further into the life of the Trinity as children of God and then impelling us outward into our world.

-adapted from City Church Philadelphia [Guide to Our Worship](#)

G O D S U M M O N S

[P R A I S E]

C A L L T O W O R S H I P

[L] Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and all that is within me,
bless His holy name.
Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and do not forget all His benefits —

[P] **As a father has compassion for his children,
so the Lord has compassion for those who fear Him.
For He knows how we were made;
He remembers that we are dust.
As for mortals, their days are like grass;
they flourish like a flower of the field;
for the wind passes over it, and it is gone,
and its place knows it no more.**

[L] But the steadfast love of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting
on those who fear Him,
and His righteousness to children's children,
to those who keep His covenant
and remember to do His commandments.
Let us bless the Lord, with all we have within us,
let us bless His holy name.

Adapted from Psalm 103

S O N G

ALL HAIL THE POWER OF JESUS' NAME

GOD SANCTIFIES

[RENEWAL]

CONFESSION OF SIN

[All] **Almighty God, our Redeemer, in our weakness we have failed to be your messengers of forgiveness and hope. Renew us by your Holy Spirit, that we may follow your commands and proclaim your reign of love, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

based on Psalm 130:3-6

TIME OF SILENT REFLECTION AND CONFESSION

SONG

HAVE MERCY

WORDS OF COMFORT AND ASSURANCE OF PARDON

[L] He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Colossians 1:13-14

[All] **Thanks be to God!**

SONG

BUILD YOUR KINGDOM HERE

LIFE OF THE PEOPLE
[ANNOUNCEMENTS]

NEW TO CTR? Welcome! If you would like to connect, learn more about our church or subscribe to our weekly announcement email, please use this QR code.



THE PEACE OF GOD
and THE BLESSING OF THE CHILDREN

[L] May the peace of the Lord be always with you.

[P] **And also with you.**

[L] People of God, what is our prayer for these and all our children?

[All] **May the Lord be with you.**

[Children] **And also with you.**

G O D S P E A K S

[W O R D]

S O N G

THIS IS MY FATHER'S WORLD

S C R I P T U R E

Matthew 6:7-13; Psalm 72

Read by Moriah Peaslee

The Lord's Prayer

⁷“And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. ⁸Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. ⁹Pray then like this:

“Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.

¹⁰Your kingdom come,
your will be done,

on earth as it is in heaven.

¹¹Give us this day our daily bread,

¹²and forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.

¹³And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

Give the King Your Justice

Of Solomon.

72 Give the king your justice, O God,
and your righteousness to the royal son!

²May he judge your people with righteousness,
and your poor with justice!

- ³ Let the mountains bear prosperity for the people,
and the hills, in righteousness!
- ⁴ May he defend the cause of the poor of the people,
give deliverance to the children of the needy,
and crush the oppressor!
- ⁵ May they fear you^[a] while the sun endures,
and as long as the moon, throughout all generations!
- ⁶ May he be like rain that falls on the mown grass,
like showers that water the earth!
- ⁷ In his days may the righteous flourish,
and peace abound, till the moon be no more!
- ⁸ May he have dominion from sea to sea,
and from the River^[b] to the ends of the earth!
- ⁹ May desert tribes bow down before him,
and his enemies lick the dust!
- ¹⁰ May the kings of Tarshish and of the coastlands
render him tribute;
may the kings of Sheba and Seba
bring gifts!
- ¹¹ May all kings fall down before him,
all nations serve him!
- ¹² For he delivers the needy when he calls,
the poor and him who has no helper.
- ¹³ He has pity on the weak and the needy,
and saves the lives of the needy.
- ¹⁴ From oppression and violence he redeems their life,
and precious is their blood in his sight.
- ¹⁵ Long may he live;
may gold of Sheba be given to him!
May prayer be made for him continually,
and blessings invoked for him all the day!
- ¹⁶ May there be abundance of grain in the land;

on the tops of the mountains may it wave;
may its fruit be like Lebanon;
and may people blossom in the cities
like the grass of the field!

¹⁷ May his name endure forever,
his fame continue as long as the sun!
May people be blessed in him,
all nations call him blessed!

