See the February 2015 *Herald* article, “Lent: We’ve Been Here Before,” following Lenten Practices.

**Living Lent**

Welcome to the Lenten journey. Our prayer is that this will become a time of blessing, confrontational to that which keeps you distant from God, and will lead you to fuller life in Christ.

We offer this guide as a threshold into the season. The practices are enduring, tested through the centuries as ways to experience the fullness of the Divine presence in every part of our lives. We celebrate our diversity in all its facets as disciples of Jesus Christ. We affirm that there are many right ways to walk the path through the Lenten season. Here are some suggestions for using this guide.

1. **Weekly reflection:** Choose one day a week during Lent to engage in the weekly practice and read the blog post that invites you to explore its significance for your life and this season.

2. **Daily reflection:** Accompanying the weekly practices are daily acts to awaken you to God’s presence and activity in the world. Commit to living each day’s act during Lent. Engage in the weekly practice once, or as many times throughout the week as you feel led.

3. **Prayer phrase:** Memorize the prayer phrase for the week and commit to repeating it silently throughout your day. Pay attention to how this phrase increases your awareness of God’s presence throughout each part of your day.

4. **Small group reflection:** Covenant with a group of people to journey through Lent together. The outline below can serve as a guide.

5. **Worship:** Incorporate practices, recommended hymns, or questions for reflection into weekly worship services.

6. **Family devotions:** The following recommendations will help guide the use of practices in family devotions.
   - Choose a time each day as a family to focus on the journey of Lent and its meaning.
   - Engage in the practices as a family, or allow family members to engage in the practices in their own way. Share your experiences with each other.
   - Ask questions and learn from one another. Pay close attention to what children notice and the questions they ask.
   - Young children learn through their feelings. Focus on feelings of love, kindness, and generosity, and take special care to avoid feelings of guilt. Older children understand responsible choices, being kind to others, and taking care of the Earth. Youth are learning what it means to be a member of a global community. They will understand issues of social justice and how they can make a difference in the world.
   - Everyone’s journey is unique, and everyone will respond to the practices in different ways. The following suggestions may be helpful with children and youth.
     1) **Fasting:** Focus on Responsible Choices and making time and space for God.
     2) **Prayer of examen:** Review each day. When did you receive love? When did you share love?
     3) **Holy attention:** Encourage family members to focus on a friend in need or the country upheld in the Daily Prayer for Peace (www.CofChrist.org/daily-prayer-for-peace).
     4) **Centering prayer:** Try simple breath prayers that help children focus on God and others. Encourage a different family member each day to come up with prayer words to use as the family does a breath prayer together.
     5) **Lectio divina:** Use different versions of Isaiah 58:6–9 to read each day. What do you learn from hearing this scripture passage repeated? What questions do you have about the scripture passage? What ideas come to mind about being peacemakers?
     6) **Silence:** Set aside family time each day to “unplug” and be together in silence. Do not worry about long periods of silence together. Start with just a few minutes and talk about what is comfortable or uncomfortable about being together in silence. As you are able to increase the time, listen to how each member of the family responds to this time set aside for just being silent with one another and with God.

**Additional Resource**

Welcome: We welcome one another in God’s Spirit.
- Share the peace of Jesus Christ together. Greet each other with the phrases, “Peace be with you” and “And also with you.”

Statement about the purpose of Lent:
As we journey once again toward the cross, we strip ourselves of the distractions and distances we have placed between ourselves, God, others, and creation. During Lent, we empty and open ourselves so we can draw ever closer to the one we seek.

Opening song suggestions:
- Fasting: “Come and Find the Quiet Center” CCS 151
- Examen: “Searcher of Hearts” CCS 178
- Lectio divina: “The Living Word of Scripture” CCS 65
- Holy attention: “God Within God Around” CCS 20
  (Note: Sing several times through.)
- Centering prayer: “In the Quiet of This Day” CCS 161
- Silence: “Bleibet hier” CCS 468 (Note: Translations are available at the bottom of the page. You may sing in the language with which you are most comfortable. Sing several times through.)

Breath prayer: Breathe deeply and repeat the phrase silently as a way to center your heart in prayer.

Reflections from the week: How have this week’s practices been affecting you? Invite group sharing.

Engage in the week’s spiritual practice together.

