

Dear Zionistas,

You are invited! Traditionally at the Ash Wednesday Service we are invited as disciples into the discipline of Lent. The first day of Lent is Wednesday February 22nd. We are marked with the sign of the cross in ashes as a reminder of our penitence, mortality, and that through the cross of Christ we are given eternal life. It is a very humbling and meaningful experience to take a good hard look at sin and death and realize that they do not have the final word. But Lent is a time of harsh honesty about who we are and about our need for a Savior.

You are invited! The discipline of attending weekly Wednesday evening Lenten Services and simple soup suppers is a good preparation to receive the amazing news of Easter. Lent is a time of preparation, and without it Easter seems to lack depth and genuine resurrection joy. Without knowing of our need for forgiveness and new life Easter seems to have the same characteristics as plastic grass, plastic eggs, and jelly beans—artificial, empty, and excessively sweet. The real joy of Easter is found after forty days of deprivation, self-denial, and honest preparation.

You are invited! Come and learn about our faith by reviewing the major parts of Luther's Small and Large Catechisms. Come and recall why we believe what we believe and do what we do—why we confess our sin, learn the 10 Commandments, confess our faith in the words of the Apostles' Creed, pray the Lord's Prayer, and receive the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion. For some of us Confirmation Class was a long time ago and a good review is just what we need.

You are invited! As Easter draws near the Lenten journey grows more intense. Be sure to come to Passion Sunday, Maundy Thursday, and Good Friday services. The austerity of these services and the recollection of Jesus' innocent suffering and death will make you hunger for the Feast of the Resurrection.

You are invited to share the invitation with others! Please welcome others to share in the discipline of Lent. For me personally, the tradition of Lenten worship was absolutely essential and instrumental in my faith development. Welcome children, siblings, spouses, friends, and coworkers to come and see what God is up to through the death and resurrection of Jesus.

In Christ,

Pastor Christian