



# **Fasting from stuff**

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## **Fasting from Stuff**

Lent is traditionally the season for fasting, reflection and prayer. We remember the 40 days Jesus spent in the wilderness and focus more closely on the cross as we await the glorious resurrection of Jesus Christ. Although we remember to pray more during Lent, we may not often focus on fasting. We may give up something we enjoy like chocolate or watching TV, but what does it really mean to “fast from stuff”?

Our culture has become more and more defined by **stuff**. We are constantly bombarded by advertisements to buy newer and better products that we don't need. Stuff in itself is not bad, God wants us to have what we need and be cared for. However, when we begin buying things we don't need, we are not living out the call of Christ in our lives. We also have become burdened by “stuff” that takes our time away from our relationship with God. We are being asked to work more and spend less time with our families. When we let this stuff define who we are and how we live, we lose focus on our faith. So together this Lenten season, let's take a time to fast from stuff; the stuff we don't need, that ends up becoming an obstacle on our path to following the Word of God. Together we can free ourselves from the burden of stuff and also make a difference in the world along the way through thoughtful and wise use of our resources.

In this devotional book you will find daily devotions and thoughts for each day of Lent, collected from discussions with different groups within the Grace Lutheran Church of La Grange congregation. For more information to help you live out the practice of “Fasting from Stuff,” this Lent and throughout the year visit your church library or refer to the resources at the end of this book.

Enjoy and have a blessed Lent!

## **Day 1-Ash Wednesday**

### **February 17- Are We What We Own?**

*Isaiah 58:6-7 Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin?*

What fast do you choose this Lent?

We have been blessed with an abundance from God and that abundance is good in itself. However, Walter Bruggemann explains, “We never feel that we have enough; we have to have more and more, and this insatiable desire destroys us. Whether we are liberal or conservative Christians, we must confess that the central problem of our lives is that we are torn apart by the conflict between our attraction to the good news of God’s abundance and the power of our belief in scarcity – a belief that makes us greedy, mean and unneighborly.” [From *The Myth of Scarcity, the Liturgy of Abundance.*] Abundance is freely given by God, but we have to decide how to use it. We have to decide whether or not we are defined by what we own. If we are, perhaps it is time to loose those bonds and break the yoke by fasting from the stuff in our lives that we do not need.

Intern Pastor Dara Schuller-Hanson

## **Day 2-**

February 18

*Matthew 6:16-18* And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

What does fasting during Lent mean for you?

“I am willing to give every Sunday up for God. I will give up time in the day to pray during Lent. I plan to make time during the week for God. Plans in my day might prevent me from finding time to pray to God. God really wants our faith in him to help us get through the 40 days of Lent.”

Madeline Simms, Confirmation Student

## **Day 3-**

February 19

*Psalms 37:16* Better is a little that the righteous person has than the abundance of many wicked.

What might make it hard to give up something for God?

“I’m going to give up action video games for Lent. It might be hard because I am greedy. God really wants us to share with one another.”

Ethan McGahay, Confirmation Student

## **Day 4-**

February 20

*2 Corinthians 8:9* For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich.

What would you give up for God?

“I am willing to give up T.V. for God. It might be hard because I would be tempted to watch it. But God wants us to trust, love and respect him and others.”

Andrea Pardo, Confirmation Student

## **Sunday-**

February 21

*Matthew 4:2* “Jesus fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished.”

What “stuff” gets in the way of your relationship with God?

“Time, work, sports, and wants get in the way. I try to draw the line and separate needs from wants to remove these obstacles.”

YFG member

## **Day 5-**

February 22

*Romans 12:2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God— what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

What does God really want for us?

“God’s will is hard to fulfill and we all get frustrated some time and we all do things against the 10 commandments. God wants us to fulfill his will by treating our neighbor as ourselves.”

Maggie Taylor, Confirmation Student

## **Day 6-**

February 23

*Luke 12:33-34 Sell your possessions, and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

Are we what we own?

“No, but maybe we are defined by our relationship with what we own. Pride in personal accomplishments and less reliance on God can get in the way of our relationship with God. We can recognize our relationships with stuff and distance ourselves from the stuff. Also, recognize that all you have is from God.”

YFG Member

## **Day 7**

### **February 24 - Why fasting?**

*Acts 9:8-9* Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. For three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

Why would we fast?