Reflect on the experience together as a group. What was this practice like for you? Did any insight, invitation, challenge, or comfort emerge for you during this time?

We hold one another in prayer during this Lenten season. Are there any concerns, something that is difficult to let go, questions or struggles during this season that need to be held in prayer? (Invite a member from the group to offer a prayer for the community’s concerns.)

Song: Each week, sing “Ososŏ” CCS 225 as a song to center in the heart of Lent, which is reconciliation with ourselves, others, creation, and God. In whatever language you feel comfortable singing, repeat the song three to four times prayerfully.

Close with a blessing for the week ahead and the Lenten journey we are on.
A rich blessing of a Lenten journey is using ancient practices to guide us into what is new. Though the path ahead is not easy or certain, an abundance of wisdom from generations past can help us live even deeper into the meaning of resurrection. In the spirit of the ancient and the new, we invite you to join us daily on this Lenten journey! We live once again through the stories of Christ, leading us to the cross and the anticipation of new life.

As a community we are invited to focus on a specific practice each week to help simplify our lives, focus on what matters most, and prepare for the wonder and transformation resurrection brings! These practices have been used throughout our broader Christian heritage to seek guidance, dwell in God’s presence, and open us even more to what God is stirring within each of us! Beginning with fasting as the foundational Lenten practice, each practice guides us deeper inward and outward. With each practice there is a suggested Lenten reflection hymn from Community of Christ Sings (CCS). There is also a daily prayer phrase and daily acts to use throughout each week encouraging prayerful attention and connection to each practice.

Blessings on our Lenten journey! May we travel with the knowledge that our community goes with us. We journey together seeking deeper connection and releasing what holds us back so we might live more fully.

Week 1: Fasting

Daily prayer phrase for the week: *Open me to receive more of you.*

To fast is to empty oneself intentionally in a way that makes space for God. During the season of Lent, we fast for 40 days remembering Christ’s own fast in the wilderness. It is a time to focus on what matters most amid alluring distractions. This practice empties us and prepares us to go deeper through each consecutive practice on the Lenten path. Fasting is about making space for God.

Hymn for Reflection

“Lead Me, Lord” CCS 450

Choose something from everyday life you will noticeably miss. This could be a food item, a meal itself, an ac-
tivity you enjoy, or something you buy daily or weekly that may be an excess in your life. It could also be intentionally reorienting your daily routine or inner conversation.

A Lenten fast typically lasts from Ash Wednesday to Easter morning except for Sundays.

Choose an intentional act that will replace what you are fasting from. What will you do in place of what you have given up? Is there something specific for which you are praying?

Spend time during your fast to pay attention to what is going on within you. Intentionally reflect through writing in a journal or solitude. Notice the time frame you have set. Is your craving from what you have given up increasing or decreasing? What is the depth of your prayer life during this time? Are you feeling more focused?

Questions for Reflection

1. How does intentional emptying make more space for God in your life?
2. How does this disruption in your normal routine draw your attention to God and others in a new way?

Daily Acts (February 22–28)

**Sunday:** Practice fasting. Repeat this week's prayer phrase throughout your day.

**Monday:** Choose to eliminate one task from your schedule today. Spend that time in prayer, dwelling in God’s presence. Repeat this week’s prayer phrase throughout your day.

**Tuesday:** Create space within by opening your heart to another. Whom will you let in today? How do you experience God when you make genuine space for others in your life? Repeat this week’s prayer phrase throughout your day.

**Wednesday:** Find a possession that you value or enjoy and choose to give it away to someone else. What does it feel like to let go? How is God present in your generous giving? Repeat this week’s prayer phrase throughout your day.

**Thursday:** Engage in an act of generosity today. Buy someone a cup of coffee, send a note or gift to someone you think could use it, or make time in your day to spend with someone who could use your gift of time and presence. Dwell in the experience of self-emptying for the sake of another. Repeat this week’s prayer phrase throughout your day.

**Friday:** When we move toward lives of simplicity, we use less of the Earth’s precious resources as well. Today, choose to conserve in a way that will be a blessing to creation. Decrease or eliminate your use of electricity, water, or fuel for one day. Repeat this week's prayer phrase throughout your day.

**Saturday:** Spend time in prayer with the questions for reflection (above). What is God revealing in you through the practice of fasting? Repeat this week's prayer phrase throughout your day.

