



# Faith Country

## Shared Ministry

## *Faith Country Chronicle*

**March 2016**



Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ –

Throughout 2016 I invite you to reflect with me on the theme of “Practicing Our Faith” as you gather for church council, adult study, youth group, coffee group, choir rehearsal and are engaged in learning, discernment and reflection together. Dorothy Bass has edited an excellent resource published several years ago by Jossey-Bass, *Practicing Our Faith*, which I will be using as a primary resource. Together with Don Richter, Dorothy Bass has also edited a second book, *Way to Live: Christian Practices for Teens*, published by Upper Room Books, which is also an excellent resource. Each article will include a Scripture reference, thematic reflection, questions for consideration, and a prayer. Portions of this article were also used in the February 2013 Monthly Message for Congregations and Lay and Rostered Leaders and the March 2014 edition of the Canada Lutheran.

I want a fast  
from gluttony of nations, systems, policies  
that feed some well others starve for grain,  
for bread,  
for dreams,  
for peace.

Jan Richardson, *Sacred Journeys*  
**“Giving something up for Lent”**

I’ve often struggled with the notion of “giving something up for Lent.” Now don’t get me wrong; I am all for spiritual practices and discipline. I’m just not sure that the act of giving up chocolate or TV or texting for Lent can draw us closer to God in and of itself. Laurence Hull Stookey puts it well when he writes: “Lenten disciplines are not temporary deletions or additions, but spiritual exercises that permanently alter us....The fuller Lenten discipline is a self-examination that seeks greater conformity to the mind of Christ, and more effective ministry on behalf of the world” (*Calendar: Christ’s Time for the Church*, Abingdon Press, 1996, p. 82).

The concept of a period of penitence and preparation for the celebration of Christ’s resurrection through spiritual exercises such as fasting originated as a way of preparing new converts for their baptism, which would occur at the Easter Vigil. As Christianity gained a foothold in the culture and infant baptism became the norm, this time of preparation was extended to include those who had already been baptized.

Within our faith communities’ “giving something up for Lent” is frequently heard. “Giving something up” as a reminder of what Christ gave up for us in his incarnation, his life on earth, and his death. But while we may have the right intentions, I wonder if our practices truly alter how we view the world around us; our relationship with Christ; or our relationship with one another.

This Lenten season I encourage you to think deeply about your Lenten observance. Instead of asking what you can give up for Lent, consider what stands in the way of a closer walk with God. Do you need to turn the TV off in order to spend more time in prayer and Scripture reading? Then by all means limit your TV viewing and replace it with devotional time. In other words, whatever we choose ought to bring us closer to Christ himself.

But there is more. Christ gave himself up for others, and through our baptism into Christ we are called to do the same. During Lent, consider what practices will help bring about Christ’s kingdom here on earth. Are there people with whom you need to be reconciled? Is there a way to promote justice in your community? Are there opportunities to serve the poor, the widow, and the orphan? Asking these kinds of questions will lead us to practices that result in the deep change intended by Lenten observances.

This year, rather than simply “giving something up for Lent” I challenge you to give more of yourselves to Christ by finding one or two ways in which your life can more fully emulate his. Perhaps these will become habits that don’t end with Easter but continue to sustain you throughout the year.

Read and Reflect: Psalm 136

## Discuss and Reflect:

What in this reading leads you to say, "I wonder about...", or, "I noticed..."

What memories does "the season of Lent" evoke for you?

How have your patterns of "giving something up for Lent" changed during the course of your lifetime?

**Comment on the following:** This year...I challenge you to give more of yourselves to Christ by finding one or two ways in which your life can more fully emulate his.

**Pray together:** Spirit of God, Life and Life-giver, Root of all life, Enlivening Wind, washing away sin, anointing each wound, You are True Life, alive with Light, worthy of praise, awakening the heart from death to new life. Amen. (Hildegard of Bingen).

*The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 15:13).*

In Christ Jesus –  
Shalom,  
+Larry

The Rev. Dr. Larry Kochendorfer, Bishop  
Synod of Alberta and the Territories  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

***Spirit -Led Leadership - Hope-Filled Discipleship -  
Innovative Tradition - Collaborative Partnerships***

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Two priests died at the same time and met Saint Peter at the Pearly Gates.

St. Peter said, "I'd like to get you guys in now, but our computer's down.

You will have to go back to Earth for about a week, but you can't go back as priests. What'll it be?"

The first priest says, "I've always wanted to be an eagle, soaring above the Rocky Mountains."

"So be it," says St. Peter, and off flies the first priest.

The second priest mulls this over for a moment and asks, "Will any of this week 'count' St. Peter?"

"No, I told you the computer's down, there's no way we can keep track of what you are doing.

"In that case" says the second priest, I've always wanted to be a stud.

"So be it" says St. Peter, and the second priest disappears. A week goes by, the computer is fixed, and the Lord tells St. Peter to recall the two priests. "Will you have any trouble locating them?" he asks.

"The first one should be easy," says St. Peter, "He's somewhere over the Rockies, flying with the eagles. But the second one could prove to be more difficult."

"Why?" asks the Lord.

"He's on a snow tire, somewhere in Saskatchewan."

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## Passion Sunday / Palm Sunday.

We now come to the Sunday with a split personality. It starts with an upbeat gospel recounting Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. It is a festive affair, complete with a parade route strewn with palm branches instead of ticker tape. But we quickly progress to the stark reading of Jesus' passion, bearable only because we already know its happy ending. Mel Gibson's film did us a favour in reminding us how shockingly brutal the whole business really was.