In this society of abundance, can we give up what we have? Of course, we want to be secure and care for our family, but we know what it is like to have more than enough. We know that when we let go of what is separating us from God, we can have a richer relationship with God. Saul, who became Paul, persecuted Christians and became blind for 3 days before he could see his wrongdoings. The faith was revealed to him through another man, Ananias, a believer, and helped Paul to open his eyes. Our brothers and sisters across the globe, who work in factories producing the stuff we buy, need our help. As Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." God is calling you to open your eyes to the injustice and let go of the want to fill our lives with stuff. Instead we can share our abundance, so everyone has enough. We can be like Ananias and show others our faith in Christ through our purchasing power and help those around us see the abundance we have in Christ rather than in stuff.

Intern Pastor Dara Schuller-Hanson

## **Day 8-**

February 25

*Matthew 6:24 No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.*

Can you serve God and stuff?

“It’s difficult to keep sight of this in a materialistic world where it is easy to try to discern one’s value based on their possessions, BUT God gave us everything that we have so our possessions are ultimately not ours.”

Terra Fuller, YFG member

## **Day 9-**

February 26

*1 Corinthians 13:3 If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.*

Is giving up our possessions enough?

“I would be able to give up basically anything for God. It is hard because they are the things that you love, but you also have to give up things to show your love for God. He wants us to give to one another and treat others as we want to be treated.”

Marisa Von Drasek, Confirmation student

## **Day 10-** **February 27**

*Acts 2:44-45 All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need.*

Why are you a part of the ministry at Grace?

“I am a part of the Prayer Shawl ministry because I enjoy interacting with other members who enjoy crafts. The shawls provide tangible support to those people with needs, grieving, sick, family issues. Those who receive them have an everyday reminder that someone has prayed, is praying or will pray for them.”

Sue Bloecks, Prayer Shawl crocheter

## **Sunday-** **February 28**

*James 1:9-10 Let the believer who is lowly boast in being raised up, and the rich in being brought low, because the rich will disappear like a flower in the field.*

Doesn't God want us to be rich?

“God wants us to give up what we have for the poor.”

Sam Gosiewski, Confirmation Student

“God wants us to devote ourselves to him.”

Jeff Bannister, Confirmation Student

## **Day 11-**

March 1

*1 Timothy 6:9-10* But those who want to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil and in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains.

Is wealth really the problem?

“I would give up TV so I can concentrate more on faith. To do this might make it hard to get along with friends. God wants us to give up something to open our eyes more to faith.”

Emma Montgomery, Confirmation Student

## **Day 12-**

March 2

*Philippians 4:12-13* I know what it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

Will it be hard to change our ways?

“I will give up my time for God. It might be hard because I might forget, maybe my friends will make it hard, or I might not want to. God wants our devotion, and loving him and obeying him.”

Jennifer Vetrone, Confirmation Student

## **Day 13**

### **March 3- Fasting as Revelation**

*Exodus 34:27-28 The Lord said to Moses: Write these words; in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel. He was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he neither ate bread nor drank water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the ten commandments.*

What can fasting reveal to us about God?

It was during his 40 days of fasting that the Ten Commandments were revealed to Moses from God. In this Lenten journey, has anything been revealed to you? When we fast from the stuff in our lives that burdens us, we can see more clearly what God wants for us and how God wants us to use what we have. In the Bible revelations often come to ordinary people while they are praying, dreaming or fasting. Imagine what God may have in store for us when we fast from stuff. God can and will use you in this world, if we allow ourselves to be open to the revelation of grace.

Intern Pastor Dara Schuller-Hanson

## **Day 14-**

March 4

*1 John 3:2 Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is.*

What do you know about God?

“I’m willing to give all my prayers to God. It might be hard because it might change our lives. God wants our time to pray to him.”

Rachel Montgomery, Confirmation Student

## **Day 15-**

March 5

*James 1:17 Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.*

What would you replace the “stuff” with and why?

“We are part of the mission of the church. We have been chosen because of grace and we are who God chooses to fulfill God’s work.”

Randy Hackbarth, Social Ministry committee member

## **Day 16-**

March 6

*2 Corinthians 5:16-17 From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!*

How can fasting from stuff refresh you?