¹⁸ Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel,
who alone does wondrous things.

¹⁹ Blessed be his glorious name forever;
may the whole earth be filled with his glory!
Amen and Amen!

²⁰ The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended.

[L] The grass withers and the flower fades,
but the Word of God stands forever.

Isaiah 40:8

The Word of the Lord.

[P] **Thanks be to God.**

Sermon Series:
KINGDOM PRAYER:
THE LORD'S PRAYER

Sermon:
"YOUR KINGDOM COME, YOUR WILL BE DONE"

Rev. Josh Henderson
Assistant Pastor

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

Heidelberg Catechism Q & A #'S 123 & 124

[L] What is the second petition?

[P] **Thy Kingdom come. That is: So rule us by Thy Word and Spirit that more and more we submit to Thee. Preserve and increase Thy Church. Destroy the works of the devil, every power that raises itself against Thee, and every conspiracy against Thy holy Word. Do all this until the fullness of Thy kingdom comes, wherein Thou shalt be all in all.**

[L] What is the third petition?

[P] **Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. That is: Grant that we and all men may deny our own will, and without murmuring obey Thy will, for it alone is good. Grant us also that everyone may carry out the duties of his office and calling as willingly and faithfully as the angels in heaven.**

PRAYER OF THE PEOPLE

Led by Sharie Pillsbury

THE LORD'S PRAYER

**Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come; your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:
For yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.**

G O D S T R E N G T H E N S

[T A B L E]

C E L E B R A T I N G H O L Y C O M M U N I O N

A Word about Communion: Communion is the family meal of Christians. Baptized believers actively looking to Jesus as their hope for salvation are warmly invited to share in this meal with us as our brothers and sisters.

- *Please approach the servers by coming up the middle aisle and returning to your seat via the outside aisles.*
- *Once you receive the bread and wine/juice, please hold on to it as you return to your seat. We will partake together as one body after everyone has received the elements.*
- *Children and those who are not partaking are also welcome to approach the servers for a prayer or word of God's blessing. We ask that you fold your hands as you approach so the server is aware.*
- *Please dispose of your communion cups and any other trash in the wastebasket located at the back of the sanctuary or the one near the exit at the front of the sanctuary as you leave today. Thank you!*

S O N G : D O X O L O G Y [Old 100th]

W O R D S O F I N V I T A T I O N & I N S T I T U T I O N

G R E A T P R A Y E R O F T H A N K S G I V I N G

M E M O R I A L A C C L A M A T I O N

[L] Lift up your hearts.

[P] **We lift them up to the Lord.**

[L] Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

[P] **It is right for us to give thanks and praise.**

P A R T A K I N G O F T H E E L E M E N T S

PRAYERS OF REFLECTION

Prayer for Those Searching for Truth

Lord Jesus, you claim to be the Way, the Truth and the Life. If what you claim is true, please guide me, teach me, and open to me the reality of who you are. Grant that I might be undaunted by the cost of following you as I consider the reasons for doing so. Give me an understanding for you that is coherent, convincing, and that leads to the life that you promise. Amen.

Prayer of Belief

Lord Jesus, I admit that I am weaker and more sinful than I ever before believed, but through you, I am more loved and accepted than I ever dared to hope. I thank you for paying my debt, bearing my punishment on the cross and offering forgiveness and new life. Knowing that you have been raised from the dead, I turn from my sins and receive you as my Savior. Amen.

Prayer for Those Struggling with Sin

Lord Jesus, grant that I may see in you the fulfillment of all my needs, and may turn from every false satisfaction to feed on you, the true and living bread. Enable me to lay aside the sin that clings so closely, and run with perseverance the race set before me, looking only to you, the author and finisher of my faith. Amen.

Prayer of Commitment

Lord Jesus, you have called us to follow you in baptism and in a life of committed discipleship in your church. Grant that I may take the necessary steps to be one with your people, and live in the fullness of your Spirit. Amen.

COMMUNION SONG
LET YOUR KINGDOM COME

G O D S E N D S

[MISSION]

R E S P O N S E S O F J O Y

O F F E R I N G O U R L I V E S A N D
R E S O U R C E S

[our tithes and offerings]

If you would like to give online, please use this QR code:
This takes you to our online giving portal.