Week 2: Prayer of Examen

Daily prayer phrase for the week:

*Search my heart and make it one with yours.*

The prayer of examen is a daily spiritual practice that encourages us to review the day with God, remember our connection with the Holy, and recommit ourselves to encounter the Divine once again. Many Christians have used this practice since the 1500s, and while it is often practiced at the end of a day, it may be done any time. Praying the examen during Lent is an opportunity to review our lives and realign with the mission of Christ.

Hymn for Reflection

“I Will Talk to My Heart” CCS 168

Find a comfortable and quiet place in which you are able to reflect on your day. Read scripture passages, such as Psalm 139:1–3, 7 or Psalm 51:10–12, 15–17.

You may want to write your thoughts on these passages in a journal, or during the examen, write as you notice the Spirit stirring within you.

Becoming calm and centered is critical, so begin by recognizing God’s presence and give thanks for this awareness. Gently enter a time of prayer with the expectation and permission to be guided by the Holy Spirit. Express gratitude as you recognize the many and diverse ways you have sensed God’s presence throughout the day. You may want to record your thanks in writing.

Looking back over your day objectively, without judgment or justification. Notice when you recognized God’s presence and where you were most Christ-like. When did you cooperate with God's Spirit of healing and shalom?

Also notice where you were not as cooperative, and perhaps even resistant to the invitation to linger and follow.

Pay attention to your feelings as you review and reflect,
and notice patterns and choices. Are you being invited to release certain attitudes or behaviors and embrace others? Ask the Holy Spirit for insight, and pray for forgiveness, healing, reconciliation, or release as needed.

Offer God the next day, asking God to be present in your thoughts, feelings, and actions. Ask yourself, “Beginning tomorrow (or today), how will I live my life differently?”

Close your practice with a brief benediction. Receive God’s grace and rest.

Questions for Reflection

1. Where have I been complacent in God’s vision of shalom?
2. Where have I been complicit in a lack of peace in this world?
3. Looking back over my life, what are my priorities?
4. Where do my passions mirror the passion of Christ?

Daily Acts (March 1–7)

**Sunday:** Practice examen. Repeat this week’s prayer phrase throughout your day.

**Monday:** Seek God’s presence in each part of your day. At the end of every task, conversation, or experience, ask the question, “How was God present?” Repeat this week’s prayer phrase throughout your day.

**Tuesday:** Reflect on your life and consider the people who have helped you grow in your faith. Write a letter of gratitude to a person who has been formative to you. Repeat this week’s prayer phrase throughout your day.

**Wednesday:** Reflect on your life and consider areas in need of reconciliation. Is there a reconciling action you are invited to make today? Repeat this week’s prayer phrase throughout your day.

**Thursday:** Stand for justice. Is there an issue in your community or in the world that is calling you to engage in a deeper way? (For example: Write a letter to a political leader or give money to a sustainable cause to align your life with God’s vision of shalom.) Repeat this week’s prayer phrase throughout your day.

**Friday:** Spend time in prayer and record in a journal your responses to the questions for reflection (above). Repeat this week’s prayer phrase throughout your day.

**Saturday:** Take inventory of your life. Use this day to pause and write down what you do daily or weekly. What is it that is most life-giving in your regular schedule? Is God calling your to imagine new priorities or a different pace? Repeat this week’s prayer phrase throughout your day.

**Week 3: Holy Attention**

**Daily prayer phrase for the week:**

*Awaken me to your presence in and through all creation.*

Engaging in the practice of holy attention allows us to suspend our inner conversations and agendas and give reverent and receptive focus to a specific person or portion of God’s creation. Respecting another as an unrepeatable miracle whose life journey is unique and sacred brings awareness to and affirmation of God’s presence in all creation. We do this in the spirit of Christ who saw into the deep hearts of people and recognized their true identities as God’s beloved. During Lent, as we continue to empty ourselves (fasting) and evaluate our lives (examen), we begin to make space for awareness of where God is showing up in the world around us.

**Hymn for Reflection**

“God Is Calling” CCS 172

Enter a time of quiet reflection. Relax your body and breathing and bring to mind a particular person, group of people, or portion of creation. Ask God to bless you with curiosity and gratitude as you consider the life journey of others.