“I would probably perform better at my job if I focused on it 24/7, but that work is not that important to me, and I don’t want to be completely consumed by my job because it is not focused on things that are most important to me. That would take me away from the things and people that are important to me. So even though my work-day is long, and it is often on my mind, I set it aside to spend time with family, friends and my relationship with God. My kids bring me hope, their fun inspires me. The more ups and downs I experience, the less I worry about the day to day struggles and spend more time thinking about bigger ideas. My relationship with God brings hope. His grace gives me confidence to put aside the things that aren’t important and focus on doing God’s work.”

Chad Fuller, YFG member

## **Sunday-**

March 7

*Psalms 49:4-6 Why should I fear in times of trouble, when the iniquity of my persecutors surrounds me, those who trust in their wealth and boast of the abundance of their riches? Truly no ransom avails for one’s life, there is no price one can give to God for it.*

How can you express your faith in God?

“I would rather sing what I feel than ‘just’ say it! I remember lyrics more than general discussion, the sermon text and music connection in each service. There is always a song in God’s gracious, generous heart. Rhythm and tune holds more attention and reaches everyone in some way.”

Choir member

## **Day 17-**

**March 8**

*Isaiah 40:5* Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.

How is the glory of God revealed to you?

“Music proves that there is a grand, overarching scheme... something so basic and unifying that it surely touches upon the Creator. In its infinite complexity, music soothes so, that it could only be the simple grace of God.”

Tim Caldwell, Choir member

## **Day 18-**

**March 9**

*Jonah 3:5, 10* And the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast, and everyone, great and small, put on sackcloth. When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil ways, God changed his mind about the calamity that he had said he would bring upon them; and he did not do it.

Why should we give up something for God even though we always have God in our lives?

“I will give up ice cream and gossiping for God. It might be hard because you always have God and it’s hard to give up something for something you always have. Also, giving up something for a sport is easier than giving up something for life. God wants our time and to want to live in his kingdom.”

Lindsey Piggott, Confirmation Student

## **Day 19**

### **March 10- Fasting as Devotion**

*Luke 2:36-38* There was a prophet Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped there with fasting and prayer night and day. At that moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child [Jesus] to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

All that is in our world belongs to God, not to us. We have to decide how to care for God's creation and how to use the blessings God has given us. To fast can be a sign of our devotion to God. It can be a sign of our thankfulness for all of the abundance and blessings of our lives. In our baptism, which we reaffirm in our confirmation, we promise that we not only receive the Holy Spirit in our hearts, but we also accept the responsibility to care for creation and for one another. The ELCA Social Statement on Economic Life says, "Our primary and lasting identity, trust, and hope are rooted in the God we know in Jesus Christ. Baptized into Christ's life, death, and resurrection, we receive a new identity and freedom, rather than being defined and held captive by economic success or failure." Our identity as Christians comes from our connection to God, our creator, not through our abundance of possessions. Our devotion to God comes out of our want to give thanks and fully offer ourselves to the service of God.

Intern Pastor Dara Schuller-Hanson

## **Day 20-**

March 11

*Colossians 3:16-17* Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

What do you do to devote yourself more fully to God?

“The experience of music in church has always brought the opportunity for the words of Jesus to ‘take flight’ —and take my soul with them! I believe that the arts exist purely to inspire our souls, to know more of the divine, to know that we are capable of greater things. For me, music provides that extra nudge in my daily life to lift my soul toward the divine and not get stuck in ‘my muck.’ I suspect I’m more productive, less introspective, and more joyful purely because of music.”

Kurt Amolsch, Music Director

## **Day 21-**

March 12

*James 1:17* Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

What would you replace the “stuff” with and why?

“We are part of the mission of the church. We have been chosen because of grace and we are who God chooses to fulfill God’s work.”

Randy Hackbarth, Social Ministry committee member

## **Day 22-**

March 13

*Psalm 24:1 The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it.*

What gifts has God given you?

“God is the giver of all good gifts, and he has given us the wonderful gift of music. Music is part of me!”

Lorrie Nicholaus, Choir member

## **Sunday-**

March 14

*Ezra 8:21-23 Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river Ahava, that we might deny ourselves before our God, to seek from him a safe journey for ourselves, our children, and all our possessions. For I was ashamed to ask the king for a band of soldiers and cavalry to protect us against the enemy on our way, since we had told the king that the hand of our God is gracious to all who seek him, but his power and his wrath are against all who forsake him. So we fasted and petitioned our God for this and he listened to our entreaty.*

How do you seek God?

“God wants us to love other people.”

Joseph Catania, Confirmation Student

“God wants us to be helpful, friendly and devoted to God.”

