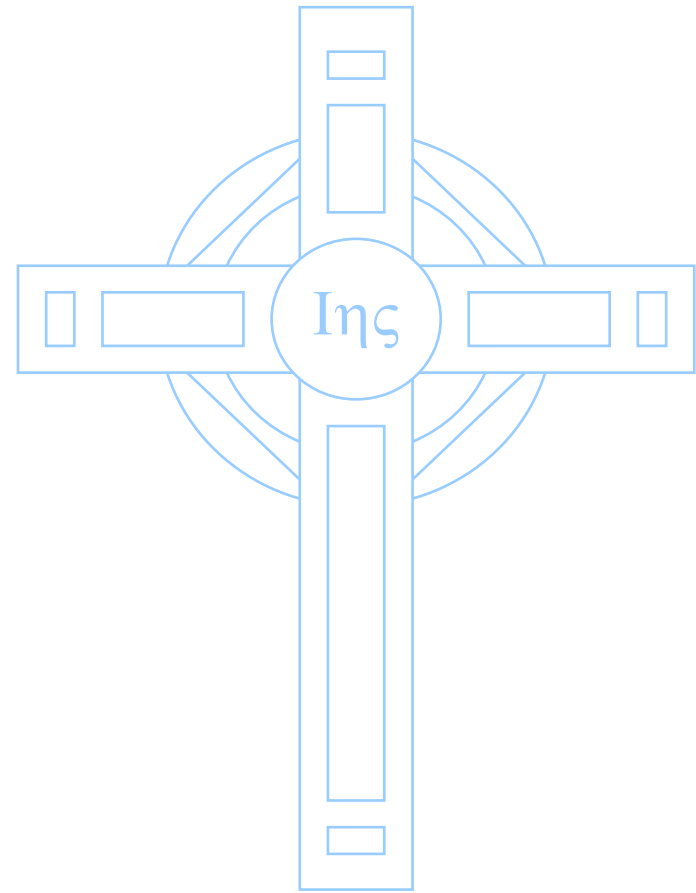

CHRIST CHURCH VENTURA



CHRIST CHURCH VENTURA IS A MISSION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

— Empowered by the Gospel, we aim to experience God's pleasure in fostering true knowledge, holy affection, and faithful obedience through historic worship, biblical learning, genuine community, and cultural outreach to the end that God's people are gathered and Christ's Kingdom is extended in Ventura County and beyond —

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Lutheran Church of Our Redeemer 1290 E. Grand Avenue in Ojai at 9:00 AM
First Lutheran Church 78 Chrisman Avenue in Ventura at 11:30 AM

A FAMILY GUIDE TO FAITH AND REPENTANCE
DURING THE LENTEN SEASON

Dear Members and Friends:

Worshipping Christ is the greatest privilege in all of life. Sometimes we worship him with great joy and celebration for our life is in him. This was particularly our emphasis during the recent Advent season. At other times, we worship him with great solemnity and brokenness because we understand what our sin has cost him. Lent is a season of worship when the emphasis is on this later reality.

It is my hope that this booklet will help you look to Christ this Lenten season. Just as we focus our corporate worship on Christ's passion so also can we meditate upon these truths and integrate them into our personal and family worship times.

This booklet is intended as a tool to shape your own worship. It can be used with flexibility. The point is not just to get through each section as it is printed, but to find a place to begin repentance before your King who suffered so that you could have life. We are using the Ten Commandments to focus on the requirements of God's holy law. The commands act as a mirror to show us the reality of our appearance before Him. They drive us to our knees in confession where we experience Christ's forgiveness and love.

Let us pray that God will use this season to convict us of our sin, cause us to rightly grieve over it, and use this humbling process to build us up in the certain knowledge that He loves us. We desire to be a true community of Christ. As such we want to be considerate of one another. Let us weep with one another over the losses and difficulties we face during this time. Let us rejoice together over the wonder of our Savior. In everything, let us adore our great Lord Jesus.

By God's Grace.

Reverend Roy R. Bennett

Ash Wednesday 2006

A Brief History of Lent

Lent is the period of days from ash Wednesday to Easter. Ash Wednesday is the seventh Wednesday before Easter Sunday. It is a time for fasting and penitence in anticipation of the celebration of the resurrection.

Lent began simply as a time of fasting from Friday at the ninth hour to Sunday morning, commemorating the time of the death of Christ. Though not universally applied in the early centuries, this forty-hour fast was widely recognized as a way of identifying oneself with Christ. Some practiced this fast on a weekly basis (which is where the Catholic practice of refraining from meat on Fridays arose), while others only fasted once a year.

By the fourth century, the annual feast of Easter was in a further state of development, and the forty hours had become forty days, known as the *tessarakoste*, during which the period of fasting was emphasized (though still not practiced universally by the church). The forty days not only commemorated the forty hours that Christ was in the tomb, but also recalled the forty-day fasts by Moses and Elijah, in addition to the forty days that Jesus was in the wilderness prior to his earthly ministry.

Two major traditions emerged. The Eastern Church observed the *tessarakoste* for eight weeks, fasting every day but Saturday and Sunday. The Western Church, on the other hand, observed the *tessarakoste* for six weeks, fasting every day but Sunday. St. Gregory (590- 604) likened the thirty-six day fast to a tithe of the year. Later, possibly in the eighth century, the Western Church added the days prior to the first Sunday of Lent so that the number of days would be exactly forty.

How We Observe Lent

Christ Church seeks to recover the riches of this season for the health of the church. We observe Lent primarily as a preparation time before Easter. It is a time when we consider the depth of our sin and misery to which the good news of the Gospel is the answer.

The good news will be all the more sweet as we recognize our need for a Savior. We also look forward in anticipation to the celebration of his resurrection. Because of this, we encourage people to fast for a time during this season as they are able.

This is not to be done legalistically, but in recognition of our desperate need for Christ. In addition we have prepared family worship liturgies based on the Ten Commandments. One of the primary functions of the law is to reveal our sinful nature and point us to our need of a savior. For this reason we believe this practice is highly appropriate during this season.

It must be remembered in this recognition of our sinfulness and desperate spiritual need that our hope is grounded on the finished work of Christ on the cross. Salvation is of the Lord and Christ has come and borne our sins. His love and forgiveness has set us free and so we are not without hope.

A Word about fasting

Many have misunderstood the concept of biblical fasting and as a result have slipped into all sorts of error. Fasting does not curry favor with God. Even our most sincere acts of piety are stained with our unrighteousness. We fast out of gratitude and love, rather than an effort to gain merit. By giving up something that is essential for our life, we are demonstrating our dependence upon God. He is our life and without Him we cannot survive. He is more necessary than food and drink.

Many who fast today refrain from luxuries like chocolate or television, rather than necessities like food and drink. While this may be an appropriate starting point, it is not what is intended by the biblical admonitions to fast and pray. Fasting is going without food as a way of reminding ourselves that we need God more than physical sustenance. While it may be that we need to realize our need for God is greater than for candy or amusement, that misses the depth of our true dependency.

We also fast to identify with Christ in his suffering. We must see that Christ has not saved us for our comfort, but for his own glory. This is a much neglected truth in the American church today. We do not suffer for the sake of suffering, but we acknowledge that Christ has called us to a life of suffering together with him. We seek to enter into that gladly knowing that to be with Christ in pain or trial or trouble is far greater than being rich and comfortable without him.

Let us pray for one another as we enter this Lent season that our prayer and fasting be generated by a genuine love of Christ.

ASH WEDNESDAY

- