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*Lent—letting God's love and forgiveness melt our hearts  
so we might live in love*



Lent began with Ash Wednesday on February 14. Lent is a period of 40 days to prepare our hearts to receive once again the gift of Easter. It is a time to remember why we need a Savior as we take time in reflection on our own sinfulness (ways we do not love) and our need for our Savior to continue to give us hearts of love and dependence upon the Good Shepherd.

The idea behind the 40 days of Lent is inspired by Jesus' time in the wilderness, where He spends 40 days and 40 nights praying and fasting before the start of His public ministry, which we can read about in the gospel of Matthew and Mark.

There are a few main focuses when it comes to Lent: **prayer, fasting and giving.**

**Prayer** during Lent focuses on our need for God's forgiveness, turning away from our sin (which leads to self-destruction) and receiving God's loving mercy.

**Fasting** during Lent focuses on giving up something that is a normal part of your life and being a type of sacrifice that reminds you of Christ's sacrifice. Some people give up eating out, social media, or entertainment, to name a few examples. Or, some make a commitment to do something, like read a Lenten devotional daily.

**Giving** encourages generosity, and either giving or doing for others as a response to the grace and kindness that God has given to you.

Lent can be a wonderful time for believers to draw near to the God who adores us and wants abundant life for us, rooting out the things we do that separate us from God and each other. It is also a time of Reflection on the immense love on of Christ who endured death to get us back, and the grace that flows from the ever loving and merciful heart of God.

These Bible verses can help you reflect during this time of Lent:

- 1. Matthew 6:21** – *For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*
  - 2. 1 Peter 5:6** – *Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.*
  - 3. Isaiah 58:6** – *Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?*
  - 4. Psalm 42:2** – *My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?*
  - 5. Isaiah 30:18** – *The Lord longs to be gracious to you; therefore, he will rise up to show you compassion. For the Lord is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him!*
  - 6. Matthew 6:33** – *Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*
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## *Goals for 2024 from Westview's Leadership Retreat of our Elders and Deacons*

1. Westview has been blessed with many wonderful organizations working in our church—Our own SonRise Kitchen providing breakfast at the levee, Community Action Board (CAB) providing services to the unhoused and teens, Homeless Persons Helping Project (HHP) providing health services to the unhoused, Recurso de Fuerza (Resource of Strength) which is the village of transitional homes that will be built behind the church with a projected completion date of November 2024. Iglesia de Cristo and Temple Betania, Spanish speaking congregations, both worshipping at our church. New School, alternative school, basketball team practicing at our church.

Our leaders would like to help these organizations and ministries to be more interconnected and for our members to feel more connected to all the good ministries occurring at Westview. You will get to know them better through the Chimes, and we hope to have meetings in which we all get to know each other better. We hope to also invite the Buddhist Temple and clubs in town into the service we are doing at Westview.

2. Sponsor a Tiny House room—we will invite families, classrooms, etc to sponsor decorating a room in the Recurso de Fuerza village.

3. Initiate ways to better care for local youth by exploring ways to connect with the New School basketball team through providing snacks, inviting them to youth events or even opportunities for them to do service. We will explore hiring a youth leader. Also we will make kid activity bags for worship service.

I appreciate you, the Westview family, and am grateful to walk in life together discovering God's goodness and lavish love!

Pastor Dan