Johnny Bareis, Confirmation Student

## **Day 23-**

March 15

*2 Corinthians 5:15* And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them.

What is the difference between a blessing and abundance?

“I would give up my favorite food, pie, for God. It might be hard because God has blessed me with pie, so it is hard to give up a blessing that God has given us. God wants us to serve people, pray and to serve God.”

Katelyn Duffy, Confirmation Student

## **Day 24-**

March 16

*Joel 2:12-13* Yet even now, says the Lord, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; rend your hearts and not your clothing. Return to the Lord, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relents from punishing.

How can you use your gifts to return to the Lord?

“Music is therapy and universal. There is beauty in simplicity and in complexity. My voice was a gift that I find easy to share and make the words live. Music chose me.”

Elaine Albright, Choir member

## Day 25

### March 17- Fasting as faithful living

*Daniel 1:12-13, 15 [Then Daniel asked,] “Please test your servants for ten days. Let us be given vegetables to eat and water to drink. You can then compare our appearance with the appearance of the young men who eat the royal rations and deal with your servants according to what you observe.” At the end of ten days it was observed that they appeared better and fatter than all the young men who had been eating the royal rations.*

How could fasting be an expression of faithful living?

Arthur Simon wrote in the book, *How Much is Enough?*, “The way we live matters. It matters to God and it matters to others whose lives are affected. The point is not that a simpler style of life would eliminate hunger and poverty (it would not), but a life given to God becomes focused on what God wills.” Fasting is not simply about giving something up during the 40 days of Lent and then going about your normal routine the rest of your life. Faithful living requires devotion to God every day. Our fasting may not change the world tomorrow, but our attention to our lifestyle and simple living can impact our relationship with God and those around us. Our life is yet another gift from God that we can choose how we want to use. We can never repay God for the gift of forgiveness from our sins. God loves us unconditionally. Our only response out of thanks for such a beautiful gift is living a life of faith.

Intern Pastor Dara Schuller-Hanson

## **Day 26-**

March 18

*Micah 6:8 He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?*

What does God really want from us?

“He wants us to all get along.”

Sergei Deptula, Confirmation student

“To serve him.”

Jack Taylor, Confirmation student

“To believe.”

Michael Dean, Confirmation student

## **Day 27-**

March 19

*Acts 4:32-34 Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold.*

How does fasting fit into faithful living?

“The crux of being a Christian is serving others. I try to find ways to be behind the scenes, but still a part of the mission of God.”

Mary Ann Mestemaker

## **Day 28-**

March 20

*Philippians 1:27* Only, live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent and hear about you, I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel.

What does it mean to live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel?

“I will give up being hyper for God. It might be hard to give to God because of school and friends. God wants our faith and trust in him! He also wants us to serve him.”

Ellen Rosicky, Confirmation Student

## **Sunday-**

March 21

*Galatians 2:10* They asked only one thing, that we remember the poor, which was actually what I was eager to do.

Does faithful living come through words or actions?

“I am part of Social Ministries at Grace because it is hands-on service. There is importance in spreading out leadership and having support makes it manageable and possible. Putting our faith in action through service.”

Scott Jensen, Social Ministry Committee member

## **Day 29-**

March 22

*Proverbs 22:2 The rich and the poor have this in common: the Lord is the maker of them all.*

How can you live as a faithful follower of the Lord, your maker?

“Music brings a special place into my soul, centers me in the midst of worship. The beauty that surrounds me in music the feelings when the voices join together reveal God’s presence.”

Jean Barbera, Choir member

## **Day 30-**

March 123

*Deuteronomy 10:12 So now, O Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you? Only to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul*

What do you think the Lord requires of you?

“I am willing to give up my time for God. My social life and other activities might make it hard. God really wants us to serve him and devote our lives and our time to him.”

Johanna Oscarson, Confirmation student

## **Day 31**

### **March 24- Fasting as Hope**

*Luke 4:14-15* Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.

After Jesus spent 40 days of fasting, praying and being tempted by Satan in the wilderness, he returned to his ministry filled up with the power of the Spirit. We are also filled with the hope that comes from the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit and the hope of the resurrection promise. Martin Luther said, “Everything that is done in the world is done by hope.” On this Lenten journey, just as any other time in life, you may have had some successes and some failures. But it is important to remember that we are never alone and we are never without hope. All Christians need hope to keep striving for justice and peace in this world which is God’s mission in this world. When we live out our Christian calling to fast from the things we don’t need, we are emptying ourselves in order that we may be filled up, not with more material possessions, but with hope. This Lent, may you be filled with the hope that only comes with reconnecting with the Lord, our God.