Two names for the same day: Palm Sunday and Passion Sunday. I propose a third name: Fickle Sunday. For the same crowd that was cheering during the parade was jeering a few days later. They'd been wowed by his sermons, fed with loaves and fishes, healed of their diseases, delivered of their demons. But as soon as the tide began to turn, so did they. Their cries of "Hosanna" turned to shouts of a very different kind: "Crucify him!"

Of course, he was not surprised in the least. The gospels tell us that he knew the human mind and heart all too well. He was not fooled by all the acclamations and fanfare. Flattery could not swell his head. He had no illusions of grandeur or ambition for worldly glory. In fact, our second reading tells us that He had willingly emptied Himself of heavenly glory in pursuit of His true passion – His Fathers will and our salvation.

Jesus "set his face like flint." He was on a mission and nothing would deter him. He barrelled through barriers that usually stop us dead in our tracks—fear of ridicule, fear of suffering, abandonment by our closest companions. He was willing to endure the sting of sin to blot out sin, and was eager to face death in order to overcome it.

He did indeed have a "well-trained tongue." His words had mesmerized the crowds, intrigued Herod and even made Pilate stop and think. But now his lips are strangely silent. All the gospels point out that he said very little during his passion, collecting only seven brief statements from the cross. Maybe this was to fulfill the Scripture that said "like a lamb led to the slaughter or

a sheep before the shearers, he was silent and opened not his mouth" (Isaiah 53: 7b). Actually, everything that happened in these fateful hours fulfilled Scripture. Isaiah 50 had foretold the beating and mockery. Psalm 22 lays it all out hundreds of years before it happens: his thirst, the piercing of his hands and feet by Gentiles (called "dogs" by the Jews), and the casting of lots for his clothing. The opening line of this psalm happens to be "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Could it be that the Lord uttered this phrase to remind us that this was all in the plan?

So the virtual silence of his well-trained tongue was to fulfill Scripture. But there was another reason for his silence. Though Jesus was destined to preach on Good Friday, the message was not to be delivered in words. The language of this sermon was to be "body language." Good Friday, according to Jewish reckoning, actually began at sundown on Holy Thursday. So on the beginning of his final day, Jesus gave us the verbal caption of his last and greatest sermon: "This is my body, given for you; this is my blood, which is poured out for you."

"I love you" is not so much something you say as something you demonstrate. Diamonds may be a moving testimony to love, but the laying down of one's life is even more compelling. And though this life is human and therefore vulnerable, it is also divine and therefore infinite in value. A gift so valuable that it outweighs every offense committed from the dawn of time till the end of the world. A gift so powerful that it melts hearts, opens the barred gates of paradise, and makes all things new.

Dr. Marcellino D'Ambrosio

### The Ten Commandments -- Minnesota Style

1. Der's only one God, ya know.
2. Don't make dat fish on yer mantle an idol.
3. Cussing ain't Minnesota nice.
4. Go to church -- even when yer up nort.
5. Honor yer folks.
6. Don't kill. Catch and release.
7. Der's only one Lena fer every Ole. No cheatin!
8. If it ain't yer Lutefisk, don't take it.
9. Don't be braggin' about how much snow ya shoveled.
10. Keep yer mind off yer neighbor's hotdish.



**The Faith Country Chronicle** is published monthly from September thru May by the partners in the Faith Country Shared Ministry:

Bethania Lutheran - Sedgewick  
Hope Lutheran - Forestburg  
St. John's Anglican - Sedgewick  
Trinity Lutheran - Loughheed

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**Maundy Thursday - March 24, 2016**

8:30 PM at Sedgewick United Church

**Good Friday - March 25, 2016**

**Forestburg**

9:30 AM - Walk of the Cross (Big Knife Villa)

10:30 AM - "Open My Life, Lord"  
- Forestburg Community Hall

**Sedgewick**

9:15 AM - Bethania Lutheran Church



**Palm Sunday Services**  
March 20, 2016

9:15 AM - Bethania

11:00 AM - Trinity



**Easter Sunday Services**  
March 27, 2016

9:15 AM - St. John's

11:15 AM - Hope

(Both services will be  
communion services)



# Faith Country Shared Ministry

~ March 2016 ~						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5
<b>6</b> 9:15a Bethania Communion Service 11a Trinity Communion Service	7	8	<b>9</b> 6p Big Knife Villa Service 7p Hope Council meets	10	11	12
<b>13</b> 9:15a St. John's Eucharist Service 11:15a Hope Communion Service	14	<b>15</b> 9a Anglican Clergy Day (St. John Evangelist - 11111 57 Ave NW Edmonton) 11a Lutheran Cluster Meeting	16	17 St Patrick	18	19
<b>20</b> 9:15a Bethania Song Service 11a Trinity Song Service	21	22	23	<b>24</b> 8:30p Maundy Thursday Service at Sedgewick United Church	<b>25</b> Good Friday 9:15a Good Friday Service at Bethania	26
<b>27</b> Easter 9:15a St. John's Morning Prayer 11:15a Hope Communion Service	28	<b>29</b> 10:30a Protestant Communion at Killam Continuing Care	30	31	Notes:	



# Faith Country Shared Ministry

~ April 2016 ~						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3 10:30a Trinity Communion Service	4	5	6	7	8	9
10 9:15a St. John's Eucharist Service 11:15a Hope Communion Service	11	12	13 7p Big Knife Villa Service 7p Hope Council meets	14	15	16
17 10:30a Trinity Song Service	18	19 11a Lutheran Cluster Meeting	20	21 7:30p FCSM Council meets at St. John's	22 Earth Day	23
24 9:15a St. John's Morning Prayer 11:15a Hope Communion Service	25	26	27	28	29	30