S O N G

J E S U S S H A L L R E I G N

B E N E D I C T I O N A N D S E N D I N G

[L] Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Galatians 1:2-5

[All] **Thanks be to God.**

HIGHLIGHTS...

February 26, 2023

NEW TO CTR? Welcome! If you would like to connect, learn more about our church or subscribe to our weekly announcement email, please use this QR code.



COMMUNITY GROUPS:

Community groups are one of the primary places that we get to know one another, care for another, and help one another grow in the gospel. If you are interested in joining a group, please contact Pastor Josh Henderson [info on back of OOW].

There are currently groups in the following communities:

PORTLAND (2 groups)
SOUTH PORTLAND
LAKES REGION

SCARBOROUGH
FREEPORT/DURHAM
NEW GLOUCESTER

CTR KIDS LENDING LIBRARY

We are so excited about our CTR Kids Lending Library! Before and after church, please visit the library cart in the back of the sanctuary and choose a Gospel-centered book to take home with you for the week! There are books available for all age groups, and some parenting resources as well!

ON THE CALENDAR:

- SUN, FEB 26 **TEEN BIBLE STUDY – 9 AM**
This study will be held at CTR every other Sunday.
For more information, please contact Emma Holloway @ 207.737.9691 or unmemiriamemma@gmail.com
- MON, FEB 27 **WOMENS’ WEEKLY BIBLE STUDY – 6 PM**
@ the home of Laura Wiersma, 29 Lilac Lane, New Gloucester (GPS does not recognize this address so please use 54 N Pownal Road - that will get you to Lilac Lane). A light meal will be served.
Curriculum: “Romans: At His Feet” (Blanton/Gordon)
- FRI, MAR 3 **FRIDAY PLAY GROUP – 10 AM – 1 PM**
Calling all stay-at-home moms or dads! Plan to join us at playgroup every Friday at 10am. We are at a different location every week, so keep a lookout on Instagram (@ctrportlandkids) for more information! Any and everyone is welcome with their children. It has been a joy to fellowship with parents from CTR and also meet other parents from the greater Portland area! Please contact Abby Reid if you have any questions.
- SUN, MAR 5 **TWO LIGHTS SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASS – 9 AM**
For children in 3rd-5th grade! Join us Sunday mornings for treats + fun while deepening your knowledge and faith in the Gospel! For more information, please contact Ally Henderson (ahenderson@ctrportland.org).
- SUN, MAR 5 **TEEN GAME DAY – 3-5 PM**
All teens are invited. Location: North Yarmouth Academy (Russell Building)
Snacks will be provided!
- SUN, MAR 12 **TEEN BIBLE STUDY – 9 AM**
This study will be held at CTR every other Sunday.
For more information, please contact Emma Holloway @ 207.737.9691 or unmemiriamemma@gmail.com
- WED, MAR 15 **BOOKS & BUBBLY – 7 PM @ 64 Brook Rd., Portland**
Ladies: Our next book is *Cry, The Beloved Country* [Alan Paton]. For more information, please contact Claire Roberts. clerkus@gmail.com or 956-270-2565.

MERCY TEAM: SERVE WITH THE ROOT CELLAR

Our Mercy Team is supporting the effort to provide food for the many asylum-seeking families that are housed at the Motel 6 in Portland. The Root Cellar needs regular assistance packaging and delivering meals. We hope to send regular volunteers to help meet this important and tangible need. There are opportunities to serve between 4:30pm and 6:30pm, Monday- Saturday.

Please contact Josh (jhenderson@ctrportland) for more info.

If you would like to package meals,
use this QR code to sign up:



If you can help with meal delivery,
Use this QR code to sign up:



CTR PRAYER CHAIN:

If you have a prayer request or would like to join the prayer chain at CTR, please send an email to prayer@ctrportland.org. The coordinators, Carol Fecteau or Megan Lafuta, will be happy to help.