Intern Pastor Dara Schuller-Hanson

## **Day 32-**

March 25

*Ephesians 2:8-10* For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God – not the result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.

Why do you fast?

“All things belong to God. There are too many temptations out there, things you see and think you need to have. We can start making good habits by giving up something during Lent. Maybe we can continue with them after Lent ends. Concentrating on the resurrection brings me hope.”

Congregation member

## **Day 33-**

March 26

*Psalms 40:3* He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the Lord.

What kind of song has God put in you?

“I like the quote “He who sings, prays twice.” And add that with the music ministry of Grace and it brings me closer to the Gospel readings and sermon each week. Songs envelop me and words and tune can last for weeks. The harmony of the Earth’s sounds can be both simple and complex as God has made it. Most music we sing is man’s expression, God made!”

Meribeth Tooke, Choir member

## **Day 34-**

**March 27**

*Matthew 6:25 Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?*

How do you fast from worries?

“I don’t own too much and I’m happy. I live according to my means. Worry sometimes gets in the way of my relationship with God. I’ve been trying to get rid of my worry for years. I pray and thank God for the blessings in my life and ask God to get rid of my worry. I put my worry in God’s hands. I try to go to communion every Sunday. Saying prayers and thanking God for all my blessings brings me hope.”

Congregation member

# **Holy Week**

## **Sunday**

March 28-Sunday of the Passion/  
Palm Sunday

*Psalm 119: 36-37 Turn my heart to your decrees, and not to selfish gain. Turn my eyes from looking at vanities; give me life in your ways.*

What helps you turn from selfish gain and the vanities of life?

“Music stays with you even outside of church. Music reveals the joyousness of the Christian faith. Music is the easiest and most fulfilling way for me to express my faith.”

Choir member

## **Day 35-**

March 29

*Romans 8:24-25 For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.*

Where does your hope come from?

“As I get older things become less important. Sometimes material items do get in the way of my relationship with God. Also, having too many decisions to make, especially for young people, the choices of what to do with our time. Do we go to soccer or go to church on Sunday morning? I can't help but think, are we really giving up things for the right reasons? My hope comes through knowing God answers our prayers, we have to learn to listen because the answer doesn't always come the way we ask it to, but God is answering us.”

Congregation member

## **Day 36-**

March 30

*Galatians 5:25-26 If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, competing against one another envying one another.*

How does the Spirit guide you on your faith journey?

“Now that I have been singing for over 40 years, there are times when music takes me to a new place in my faith journey. I am heartily grateful for this.”

Richard Albright, Choir member

## **Day 37-**

**March 31**

*Matthew 7:12* In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets.

What rules of faithful living do you follow?

“Christianity to me is something that helps people, like the Golden Rule. As faith grows we are fortunate to help one another. We are not alone in bringing help, but together we accomplish it.”

Rick Nief, Social Ministry Committee member

## **Day 38-**

**April 1 – Maundy Thursday**

*1 Corinthians 12:12-13* For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body- Jews or Greeks, slaves or free- and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

How can you be a member of Christ’s body every day?

“I am a part of the Prayer Shawl ministry at Grace because it makes me feel useful. God’s work, our hand’s. The knitting is only a minor effort, but can provide a great deal of comfort to someone in need. The knowledge that people are praying for you can be quite powerful. They are a symbol of God’s loving arms wrapped around you when you are in need of comfort. We pray as we knit and have our prayers of blessing for the completed shawls that they will provide comfort and peace to the wearers.”

Cathy Thoss, Prayer Shawl knitter

## **Day 39-**

**April 2 – Good Friday**

*Galatians 5:13-14* For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your

*freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another. For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."*

What will you do with your freedom?

"I am willing to pray to God and I'd give up my time for God. Money and material possessions might make it hard. But God wants our faith."

Jack Kunkle, Confirmation Student

## **Day 40-**

### **April 3 – Easter Vigil/ Holy Saturday**

*Nehemiah 1:4-6* *When I heard these words I sat down and wept, and mourned for days, fasting and praying before the God of heaven. I said, "O Lord God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments; let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer of your servant that I now pray before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel, confessing the sins of the people of Israel, which we have sinned against you. Both I and my family have sinned."*

Can our sin keep us from the hope that comes from "fasting from stuff"?

