



**Ascension News**  
**Church of the Ascension –**  
**The Anglican Church in Hilton, KZN**  
**Diocese of Natal in the Anglican Church of Southern Africa**

**Lent Edition 2022**

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Forbes asked us to use the following as our focus for 2022 and to include it in all communications that go out. Joan unpacks what it means for her.



Joan

Mauck:

# Rooted in faith, re-discovering community

Jesus often refers to his words as lifegiving, often with imagery of water and bread. We are rooted and nourished by the very word of God; it gives us life. Yet we so often seek life elsewhere. But to be truly nourished and sustained we need to eat the very word of God. We need to eat the very bread of life and I don't mean here that we should simply read it, we need to go beyond reading, to savouring, to immersing

ourselves in it, to suck from it the very deeper and life-giving meaning for our own lives. We need to see God's word as his word spoken to us and for us in this moment in 2022

So, let's read Psalm 23. (*Taken from, The Message*)

**God, my shepherd!**



**I don't need a thing.**

**You have bedded me down in lush meadows, you find me quiet pools to drink from.**

**True to your word, you let me catch my breath and send me in the right direction.**

**Even when the way goes through Death Valley, I'm not afraid when you walk at my side.**

**Your trusty shepherd's crook makes me feel secure.**

**You serve me a six-course dinner right in front of my enemies.**

**You revive my drooping head, my cup brims with blessing.**

**Your beauty and love chase after me every day of my life.**

**I'm back home in the house of God for the rest of my life.**

What does this say to you today about God and your life? Reflect on that.

What stands out for you? Talk to God about that.

For me, it reminds me that despite the uncertainty of the times I have a Shepherd who cares for me, who desires my wellbeing, who walks with me and guides me along the way even when the pathway goes through places of hardship, still he is beside me. I am never ever alone. I find that reassuring and it gives me courage for the day.

Because I have a Shepherd, I do not need a thing! I do not need to worry about acquiring more and more stuff, I can rest knowing that I will have enough. My shepherd will give me what I need, and I remind myself that I actually need very little. It is the Shepherd's responsibility to provide for his sheep, the sheep know that and depend on that, and I too must learn to do the same.

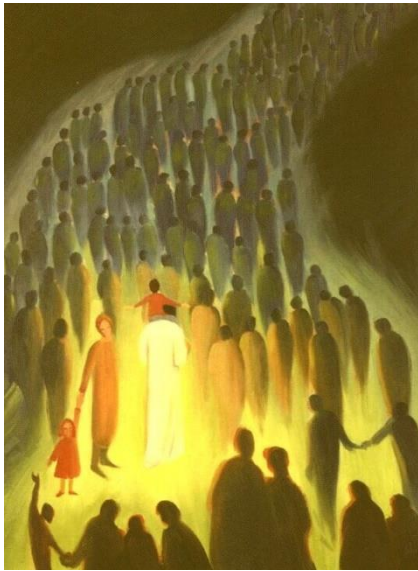


He will lead me into places that are nourishing for my soul, places where I can be renewed and revived. So, I need to look out for places that he invites me to rest. I need to accept the invitation to rest and not say “No I am too busy!”

“He sends me in the right direction” reminds me that once I have been renewed and revived, I can trust that he will lead me along the right path. So, I must trust him and listen for his guidance and not rush ahead thinking that I know the way.

So, what stood out for you? How might you root yourself in this Psalm today?

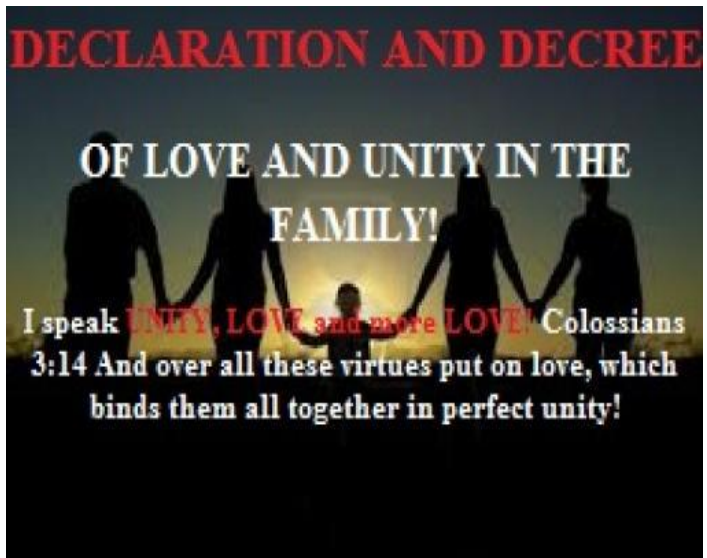
If we are rooted in the words of our faith, then we are nourished and directed by God. If God is directing us and nourishing us, then we will begin to rediscover the wonder of community.



Since March 2020 we have not been able to meet as a Church community in the usual way. We have been forced to stay at home and listen online and while this nourished and sustained us it meant that it was more difficult for us to express our faith as we are called to do, as the body of Christ. As we are nourished and directed by God we will always be drawn into community. We cannot be the Church without being together, without serving those who live around us. So, as we come out of a time of isolation, we are drawn again

to be together, to give life to each other, to encourage each other, to work with each other so that God's work can be done in Hilton.

So, as we allow God to nourish us through his word let us also be open to his call to nourish each other and serve each other in and through the gift of community.



## Why Lent?



With so many fun Easter traditions—like decorating Easter eggs, munching on jelly beans from your Easter basket, and gathering with family on the big day—it’s easy to see why Easter is such a popular holiday. But it’s also an incredibly important time for us Christians, as are the holy days leading up to it. Holy Week, starts with Palm Sunday and also includes Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday. (The Triduum) But before this is the period of Lent. What is Lent, exactly? At its core, it’s a solemn season focused on faith and sacrifice, but there’s so much more to know about its history, symbolism, and rules.

While traditions vary depending on different branches of Christianity, Lent is observed by Catholic, Orthodox, and some Protestant believers. Even within those larger groupings, there’s a lot of wiggle room. After all, there are more than 15 different denominations just in Protestantism! But regardless of the specifics, all Christians share the same basic beliefs surrounding the life and teachings of Jesus, during Lent and beyond.

### **So, what is Lent?**

Lent is the 40-day period preceding Easter that focuses on remembering the death and resurrection of Jesus. Sundays aren’t included, but it’s actually 46 days if you count them. This six-week period includes a renewed perspective on baptism, which often means a recommitment of faith. During Lent, people often fast or give up something special to them (often a food indulgence), which is supposed to prepare their hearts and minds for Easter.

A similar time of fasting and prayer is seen in the Gospel of Matthew in the New Testament when Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness for 40 days. Each



“temptation” was a test of Jesus’ faith, an effort to get him to doubt that he was really the son of God or to renounce his devotion in exchange for wealth and glory. But instead of succumbing to temptation, Jesus answered Satan each time by quoting Scripture from the Old Testament. As the story goes, the Devil then left, and the angels surrounded Jesus as he began preparing for his ministry.

That’s where the Lenten fast comes in. It hearkens back to these ideas of temptation and sacrifice, and its goal is to help us Christians achieve a deeper understanding of our faith. Instead of a 40-day fast, however, Christians might engage in shorter fasts or abstain from things they particularly love, like soda, alcohol, desserts, or social media. When they feel hungry or miss the thing they’re abstaining from, they should acknowledge that and turn to prayer and the Bible. Bev and I have given up coffee shops & alcohol. I have really hankered after a glass of wine with supper and last week when we received bad news I really wanted to just get out and journey to a pretty little coffee shop in the Midlands. Each time these cravings appeared they reminded me to focus on Jesus, my Saviour and Redeemer and all that He sacrificed for me. I have also given up social media and games on my iPad. This has been a REAL challenge.

Giving up these little things has given Bev and me more time for prayer and Bible reading. I do hope your Lenten discipline is assisting you to focus more concertedly on Christ. At this time Jesus as a Servant King has been highlighted for me. Even at the Eucharist it is He serving us at the table. It is He ministering through faithful aid workers and missionaries to Russian soldiers and Ukrainians in their deep need. So immensely humbling.



# Message of Pope Francis for Lent

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Lent is a favourable time for personal and community renewal, as it leads us to the paschal mystery of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. For our Lenten journey in 2022, we will do well to reflect on Saint Paul's exhortation to the Galatians: "Let us not grow tired of doing good, for in due time we shall reap our harvest, if we do not give up. So then, while we have the opportunity (*kairós*), let us do good to all" (*Gal* 6:9-10).

## **1. Let us not grow tired of sowing and reaping**



In these words, the Apostle evokes the image of sowing and reaping, so dear to Jesus. Saint Paul speaks to us of a *kairós*: an opportune time for sowing goodness in view of a future harvest. What is this "opportune time" for us? Lent is certainly such an opportune time, but so is our entire existence, of which Lent is in some

way an image. All too often in our lives, greed, pride and the desire to possess, accumulate and consume have the upper hand, as we see in the story of the foolish man in the Gospel parable, (*Lk* 12:16-21). who thought his life was safe and secure because of the abundant grain and goods he had stored in his barns. Lent invites us to conversion, to a change in mindset, so that life's truth and beauty may be found not so much in possessing as in giving, not so much in accumulating as in sowing and sharing goodness.

The first to sow is God himself, who with great generosity continues to sow abundant seeds of goodness in our human family. During Lent we are called to respond to God's gift by accepting his word, which is "living and active" (*Heb* 4:12). Regular listening to the word of God makes us open and docile to his working and bears fruit in our lives. This brings us great joy, yet even more, it summons us to become God's co-workers. By making good use of the present time, we too can sow seeds of goodness. This call to sow goodness should not be seen as a burden but a grace, whereby the Creator wishes us to be actively united with his own bountiful goodness.

What about the harvest? Do we not sow seeds in order to reap a harvest? Of course! Saint Paul points to the close relationship between sowing and reaping when he says: “Anyone who sows sparsely will reap sparsely as well, and anyone who sows generously will reap generously as well” (2 Cor 9:6). But what kind of harvest are we talking about? A



first fruit of the goodness we sow appears in ourselves and our daily lives, even in our little acts of kindness. In God, no act of love, no matter how small, will ever be lost. Just as we recognize a tree by its fruits so a life full of good deeds radiates light and carries the fragrance of Christ to the world (2 Cor 2:15). Serving God in freedom from sin brings forth fruits of sanctification for the salvation of all (Rom 6:22).

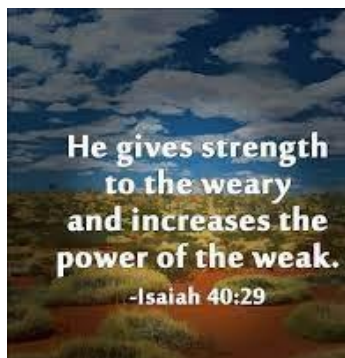
In truth, we see only a small portion of the fruits of what we sow, since, according to the Gospel proverb, “one sows, while another reaps” (Jn 4:37). When we sow for the benefit of others, we share in God’s own benevolent love: “it is truly noble to place our hope in the hidden power of the seeds of goodness we sow, and thus to initiate processes whose fruits will be reaped by others. Sowing goodness for the benefit of others frees us from narrow self-interest, infuses our actions with gratuitousness, and makes us part of the magnificent horizon of God’s benevolent plan.

The mature fruit of our lives and actions is “fruit for eternal life” (Jn 4:36), our “treasure in heaven” (Lk 12:33; 18:22). Jesus himself uses the image of the seed that dies in the ground in order to bear fruit as a symbol of the mystery of his death and resurrection (Jn 12:24); while Saint Paul uses the same image to speak of the resurrection of our bodies: “What is sown is perishable, but what is raised is imperishable; what is sown is contemptible but what is raised is glorious; what is sown is weak, but what is raised is powerful; what is sown is a natural body, and what is raised is a spiritual body” (1 Cor 15:42-44). The hope of resurrection is the great light that the risen Christ brings to the world, for “if our hope in Christ has been for this life only, we are of all people the most pitiable. In fact, however, Christ has been raised from the dead, as the first-fruits of all who have fallen asleep” (1 Cor 15:19-20). Those who are intimately united to him in love “by dying a death like his” (Rom 6:5) will also be united to his resurrection for eternal life (Jn 5:29). “Then the upright will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father” (Mt 13:43).



## **2. Let us not grow tired of doing good**

Christ's resurrection enlivens earthly hopes with the "great hope" of eternal life, planting the seed of salvation in our present time. Bitter disappointment at shattered dreams, deep concern for the challenges ahead and discouragement at the poverty of our resources, can make us tempted to seek refuge in self-centredness and indifference to the suffering of others.



Indeed, even our best resources have their limitations: "Youths grow tired and weary, the young stumble and fall" (*Is* 40:30). Yet God "gives strength to the weary, he strengthens the powerless... Those who hope in the Lord will regain their strength, they will soar on wings like eagles; though they run they will not grow weary, though they walk they will never tire» (*Is* 40:29, 31). The Lenten season calls us to place our faith and hope in the Lord (*1 Pet* 1:21), since only if we fix

our gaze on the risen Christ (*Heb* 12:2) will we be able to respond to the Apostle's appeal, "Let us never grow tired of doing good" (*Gal* 6:9).

## **3. Let us not grow tired of praying**

Jesus taught us to "pray always without becoming weary" (*Lk* 18:1). We need to pray because we need God. Thinking that we need nothing other than ourselves is a dangerous illusion. If the pandemic has heightened the awareness of our own personal and social fragility, may this Lent allow us to experience the consolation provided by



faith in God, without whom we cannot stand firm (*Is* 7:9). No one attains salvation alone, since we are all in the same boat, amid the storms of history, and certainly no one reaches salvation without God, for only the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ triumphs over the dark waters of death. Faith does not spare us life's burdens and tribulations, but it does allow us to face them in union with God in Christ, with the great hope that does not disappoint, whose pledge is the love that God has poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit (*Rom* 5:1-5).

#### **4. Let us not grow tired of uprooting evil from our lives**

May the corporal fasting to which Lent calls us fortify our spirit for the battle against sin, knowing that God never tires of forgiving.

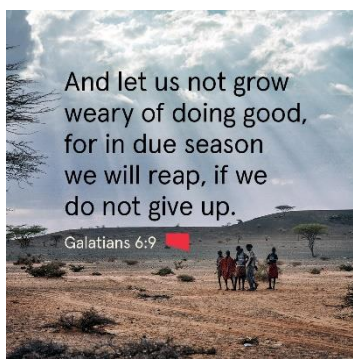


#### **5. Let us not grow tired of doing good in active charity towards our neighbours.**



During this Lent, may we practise almsgiving by giving joyfully (2 Cor 9:7). God who “supplies seed to the sower and bread for food” (2 Cor 9:10) enables each of us not only to have food to eat, but also to be generous in doing good to others. While it is true that we have our entire life to sow

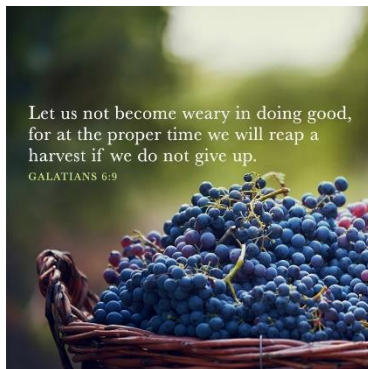
goodness, let us take special advantage of this Lenten season to care for those close to us and to reach out to our brothers and sisters who lie wounded along the path of life (Lk 10:25-Lent is a favourable time to seek out – and not to avoid – those in need; to reach out – and not to ignore – those who need a sympathetic ear and a good word; to visit – and not to abandon – those who are lonely. Let us put into practice our call to do good to all, and take time to love the poor and needy, those abandoned and rejected, those discriminated against and marginalized.



#### **6. If we do not give up, we shall reap our harvest in due time**

Each year during Lent we are reminded that goodness, together with love, justice and solidarity, are not achieved once and for all; they have to be realized each day.

Let us ask God to give us the patient perseverance of the farmer and to persevere in doing good, one step at a time. If we fall, let us stretch out our hand to the Father, who always lifts us up. If we are lost, if we are misled by the enticements of the evil one, let us not hesitate to return to God, who “is generous in forgiving” (*Is 55:7*). In this season of conversion, sustained by God’s grace and by the communion of the Church, let us not grow tired of doing good. The soil is prepared by fasting, watered by prayer and enriched by charity. Let us believe firmly that “if we do not give up, we shall reap our harvest in due time” and that, with the gift of perseverance, we shall obtain what was promised (*Heb 10:36*), for our salvation and the salvation of others (*1 Tim 4:16*). By cultivating fraternal love towards everyone, we are united to Christ, who gave his life for our sake (*2 Cor 5:14-15*), and we are granted a foretaste of the joy of the kingdom of heaven, when God will be “all in all” (*1 Cor 15:28*).



## Holy Week and Easter Services

Dear Ascension Family,

Please kindly take note of the following services as you prepare for your Easter holidays.

### PLEASE NOTE CHANGE OF TIMES

#### Making of Palm Crosses:

**09 April      09h00      Church Hall**

**Join us in the Hall for tea and making of Palm Crosses.**

**Palm Sunday :      10 April      08h30**

**Spy Wednesday:   13 April      18h00      (changed time)**

**Maundy Thursday: 14 April 18h00 (Changed time)**  
(Please contact the office if you would like your feet washed)

**Good Friday 15 April 12h00**


**Decoration and Cleaning of the Church:**

**16 April 09h00**

**Please join us to clean polish and decorate the church with flowers or even an Easter garden. If you can't join us and you wish to partake, just drop flowers off so others can arrange them, as our church welcomes the risen lord.**

**Resurrection Sunday 17 April 06h00**

**17 April 08h30**



*May all your prayers be answered  
and may you feel the Lord's  
presence near you...  
not only for Easter,  
but always.*

*Happy Easter!*