- In what ways do you experience separation from this person, group, or portion of creation?
- In what ways do you feel connected to this person, group, or portion of creation?
- What do you need to hear, see, feel, or learn?
- How are you being led to engage in actions which promote the well-being of this person, group, or portion of creation?

**Option:** For use in groups, divide the group into pairs. Allow each person three to four minutes to share, and remind the pairs when it is time to trade roles. Invite all to share a story or experience that reflects their journeys as disciples. Ask God to bless each one with compassionate curiosity and gratitude as each hears the other person’s story. Invite pairs to share briefly with each other how it felt to tell one’s story to someone who was listening with holy attention and how it felt to listen with holy attention.
Questions for Reflection

1. As you make space in your life through fasting and prayer, to what person, group of people, life circumstance, or portion of creation are you being drawn to give holy attention?
2. What new awareness do you experience as you engage in this practice?
3. In what ways are you called to respond as awareness of others deepens through holy attention?

Daily Acts (March 8–14)

**Sunday:** Practice holy attention. Repeat this week’s prayer phrase throughout your day.

**Monday:** Find reasons to be in awe. What amazes you throughout your day? Repeat this week’s prayer phrase throughout your day.

**Tuesday:** See the mystery of God in another person. (Talk to that person!) Repeat this week’s prayer phrase throughout your day.

**Wednesday:** Spend at least 10 minutes outside just noticing creation. What do you see that you normally don’t notice or take the time to appreciate? Repeat this week’s prayer phrase throughout your day.

**Thursday:** Pray the mission prayer and be open throughout your day. God, where will your Spirit lead today? Help me be fully awake and ready to respond. Grant me the courage to risk something new to be a blessing of your love and peace. Amen. Repeat this week’s prayer phrase throughout your day.

**Friday:** Eat mindfully and slowly. Savor each bite. Notice the texture, color, and taste of your food, and consider where it comes from. Give thanks for the nourishment that is yours this day. Repeat this week’s prayer phrase throughout your day.

**Saturday:** Schedule your day to see the sunrise or the sunset. Consider the extraordinary gift of life you have experienced in another day on Earth! Repeat this week’s prayer phrase throughout your day.

Hymn for Reflection

“Come and Find the Quiet Center” CCS 151

Sit in relaxed, comfortable, but erect posture with feet on the floor, eyes closed, hands open in your lap.

Gently enter a time of prayer with the expectation and permission to be guided by the Holy Spirit in this practice of opening and receiving.

Use your breath to create a sense of peace and letting go into God. Breathe deeply, slowly, calmly, allowing the deep breaths to release you of tension throughout your body.

Focus on breathing God in, breathing all else out until you feel calm and centered.

Be aware that God is present and that you are in this space intending to love and be loved by God.

Listen for a word or phrase that comes to you, expressing the desire of your heart. Repeat it silently to yourself in rhythm with your breathing.

As you become distracted—and you will—bring yourself back to that centered place by using your breath and your prayer word. Let go of the thoughts that pull you away. Merely note them and let them go.

Continue in this pattern of focus and breathe for about 20 minutes, though you may want to begin with 5–10 minutes and increase your time with practice. Set a timer so you will not have to check the time.

When the time of prayer has elapsed, offer a prayer of thanks to God, take several more breaths, and gently return your awareness to your surroundings. Trust the time spent with God will continue to bless you deep within as you move through your day.

Questions for Reflection

1. As I dwell in the mystery of God, how do I honor the divine mystery in others?
2. How do I honor the divine mystery within myself?
3. What am I being invited to consider and live into as I dwell in God’s presence?

Daily Acts (March 15–21)

**Sunday:** Practice centering prayer. Repeat this week’s prayer phrase throughout your day.

**Week 4: Centering Prayer**

**Daily prayer phrase for the week:**

*I dwell in you as the source of all life.*

Centering prayer simply uses breath and a prayer word to stay focused on God’s presence. The intent of this prayer is to spend time with God, seeking no answers but merely connection to the Divine. It is called centering prayer because one’s attention is gathered in and centered on being open to and receiving God. During Lent, centering prayer helps us dwell more deeply in the mystery of God.
Monday: Practice deep breathing throughout your day. Whenever an emotion is triggered that would cause you to be anxious, stressed, or angry, take as many deep breaths as needed to rest in God’s presence. Allow your responses to flow from this presence. Repeat this week’s prayer phrase throughout your day.