"Television, Ipods, money, excess all get in the way of our relationship with God. They pull you out of the real world. Make you think that more and more is expected of you. This is a society where we can't unplug. I wish there was less competition among people. I would like to see people come to church and be comfortable."

"Choir robes are wonderful. They allow people just to be. They help us focus on our unity as Christians and the actual words of the songs."

"Busy-ness gets in the way of our relationship with God. Just having too much to do and not enough time for family and faith. It is hard to teach your children these ideas. You just have to set limits and keep following through on them. And it is not easy. And you get tired, but you just have to keep at it."

Responses from a LOGOS Adult Table dinner conversation.

## **Easter Day-** Sunday, April 4

*Matthew 28:16-20* Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

How are our brothers and sisters in Christ across the world affected by our abundance?

God promises to be with us always, even when we are facing our own challenges of how to use our resources wisely. We can help our brothers and sisters in Christ through sharing our abundance and fasting from the stuff we do not need. We can use our resources to purchase things that were made fairly and still help our economy. We can share the good news of Christ's resurrection in our witness of responsible spending. God wants us to take care of one another. The fast does not end here. Continue to think before you buy things. Think to yourself, "Do I really need this?" Check labels, find out where things come from and think about all the people who helped make it and get it to you from the factory workers to the truck drivers to the sales clerk and pray for them. De-clutter and give away the things you never use or don't need anymore. Find out where your waste goes and how you can reduce your impact and care for God's creation. This is part of our Christian calling in the world. Fasting from the stuff we don't need opens our lives up so we can notice the blessings of God in the world. Jesus Christ is the ultimate blessing and will be with us always to the end of the age. Jesus Christ has risen indeed, Alleluia!

Intern Pastor Dara Schuller-Hanson

## **For More Information**

### **Books**

Ekblad, Bob. Reading the Bible with the Damned. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005.

Foster, Richard. Celebration of Discipline. New York: Harper Collins, 1978.

Hsu, Albert Y. The Suburban Christian: Finding Spiritual Vitality in the Land of Plenty. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2006.

Simon, Arthur. How Much is Enough? Hungering for God in an Affluent Culture. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2003.

Wallis, Jim. God's Politics. San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2005.

### **Articles**

Bruggemann, Walter. "The Liturgy of Abundance, The Myth of Scarcity." Christian Century. March 24-31 1999. <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=533>

Damico, Rev. Noelle. "Fasting: A Spiritually and Socially Transforming Practice"  
<http://www.pcusa.org/hunger/downloads/fasting-transformation.pdf>

### **Websites**

ELCA Social Statement on Economic Justice  
<http://www.elca.org/What-We-Believe/Social-Issues/Social-Statements/Economic-Life.aspx>

ELCA Make it Simple Campaign  
<http://www2.elca.org/stewardship/makeitsimple/>

Fair Trade Federation  
<http://www.fairtradefederation.org/>

ONE campaign  
<http://www.one.org>  
Soujourners Magazine  
<http://www.sojo.net>

2010 Shop with a Conscience Consumer Guide  
<http://www.sweatfree.org/shoppingguide>

The Universal Declaration on Human Rights  
<http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>

United Nations: Human Development Reports  
<http://hdr.undp.org>

Web of Creation: Ecology Resources to Trans-

form Faith Communities and Strategy  
www.webofcreation.org

## **Video**

(Interesting points of view on consumerism in the USA to begin discussion, not necessarily for factual reference)

Frontline: The Persuaders <http://www.pbs.org>

Leonard, Annie. The Story of Stuff. <http://www.storyofstuff.com>

*What would Jesus Buy? Reverend Billy and the Church of Stop Shopping.* Directed by Rob VanAlkemade. 2007.

## **Resources for Children**

Big Idea Productions Inc., Veggie Tales Video: *Madame Blueberry: A Lesson in Thankfulness.* Chicago, IL.

Lucado, Max. You are Special. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1997.

Pfister, Marcus. The Rainbow Fish. New York: North-South Books, 1992.

*Stewardship Stew: An At-Home Activity for kids*  
*Make it Simple: A Resource for Stewardship Education and Annual Response.* <http://www2.elca.org/stewardship/makeitsimple/>

Suess, Dr. The Lorax. New York: Random House, 1971.

**Isaiah 58:9-10** *Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am. If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil, if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday.*