

# The Next 40 Days



**Knox United Church  
Lenten Practice:  
Praying with our  
Neighbours**

## De-colonizing

One of our initiatives over the Next 1100 Days is to become a post-colonial church. "Aren't we already?" several people have asked. And the answer is "no."

**Here are some of the attitudes and ideas that tend to go with colonialism:**

The Christian church has, and should have, a place of power, influence, and privilege in Canadian society. In other words, "Canada is a Christian society."

White Western European culture is normal, good, and fits well with the gospel.

We, in the church, are basically healthy and whole, by which we assume:

- That our mission is to help the less fortunate (to become like us)
- That our own personal sin or brokenness is a matter of shame, and shouldn't be exposed in church.

During Lent of this year, we hope to challenge some of these assumptions by opening ourselves to pray with our neighbours – particularly those of other faiths.



## Lenten fasting

Lent is a traditional time of fasting and prayer, in the 40 days (not counting Sundays) leading up to Easter. One practice with which many of us are familiar is the notion of "giving up something for Lent." One friend gives up coffee for Lent, another chocolate. This is a form of fasting: the discipline and practice of feeling hunger without satisfying that hunger by eating. This practice is not meant simply as an end in itself, though -- it is meant to sharpen our focus and open space for God. We invite you this year to consider fasting for Lent.

**Here are some possibilities:**

Giving up something for Lent. What you give up needs to be important enough to you to be noticeable (if you don't feel the hunger, you are missing the essence of fasting) but not so important that you'll be obsessed by it, or that your health or well-being will be compromised. You can maintain the practice throughout Lent (March 1 – April 15, this year) or you can "take a break" from the fast on Sundays. Sundays are not counted in the 40 days of Lent, because the Sabbath feast supercedes any fast (we get that from our Jewish forebears).

Doing a one-time, or weekly, 24-hour fast. For this (and we suggest going from noon – noon) you would give up eating entirely (usually people continue to drink water, and perhaps even clear juices) for 24 hours.

This practice is not designed to make you suffer! Rather, it is designed to remind you that you are not meant to be the slave of your hungers – and it is designed to sharpen your attention to the Word and voice of God.

## Lenten prayer

We invite you to take up a practice of daily prayer through Lent – or, if you already have such a practice, to add to it. This may be a time of meditation, or a mindful walk, or a time talking to God, or a time of reading. The idea is to place yourself intentionally in the presence of God, and to focus your attention on God for a particular time.

### As you pray, we invite you to keep these things in mind:

The ways our neighbours of other faiths invite us to pray with them (we'll remind you of those ways week by week)

This church, and the changes and new initiatives that are part of The Next 1100 Days

The United Church of Canada, and the changes and challenges we are facing throughout the church – in our local churches, at the national and provincial levels, in the presbyteries.

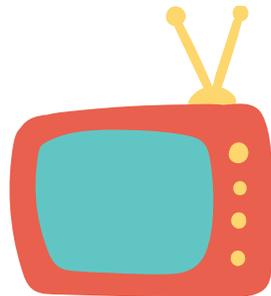
## Lenten connections

See if you can find at least one way to share this journey with another. In the spirit of “decolonizing,” perhaps you could find someone who can help you with your own practice or spiritual journey. Do you have friends of another faith? Perhaps they can teach you a bit about their faith, and give you ways to pray with their community. Perhaps there is someone who can help you deepen your prayer practice, or ...?

### Alternative

If fasting isn't for you, perhaps instead of “giving up” something for Lent, you could “take up” something for Lent -- perhaps a new practice, or a missional task, or ...?

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