Tuesday: Practice holy listening with another person. Give them the space and time to share what is going on in their or her life. Be lovingly curious toward another life. Repeat this week’s prayer phrase throughout your day.

Wednesday: Focusing on the source of all life awakens us to our connectedness with all life. Reach out to someone today who needs a sense of belonging. Invite someone to your home for a meal, or to your church. Repeat this week’s prayer phrase throughout your day.

Thursday: God’s Spirit is a place of unity drawing us together in oneness. Intentionally extend love to someone with whom you disagree today. Repeat this week’s prayer phrase throughout your day.

Friday: Extend grace to yourself and others throughout the day. When distracted or unaware, feel God’s assuring presence with you. When others are not their best selves, surprise them with a response of grace and love. Repeat this week’s prayer phrase throughout your day.

Saturday: Consider those who need to experience the peace of God’s presence. Schedule a time to visit someone who may be lonely or isolated. Repeat this week’s prayer phrase throughout your day.

Week 5:
Lectio Divina

Daily prayer phrase for the week:
Living Word, live through me.

The practice of lectio divina (Latin for sacred reading) provides opportunity for encountering God through sacred text. Listening deeply to the words opens us to an awareness of God’s invitation to us through a particular scripture passage or hymn text. Live in the questions and see how they begin to shape your journey of repentance and renewal.

Hymn for Reflection
“How Long, O God, How Long?” CCS 455

Begin by selecting a passage of scripture or hymn text. Sit comfortably and enter a time of prayerful reflection. Relax your body and breathing and offer a prayer for guidance as you interact with the text.

Read the text four times, allowing time for meditation and prayer between each reading. (In a group setting, remind the group of instructions for praying with the text through lectio, meditatio, oratio, or contemplatio as you proceed.)

Lectio—read the text to get a sense of the story or setting. Imagine the scene, senses, emotions, and tensions involved in the text.

Meditatio—read the text again to focus on meaning and understanding. What are the surface and underlying meanings? What does the text tell you about God? How do you relate to the text?

Oratio—read the text again to focus on your emotional response. Do you feel joy, sorrow, fear, anger, or guilt? Share your feelings with God in prayer. Ask for help in listening deeply to these emotions and meanings.

Contemplatio—continue in a time of receptive prayer. Breathe deeply and calmly, entering a deep silent state of listening. Wait for whatever God may bring to you in the quietness. Record in a journal any impressions or insights that come to you and return to receptive listening. If no particular awareness comes, let your mind return to the text. When you feel your prayer and meditation has ended, offer a word of thanks to God to close your time with this practice.

For use during Lent, you may select a passage of scripture (such as Isaiah 58:6–9 or Doctrine and Covenants 163:2b) or hymn text (such as CCS 455). If using CCS 455, you may choose to focus on all verses each day, or focus on a different verse each day. Pay attention to the questions that come to you as you engage in this practice. Live in the questions and see how they begin to shape your journey of repentance and renewal.

Questions for Reflection
1. As you engage in this practice over several days, what layers of meaning begin to unfold?
2. As you engage with a particular text, how are you being led to actions of social justice?

Daily Acts (March 22–28)

Sunday: Practice lectio divina. Repeat this week’s prayer phrase throughout your day.

Monday: We find peace and hope in returning to ancient memory and story. Consider your family and faith heritage. Spend time in gratitude for those who have gone before you. Find time to share a memory of your heritage
with someone, and listen to a memory of their heritage. Repeat this week’s prayer phrase throughout your day.

**Tuesday:** The Living Word speaks anew in each generation. What are your hopes for those who will come after you? What are you doing to live a life oriented toward that future? Do something today that will make a difference to God’s unfolding story in the future. Repeat this week’s prayer phrase throughout your day.

**Wednesday:** Share a scripture passage that is meaningful to you with someone who needs encouragement. Repeat this week’s prayer phrase throughout your day.

**Thursday:** Pay attention to God’s continuing revelation. How is the Living Word being spoken today through loved ones, nature, and your life? Repeat this week’s prayer phrase throughout your day.