MISSIONS SPOTLIGHT

James & Kelly Broadway

The Broadway's are missionaries with Campus Outreach and are currently in the process of beginning a new ministry location in Cape Town South Africa. Campus Outreach believes that the university campus is one of the most strategic fields of ministry available in the world today. Students' openness to ideas and hunger for knowledge is generally unequalled elsewhere or at any other stage of life.

James has asked for focused prayer during this month when the new university term starts:

1. *That God would give us wisdom in building out our campus plan during the investigation phase, discerning the best places to engage students.*
2. *For us to establish a team culture that is saturated with vision of Glorifying God and making disciples that will be reproduced into students and future staff.*
3. *Our team members to settle over the coming weeks.*
4. *That knowing Christ would be our highest joy and deepest motivation in ministry.*

SERVE...

At CTR, we believe that part of what makes the church a beautiful place is that it draws people with various passions and gifts into one body. Below are some opportunities to use your passions and gifts to serve one another and our local community.

CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES Ally Henderson
Phone: 757.375.3757
E-mail: ahenderson@ctrportland.org

Abby Reid
Phone: 404.723.4448
E-mail: areid@ctrportland.org

GREETER MINISTRY Abby Reid
Phone: 404.723.4448
E-mail: areid@ctrportland.org

MUSIC..... Kendra Hollen
Phone: 207.272.4104
E-mail: khollen@ctrportland.org

MEALS MINISTRY Tammy Locke
Phone: 207.671.0936
E-mail: tam74maine@gmail.com

SET-UP..... Cheryl Sullivan
Phone: 207-205-1437
E-mail: ctr@ctrportland.org

PRAYER COORDINATOR Carol Fecteau
Phone: 207.650.5529
E-mail: prayer@ctrportland.org

MISSIONS COORDINATOR.....Kathi Favre
Phone: 207.298.2089
E-mail: klfavre@gmail.com

ON KEEPING HOLY LENT

Rev. Craig Higgins, Trinity Presbyterian Church, Rye, NY

People from different religious backgrounds have very different reactions to the season of Lent. Some grow up in churches where Lent is observed, but with little to no real explanation. Whether observed as a time of strict austerity or merely as a time of forgoing a few simple pleasures, in such cases Lent may seem like an empty, meaningless ritual.

On the other hand, some grow up in church traditions where Lent is not observed at all. These folks may think of Lenten observance as, at best, a hollow custom, or, at worst, quite foreign to authentic Christianity. As a matter of fact, many who grew up in church have the same the question as those who didn't: "What *is* Lent, anyway?"

THE MEANING OF LENT

Lent's origin is hidden in the early centuries of church history, but we do know that it originated as a time of preparation for Easter. From the church's earliest days, the resurrection of Christ celebrated not only each week (on Sunday, the Lord's Day), but also in a special festival of the resurrection. This festival we call Easter Day, and it is celebrated as the Sunday of Sundays!

Lent, as a season of preparation, is traditionally focused on repentance. Speaking biblically, to repent means to make a change in our attitudes, words, and lifestyles. As 16th century reformer Martin Luther taught, the Christian life in its

totality is a life of repentance. Beginning when we first commit our lives to Christ, and continuing throughout our lives, we are more and more turning away from sin and self-centeredness and more and more turning to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Even though a repentant spirit should mark all we do, it is still appropriate that certain times be set aside for a particular focus on repentance.¹ The church has traditionally done this at the Lenten season (and, to a lesser extent, in the pre-Christmas season of Advent).

Lent, therefore, is a time for focusing on the heart, a time for asking questions about our spiritual health:

- What are my characteristic sins, and how can I work and pray for change?
- What idols have captured my imagination so that my love for the living God has grown cold?
- In what ways is my devotion to Christ and his church less than wholehearted?

The Lenten season is the spiritual equivalent of an annual physical exam; it's a time to take stock of our lives, our hearts.

Keeping Lent, however, is potentially dangerous, precisely because of this focus on the heart. After all, it is much easier to read a book on prayer than to spend time leisurely speaking with our heavenly Father. It is much easier to fast from certain foods than it is to

¹ In much the same way, we celebrate the resurrection of Christ each Sunday, but especially at Easter; and while we should always thank

God for the Incarnation, we especially celebrate it at Christmas. These periodic reminders keep us from becoming forgetful and imbalanced.

turn from idols of the heart. It is much easier to write a check than to spend time in ministries of mercy. Consequently, Lent is easily trivialized. The point of Lent is not to give up chocolate; it's to give up sin!

