



March 1st is Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent. Mardi Gras, or Fat Tuesday, is a wild and raucous celebration on the last day before Lent begins. I guess the idea is that before you give up some things for 40 days, you need to indulge yourself on them. To excess!

Lent is an ancient Christian observance, going back at least to the 3rd century. The 40 days of Lent (seven weeks not counting Sundays) were formalized after Christianity

became the religion of the Roman Empire in 313 under Emperor Constantine.

The observance of Lent involves mostly prayer and fasting, or in common parlance, “giving up something” for Lent. (See the cartoon to the right.)

The idea of giving up something for Lent is usually seen as putting us in touch with the sufferings of Jesus. Jesus suffered on the cross, but also suffered his whole life. “A man of sorrows, familiar with grief” says the prophet Isaiah about the Servant of the Lord. Jesus laid aside his glory and became human, with all the limitations that entails.

As Americans, we don’t like to give things up. We do not like suffering. Many of us do not like discipline, we like what we like, we want what we want, in the way we want it, when we want it!

Jesus said, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.” (Mark 8:34) Self-denial and sacrifice are difficult for us. We like what we like. We want what we want, how we want it, when we want it! But self-denial is at the heart of being a disciple of Jesus Christ.

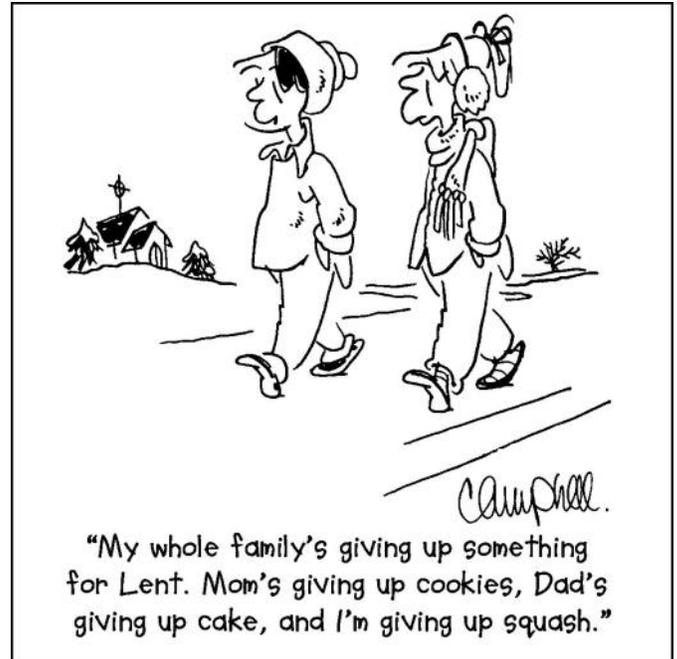
The Apostle Paul wrote, “For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.” (Galatians 5:1) “Freedom” is a word that resonates with Americans. We love freedom. But there is a cost.

Our Lenten sermon series will address some of these issues. Giving Up Control, Giving Up Expectations, Giving Up Superiority, Giving Up Enemies, Giving Up Our Lives, Giving Up Popularity, Giving Up Death.

What will you be giving up for Lent? You only have your freedom to gain!

SDG

Pastor Jim



## Notes:

- 1) Thank you for praying for Beth's brother Charlie and his family (wife Lynn and son Carl). He passed away peacefully on Valentine's Day, and the memorial service was held in Millbrae on February 23rd. Please continue to pray for the family as we mourn the loss of Charlie, but also celebrate his graduation to the Church Triumphant.
- 2) We continue to pursue a Choir Director. We are grateful for Lisa Highest's directing the choir on Sundays, and for Michele's wonderful guidance as the choir chooses songs to sing. If you know anyone who might be remotely interested, please let the office know the contact information. Please continue to pray.

## How Lent Can Make a Difference in Your Relationship with God

by Rev. Dr. Mark D. Roberts © 2011 Mark D. Roberts and Patheos.com

[Note: this is an excerpt from a really good article on Lent written a few years ago by Mark D. Roberts, a Presbyterian pastor from Irvine, CA.]