**Friday:** Allow God’s Living Word to speak through you as you raise your voice for justice and peace. Find the courage to speak out against an injustice that weighs on your heart. Repeat this week’s prayer phrase throughout your day.

**Saturday:** Write a note to someone to let them know how their life is integral to God’s unfolding story. Repeat this week’s prayer phrase throughout your day.

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**Week 6—Holy Week: Silence**

**Daily prayer phrase for the week:**

**Holy Mystery, I am speechless in your presence.**

Practicing silence reminds us that relationship with God is a mutual, reciprocal act. In silence, we take the time to listen intently and be present with God without words. Often, our most profound spiritual experiences cannot be fully described. We know that in times of distress (Romans 8) the Spirit prays for us hearing the groans of our hearts that are too deep for words. Intentional time in silence allows us to be fully present with God without the confines of language. As we enter Holy Week, the full implication of life as a disciple brings with it a weighted hush. There are moments when words are inadequate and our most faithful response is to stand humbly before the mystery.

**Hymn for Reflection**

“Come, Let Us Dwell” CCS 173

Find a place free from noise or distractions. Practicing silence may be difficult at first. The mind may run wild, and centering in God’s presence could take some spiritual effort! Allow yourself grace in this practice and the ability to slowly ease into longer periods of silent reflection. Perhaps you begin in silence for 5–10 minutes and then write in a journal or pray about your experience.

Breathe deeply. Focusing on each breath in and out can help quiet the mind and center you in God’s Spirit.

Become aware of your surroundings; notice how the air feels on your skin; trust that you are in the presence of the holy—fully surrounding and embracing you.

Don’t expect that God will speak to you in a certain way. Just open yourself to what is. Allow your inner conversations to stop for a while, being fully present with the one who is fully present with you.

After being silent for a while, offer a prayer of gratitude for God’s constant presence whether you are fully aware of it or not. Pray that you may continue to draw closer to God and discover what God is saying and doing within you.

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**Questions for Reflection**

1. How does it feel to be present with God in silence? Was this natural or difficult at first?
2. In the silence, did you discover something new about yourself? Your relationship with God?
3. Preparing to experience new life in Christ, what is it that leaves you speechless?

**Daily Acts (March 29–April 4)**

**Sunday:** Practice silence. Repeat this week’s prayer phrase throughout your day.

**Monday:** Find a quiet space and allow yourself at least five minutes alone in silence (preferably more). Breathe deeply, paying attention to how your breath feels as it enters your body and as it leaves. Allow your breath to silence your restlessness, activity, and inner noise. Continue to listen to your breath in silence. Repeat this week’s prayer phrase throughout your day.

**Tuesday:** Before you begin your day of work or activity, silently offer this prayer (taken from Psalm 46:10), which is best said with a rhythmic chanting of the words and a pause for contemplation after each line. You may choose to end the day with this same prayer.

*Be still and know that I am God.*

*Be still and know that I am.*

*Be still and know.*

*Be still.*

*Be.*

Repeat this week’s prayer phrase throughout your day.
**Wednesday:** Refrain from posting or commenting on all social media for the day. Instead, use that time to listen to what you are hearing from others and offer prayers on their behalf. Repeat this week’s prayer phrase throughout your day.

**Thursday:** Incorporate times of silence into your daily routine. Before beginning work, eating a meal, or beginning any daily task, observe a minute of silence. Repeat this week’s prayer phrase throughout your day.

**Friday:** Turn off the radio, TV, phone, or computer, and simply work or rest in silence. As you hear the sounds of life around you, allow yourself to be filled with awe and gratitude at the presence of God’s Spirit in diverse ways. Repeat this week’s prayer phrase throughout your day.

**Saturday:** “Entering the silence” is based on a practice of the Seneca (First People) Nation. The imagery is adapted from the words of Twylah Nitsch:

*Close your eyes. Breathe out three times.  
Listen and hear the Silence...Listen and see the Silence.  
Listen and taste the Silence...Listen and smell the Silence.  
Breathe out one time. Listen and embrace the Silence.  
When you are finished, open your eyes.*

Repeat this week’s prayer phrase throughout your day.
My global-positioning system (GPS) froze as I was entering my friend’s neighborhood. I had been there only once. I tensed with frustration and anxiety as the little arrow stood suspended, though I knew I needed to make several quick turns through the subdivision.