Even with this warning, however, we need to beware of going from one extreme to the other. Yes, it is possible so completely to *externalize* your Lenten observance that you end up trivializing it. Yet we need to remember that we are not purely spiritual beings. God created humans as *physical* beings; we are psychosomatic creatures, a “nexus of body and soul.”² What we do physically has an effect on us spiritually—and we neglect this principle to our peril.

For example, it is unquestionably true that my attitude in prayer is more important than my posture in prayer. However, sometimes being in a physical posture of humility—kneeling in prayer—helps me get in the right frame of mind. It shouldn't surprise us in the least that there is a connection between the physical and spiritual; it simply reflects how God created us. That's why, at the center of Christian worship, God gave us the sacraments, baptism and the Eucharist—simple physical rites involving water, bread, and wine, but rites that communicate to us the most profound of spiritual realities. That's also why, in the pages of Holy Scripture and throughout the history of the church, we find many physical acts and postures³ designed to help us worship, to help us pray, to help us in our spiritual growth.

² This phrase comes from Dr. Jack Collins of Covenant Theological Seminary in St. Louis.

³ The list could be quite long, such as standing for prayer and praise, bowing one's head and closing one's eyes for prayer. Two practices not generally practiced by Presbyterians also come to mind: Lifting up one's

Recognizing this God-created link between the physical and the spiritual, the Lenten season has historically included a physical element, specifically fasting and other acts of self-denial. We'll deal with these more fully below.

SHOULD WE OBSERVE LENT?

I am sometimes asked why churches should observe Lent at all. Well, I certainly agree that of all the seasons of the church year Lent is the most-often trivialized. Consequently, many churches (including some Presbyterian churches) do not observe the season. There are, however, two good reasons for keeping this tradition:

First, this is a *wise* tradition. Realizing that repentance should characterize the totality of the Christian life, we should see the practical wisdom in setting aside time especially for this purpose. Just as a baseball player may work at staying in shape year round but still give special attention to conditioning before the start of spring training, so we may find great spiritual benefits in setting aside a few weeks to give special attention to the state of our souls.

Second, it is right that we *honor* the traditional wisdom of the church, and Lent is a tradition that the church has observed for centuries. Inasmuch as the Holy Spirit has been present throughout church history, guiding God's people into an ever-increasing awareness of biblical truth, we believe that it is foolhardy to disregard history and constantly to try to “reinvent the wheel.” We

hands for prayer and praise is seen in both Scripture and history. And making the sign of the cross, while post-biblical, has a long history (yes, even in Protestant circles!).

dishonor our spiritual ancestors when we casually disregard their wisdom.

Are Christians required to observe Lent? Strictly speaking, no; Presbyterians have long emphasized that our consciences are bound to Scripture alone, and there is no biblical mandate to celebrate Lent. But countless generations of Christians have found this a helpful tool.

WHEN IS LENT?

The Lenten season begins on Ash Wednesday and lasts until Holy Saturday, the Saturday before Easter Day. The last week of Lent is called Holy Week, which includes both Maundy Thursday (commemorating the institution of the Eucharist) and Good Friday (commemorating the crucifixion of our Lord).

Reminiscent of Jesus' fasting for forty days in the wilderness, the Lenten season, not counting Sundays, lasts forty days. Sundays are not included because the Lord's Day, according to church tradition, is never a fast day but always a *feast day*—a celebration of the resurrection! Therefore, during Lent the Lord's Days are listed as Sundays *in* Lent, not Sundays *of* Lent.

HOW CAN I (& MY FAMILY) KEEP A HOLY LENT?

