



## **Questions About Lent:**

### **What *is* Lent?**

"Lent is a word that means "spring" (as in the "time of year.") Lent is the season of the Church Year that precedes the Easter Season. It is designed to help us prepare for that greatest of all Christian celebrations: the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

We prepare by examining our lives, reflecting on our sins, being reminded of all that Jesus did in coming to this earth and going to the cross to pay for our sins. We prepare by remembering that Jesus' suffering of death and hell did indeed pay for our sins and restore our relationship with God. We prepare by seeking the Holy Spirit's help to become more like Jesus - resisting temptation, loving God above all things and loving our neighbor as ourselves."

### **Why is Lent soooooo long?**

Lent is a season that lasts 40 days. The 40 days of Lent correspond to the 40 days that Jesus spent being in the wilderness being tempted by Satan as preparation for his public ministry.

### **But it seems longer than 40 days...**

If you count the days from Ash Wednesday (the beginning of Lent) to Easter you will find 47 instead of 40 days. That's because Sundays are not included in the season. Lent is to be a somber time without celebration. But every Sunday is to be a "mini-Easter" celebrating the fact that we have a God who rose from the grave and lives to love, guide and forgive. For this reason Sundays are not counted as being a part of the season of Lent.

### **Why do we have worship services on Wednesdays during Lent?**

Since Lent is a somber season of repentance and renewal, and Sunday worship is to be a celebration, the church felt it needed a special worship that emphasized the somber, repentant theme of Lent, so Wednesday worship was added to serve that purpose.

### **Why does Ash Wednesday always start on a different day?**

The date of Ash Wednesday (the beginning of Lent) is determined by the date of Easter (which changes every year). In A.D. 325, the church leaders at the Council of Nicaea stated that "Easter should be observed on the first Sunday following the 14th day of the Paschal moon. This year that Sunday is April 15. Backing up 40 days from April 15 (not counting the Sundays) we end up with February 28 as the date of Ash Wednesday this year.

### **Why ashes?**

The wearing of sackcloth and ashes is a custom going back to the Old Testament. It was a sign of grieving and repentance (grieving over sin). The practice of applying ashes to the foreheads of

worshippers on Ash Wednesday began as a humble reminder of our sinfulness and need for a Savior. They are applied in the shape of a cross as a reminder that we do have a Savior who died to forgive our sinfulness.

**Why do some people "give up something for Lent?"**

Today in an effort to, in some small way, relate to Jesus self-denial those 40 days in the wilderness, people often deny themselves a certain pleasure during the 40 days of Lent. Maybe a better practice would be to use the 40 days to give up a *particular sin* that is hindering your faith and life.

**What is "Almsgiving?"** Moved by the sacrifice of Christ, many Christians combine almsgiving with fasting during Lent - giving to the poor the money they saved by eating, drinking, or buying less as they rely more upon God's abundant grace.

Thanks for asking,  
Pastor David

Send your questions to <mailto:pastor@livingwordlutheran.net>