### What I've Learned by Fasting During Lent

First, giving up something allows me to make a tangible sacrifice to the Lord. Although certain sacrifices are already present in my life, they're sort of "built in" at this point. I don't often experience giving up something for God on a daily basis. The act of sacrifice reminds me of my commitment to God and my desire to make him first in my life.

Second, by giving up something I usually enjoy on a daily basis, I have sometimes found myself yearning for that thing. Frankly, I've been tempted to give up my Lenten fast at times. I could easily argue that it's unnecessary (it is optional, after all) and certainly not taught in Scripture. But, though I don't think my effort at fasting makes God love or bless me more, I do think it raises my awareness of how much I depend on other things in life rather than the Lord. I see how easy it is for me to set up all sorts of little idols in my life. Fasting, in some way, helps me surrender my idols to God.

Third, when I give up something I like and then feel an unquenched desire for it, I'm reminded of my neediness as a person. And neediness, I believe, is at the heart of true spirituality. Jesus said: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. . . .Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled." (Matthew 5:3, 6)

Of course feeling hungry for one of life's pleasures isn't quite the same as hungering and thirsting for righteousness. But when I feel my hunger, when I sense my neediness for some other thing, I can use this to get in touch with my hunger and need for God.

Fourth, as I continue with my Lenten fast, I find myself less eager for the thing I've given up. Ironically, this makes my fast easier. It's almost something I can take for granted, thus dulling the spiritual impact of the fast.

But I'm also gratified to know that one of my little "idols" is being set aside in my heart, as I learn to depend more upon God. I'm experiencing a bit of freedom that makes me gladly thankful for God's grace at work in me.

### Adding a Lenten Discipline

Instead of or in addition to fasting during Lent, you might add a spiritual exercise or discipline to your life. If your church sponsors a Lenten Bible study, you might choose to join this study. Or you may want to participate in some act of kindness, such as feeding people at a homeless shelter.

I like to add something that I can do every day. It needs to be realistic, given my nature and patterns of life. So, for example, it would be a bad idea if I decided to get up at 5:00 a.m. to pray for an hour each day of Lent. This would stretch me so far that I'd surely fail. But I could take on additional Bible reading. Some years I've read one chapter of a gospel each day of Lent, taking it in slowly and meditating upon it. Other years I've used a Lenten devotional to focus my thought.

If you have no idea what to do during Lent, let me suggest the following. Set aside some time of quiet to ask the Lord what he wants you to do. See if the Spirit of God guides you to something. If nothing comes to mind, I'd recommend that you read a chapter of a gospel each day. If you start with Mark, you'll have time to read all of Mark plus all of one other gospel during Lent.

So, as we enter the season of Lent, I am grateful for the saints who have gone before me, some of whom discovered the blessings of giving up something in Lent, while others grew in their faith by adding a Lenten discipline. No matter what you do during this Lenten season, I pray that God will draw us closer to him, and prepare us for a fresh experience of Good Friday and Easter. May God's peace be with You!



## Harvest Mariner's Corned Beef Dinner March 17th

In February, Pat Cousins and her cousin Juanita Erickson presented readings from Pat's new book. It was a great evening.

At our meeting on March 17th, at 6:00 p.m., (St. Patrick's Day!) we will host a traditional corned beef and cabbage dinner. All Harvest members and friends are invited. The meal will be \$6 per person and you can sign up on Sunday mornings in the narthex.



**amazon**smile Amazon smile is an excellent opportunity to support the church without donating your money or time. Amazon smile is a way to support a charitable organization every time you shop online at no cost to you. In order to participate simply go to "**smile.amazon.com**" and type in "*Harvest Presbyterian Church*" into the search bar in the lower left corner. Then be sure to select our church in Ceres, CA. You can then follow the on-screen instructions to help you finish getting connected to Amazon Smile. After you have finished the on-screen instructions, all you have to do is shop online and 0.5% of your purchase will be given to Harvest Presbyterian Church! Not all purchases will donate to Harvest; however, any item labeled "*Eligible for AmazonSmile donation*" will work. Do you already have an amazon account? If so, when you are directed to the home page of amazon, simply log in and all purchases will be linked to your account. Please tell your friends and family!