Traditionally, the Lenten season is observed in four basic (and often overlapping) ways:

Self-examination. As we've discussed, this is central to the traditional Lenten observance. Use this time to ask yourself some hard questions about your spiritual life, your spiritual maturity.⁴ If you're married, ask your spouse to

give you his or her evaluation of your spiritual health. Many Christians have a Christian friend, or a small group of fellow believers, who have agreed to hold them accountable. If you don't have an accountability group or partner, Lent might be a good time to initiate such a relationship. Parents—especially fathers—could use Lent as time to spend more time with their children individually, trying to understand their particular spiritual struggles and providing them encouragement.

With all this emphasis on self-examination, however, it is crucial to keep your focus the *gospel*: All of us are more sinful and helpless than we would've ever dared admit, yet it Christ we are more accepted and forgiven than we would've ever dared hope. Be careful that your self-examination is centered on this good news. There is always the danger of falling into morbid introspection, which can lead to despair over your own spiritual health and to a harsh legalism toward others.

Self-denial. The Lenten season traditionally is also a time for acts of self-discipline and self-denial, a time to remind ourselves that we do not live by bread alone. Self-denial helps us remember what is so beautifully signified in the Eucharist—that Jesus is the true bread of life, our only source of strength and sustenance.

The two major fast days of the traditional church year—Ash Wednesday and Good Friday—both occur during the Lenten season. Traditionally, the other days of Lent—except Sundays, of course⁵—are marked by other acts of self-denial. Some common examples would be giving up one meal a day or giving up a

⁴ See the questions at the end of this paper for a place to start.

⁵ The traditional church calendar sometimes has a few other "feast days" during Lent as well.

particular food. Self-denial, however, doesn't always involve what we eat; some people may work on other habits, seeking better to use their time. (I've known some people to fast from watching too much television!) For families in this dangerously frenetic culture, Lent would be certainly be an appropriate time to cut back on the seemingly-endless flow of activities and spend time worshipping, praying, and learning together.

Since fasting is so unfamiliar to many in our culture, it is wise to consult with a pastor or other spiritual leader before making any decisions in this area. (Some people, of course—such as expectant or nursing mothers, the sick, and those on special diets—should not fast.) Before you begin fasting, I would recommend that you look at what the Scriptures say about the practice (see especially Matthew 6), and perhaps get some guidance from good books on the subject.⁶ And again, remember that there is nothing magic in these spiritual disciplines; they are tools to help you grow closer to Christ.

Acts of compassion. The Lenten season is a particularly appropriate time to ask God to fill you with compassion for the poor and oppressed and to put this into practice in concrete ways. This can take many practical forms. For example, there are Christians who give up one meal a day as a Lenten discipline, and then give the money they've saved by doing so to the poor. Many churches—including ours—have an Easter offering for ministries of mercy, so money saved during Lent could be given at that time. There are many ways in which families can practice compassion during Lent. In your

neighborhood, there may be a poor family you could help (with or without drawing attention to yourselves). Or maybe you know an older person who lives alone who could use some help around the house—or would simply like having a friend. Some families save their loose change or forego some simple expenditures, then give the money to the poor. Lent can be an excellent opportunity to teach our children the value of compassion.⁷

Using the means of grace. Finally, the Lenten season is a time for renewing our focus on the means of grace—a focus that all-too-easily fades when not given adequate attention. Historically, the church has said there are three means of grace—three instruments through which God helps us grow to be more and more like Christ: the Scriptures, prayer, and the sacraments.

If regular times of prayer and Bible study have never been a part of your life (or if they once were but have become less so) then Lent is a wonderful opportunity to begin these life-changing practice. There are scores of lectionaries and Bible-reading plans out there; talk with a pastor or mature Christian to help you find one right for you; there are also many helpful aids for developing a consistent life of prayer. The Lenten season would also be a good time to get involved in a small group—a practice that generations of Christians have commended as key to their spiritual growth. And if your family doesn't have a time of worship together, Lent is a great time to start—and then keep going the rest of the year!

⁶ An excellent discussion on fasting and other spiritual disciplines is found in Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (NavPress, 1991).

⁷ For more ideas on building compassion as a value in your family, see John & Susan Yates, *What Really Matters at Home: Eight Crucial Elements for Building Character in Your Family* (Word, 1992), especially chapter 5.