Ignoring the failed technology, I felt my way by remembering the signs—the way the curve of the road felt, the color of houses, and placement of trees. To my surprise and delight, I turned a corner and recognized her car out front. I had reached my destination by remembering where I had been before.

Lent is the season when all the things we normally rely on for guidance seem unable to help us find our way. The only thing we have to rely on is the knowledge that we have been here before, however long ago or seldom. It is part of our ancient Christian memory and perhaps our recent practice.

We don’t know where Lent will take us. Strangely, once everything else is stripped away, we realize that maybe we do. Fasting from our attachments to busyness, success, and convenience, we fall back on the embedded memory of our Christian discipleship. We walk the road, noticing again how it feels, for signs we’ve come to recognize, and for anything familiar to signal the arrival home.

Lent is when our spiritual GPS stops working, or when we choose to turn it off. Take a moment to consider those things in your spiritual life that sometimes can stick on autopilot. No matter how good or pure our intentions, we are tempted with the easy, habitual, and convenient in faith.

We may become too comfortable in our pews or our prayers to notice the deeper work of the Spirit, calling us to cast off rituals and pay attention again to the source of our lives. It may come at the most disruptive time—when you need to know where to go and technology fails you. Before panic ensues, breathe deeply.

It is time to remember, feel your way back to God, and notice how the Spirit is guiding you to the full life you actually desire.

It will take a journey through your own inner wilderness, or outer. It will take you to the cross and the tomb, relinquishing what you’ve held so tightly in order to be safe. It also will lead you through the darkness to Easter’s bright dawn, where God invites you to be fully alive.

This Lenten season, we invite you to journey again through a return to ancient practices that seek to open and empty us to receive new life in Christ. The practices are like a guidebook for the journey. They point out what to see along the way to help you gather your bearings in the Spirit. The practices remind you no one can walk the way...
for you, but others who have been this way before will join you. (These practices are at www.CofChrist.org/spiritual-formation.)

You may know that letting go is rarely easy. There are reasons for relying on things that keep life from being hard. It’s difficult to explain that this season isn’t about punishment or self-loathing, but desire. Why would we choose to enter something, knowing it will challenge and change us?

This is something only you can answer for yourself. All I know is that I want to be where God is. Sometimes God is in the wilderness, and sometimes God is on the cross.

So let your conveniences fail you even against your best, rational judgment and need to be in control. Turn them off and unplug completely if you dare. Pull out a paper map if you must, but try to keep just your eyes on the road. There are things to see and things to learn along the way.

Get lost and wander. Search for God by learning the terrain you are in. Feel the curve of each turn deep within you, triggering your own sacred memory of the way you’ve walked before. Feel how it leads you to the eternal One who brings fullest life. It leads you to your true home.

Trust yourself without all the stuff you usually fall back on. Trust the God who guides the way and is the way itself. Breathe deeply and enter this strangely familiar wilderness of Lent. We’ve been here before.

**Opportunities to Engage in Lent**

- Lenten resources for individuals, small groups, and congregations are at www.CofChrist.org/spiritual-formation.
- An Ash Wednesday service will be held during the Daily Prayer for Peace, February 18, 1:00 p.m. (CST).
- The Daily Prayer for Peace will have opportunities to dwell in the season of Lent.
- Shalom Place Lenten Encounters will be held at the Temple in Independence, Missouri, and small-group materials following this format will be online.
- “Into the Wilderness” Lenten Spiritual Retreat will run March 13–15 at the Spiritual Formation Center in Kirtland, Ohio. For more information visit www.spiritualformationcenter.org.

**Lenten Journey**

- Week One Spiritual Practice—fasting, prayer phrase: “Open me to receive more of you.”
- Week Two Spiritual Practice—examen, prayer phrase: “Search my heart and make it one with yours.”
- Week Three Spiritual Practice—holy attention, prayer phrase: “Awaken me to your presence in and through all things.”
- Week Four Spiritual Practice—centering prayer, prayer phrase: “I dwell in you as the source of all life.”
- Week Five Spiritual Practice—lectio divina, prayer phrase: “Living Word, live through me.”
- Week Six Spiritual Practice—silence, prayer phrase: “Holy Mystery, I am speechless in your presence.”