Harvest Presbyterian Church  
1813 Moffet Road  
Ceres, CA 95307

POSTAGE

March

Mission Statement ~ With God in control, the mission of the Harvest Presbyterian Church is to proclaim and bear witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ and nurture the faith of our church family.

## Harvest Leadership 2017

### Deacons

Virginia Bathe (Moderator)  
Pat Cousins  
Martha McNamara  
Nawatha Reed  
Linda Sherman  
Myrna Wilhite (Treasurer)

### Elders

Patti Arbizu (Personnel)  
Susan Bennett (Communications)  
Michael Cousins (Treasurer)  
Karen Edwards (Clerk/Mission)  
Staci Edwards (CE)  
Brandy Meyer (CE/Youth)  
Wilson Kailiponi (Worship)

### Church Information

Church Office Phone: (209) 537-3519  
Church Fax (209) 537-1869  
Website: [www.harvestpres.org](http://www.harvestpres.org)  
Pastor Jim Stochl— [harvest.pastor.jim@gmail.com](mailto:harvest.pastor.jim@gmail.com)  
Prayer Requests—[prayer@harvestpres.org](mailto:prayer@harvestpres.org)  
Kohl James —[secretary@harvestpres.org](mailto:secretary@harvestpres.org)

### Office Hours

Tuesdays: 8:00a.m.—12:00 p.m.  
Thursdays: 3:30p.m.—7:30 p.m.  
Friday: 9:00a.m.—1:00 p.m.

# March

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
26	27	28 	1  ASH WEDNESDAY Harvest Youth —7:00p.m.	2 Alpha Circle— 9:30 a.m.  Choir—6:30 p.m. Praise Team— 7:30 p.m.	3 Women's Bible Study—10:30 a.m.	4
5 Communion — 10:30 a.m.	6  Prayer Mtg — 6:00 p.m.	7	8  Harvest Youth —7:00p.m.	9  Choir—6:30 p.m. Praise Team— 7:30 p.m.	10 Women's Bible Study—10:30 a.m. Deacons— 12:00 p.m.	11
12 Worship — 10:30 a.m.  	13  Prayer Mtg — 6:00 p.m.	14	15  Session Mtg— 2:30 p.m.  Harvest Youth —7:00p.m.	16  Choir—6:30 p.m. Praise Team— 7:30 p.m.	17 Women's Bible Study—10:30 a.m.  Mariners— 6:00 p.m.	18
19 Worship — 10:30 a.m.	20  Prayer Mtg — 6:00 p.m.	21	22  Harvest Youth —7:00p.m.	23  Choir—6:30 p.m. Praise Team— 7:30 p.m.	24 Women's Bible Study—10:30 a.m.	25
26 Worship — 10:30 a.m. End of the Month Potluck	27  Prayer Mtg — 6:00 p.m.	28	29  Harvest Youth —7:00p.m.	30  Choir—6:30 p.m. Praise Team— 7:30 p.m.	31 Women's Bible Study—10:30 a.m.	1 

## March Sunday School Schedule\*

- 3/5 Nursery:** Kendall Meyer, Nawatha Reed  
**K-3rd:** Beth Stochl, Anette Arias, Judy Salyer (Alternate)
- 3/12 Nursery:** Kendall Meyer, Nawatha Reed  
**K-3rd:** Staci Edwards, Patti Arbizu, Cyndy Cawley (Alternate)
- 3/19 Nursery:** Kendall Meyer, Martha McNamara  
**K-3rd:** Brandy Meyer, Judy Salyer, Beth Stochl (Alternate)
- 3/26 Nursery:** Martha McNamara, Anette Arias  
**K-3rd:** Beth Stochl, Staci Edwards, Patti Arbizu (Alternate)

\* This schedule may change! Check with Brandy Meyer if you have any conflicts or questions.

## Regular Prayer List

### *Health Issues:*

Virginia Irons (hospice care)  
Dorothy Nelson  
Margaret Kuglin (eye)  
Alice Visser (English Oaks)



2—Kohl James  
20—Bettye Welsh  
25—Martha McNamara  
29—Brady Arias