In our individualistic culture, it is all too easy to lose sight of the fact that Christianity is a *communal* faith, that the center of Christian life is not private religious devotion but corporate worship, gathering with fellow believers to sing, pray, and receive Holy Communion. There are many today who identify themselves as Christians but for whom the church is peripheral and tangential. If this sounds like you, then use this Lenten season to commit yourself to the community of God's people. If you are a follower of Christ and yet have never been baptized, then make every effort to be baptized as soon as possible. If you have been baptized, remember that in baptism you were incorporated into a community, the family of God, and that you are to join in the family meal, the Eucharist. And parents, the Lenten season is a wonderful time to help your children realize that the church is their family, that worship is their first duty and greatest joy. And if your children understand the gospel, then this season could be a wonderful time to take the steps toward having them admitted to the Lord's Table.

As Lent begins this year, my prayer for you is that this would be a truly blessed season, a time of genuine and significant spiritual growth for you and for your family. May God grant you a truly holy Lent.

Lord God, eternal and almighty Father, we join with the first Christians in praising you for the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have received forgiveness and eternal life. We thank you too that it became the custom of the church to prepare for the celebration of Christ's resurrection in a time of penitence and self-examination. Grant us, therefore, gracious Father, the grace to observe a holy Lent, by self-examination and repentance; by

prayer, fasting, and self-denial; and by reading and meditating on your holy Word. Grant that we may remember that though we are dust, and to dust we shall return, that we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Appendix: Questions for Self-Examination:

1. *Have I been fervent in prayer? Was there warmth? Access?*
2. *Have I prayed at my stated times? With my family?*
3. *Have I practiced God's presence, at least every hour?*
4. *Have I, before every deliberate action or conversation, considered how it might be turned to God's glory?*
5. *Have I sought to center conversations on the other person's interests and needs and ultimately toward God, or did I turn them toward my own interests?*
6. *Have I given thanks to God after every pleasant occurrence or time?*
7. *Have I thought or spoken unkindly of anyone?*
8. *Have I been careful to avoid proud thoughts or comparing myself to others? Have I done things just for appearance? Have I mused on my own fame or acclaim?*
9. *Have I been sensitive, warm, and cheerful toward everyone?*
10. *Have I been impure in my thoughts or glances?*
11. *Have I confessed sins toward God and others swiftly?*
12. *Have I over- or under-eaten, -slept, -worked?*
13. *Have I twisted the truth to look good?*
14. *Have I been leading in my home, or only reacting to situations?*

*In his set of questions for self-examination, the late Jack Miller gets right to the point:

1. *Is God working in your life?*
2. *Have you been repenting of your sin lately?*
3. *Are you building your life on Christ's free justification or are you insecure and guilt-ridden?*
4. *Have you done anything simply because you love Jesus?*
5. *Have you stopped anything simply because you love Jesus?*

*These questions are from *Outgrowing the Ingrown Church* (Zondervan, 1986).



**CHRIST
THE REDEEMER**
-PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH-

Christ the Redeemer Presbyterian Church
longs to be a diverse people who gather around
and extend the table of God's grace.

SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICE at 10:00 AM

Reverend Sean J.S. Roberts, Senior Pastor

E-mail: SRoberts@CTRPortland.org
Tel. 956.207.1398

Reverend Josh Henderson, Assistant Pastor

E-mail: JHenderson@CTRPortland.org
Tel. 757.375.7640

Sue Miller, Director of Community Care

E-mail: smiller@CTRPortland.org
Tel. 207.459.6797

Kendra Hollen, Music Ministry Director [E-Mail: khollen@CTRPortland.org]
Ally Henderson, Children's Ministry Co-Director [E-Mail: ahenderson@CTRPortland.org]
Abby Reid, Children's Ministry Co-Director [E-Mail: areid@CTRPortland.org]
Abby Reid, Connections Coordinator [E-mail: areid@CTRPortland.org]

Cheryl Sullivan, Administration [E-Mail: ctr@CTRPortland.org]

Offices located at North Deering Congregational Church, 1364 Washington Avenue, Portland

CTR is co-located at the
WHITE MEMORIAL
SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH
97 Allen Avenue | Portland, ME 04103
207.878.1211 | <https://ctrportland.org>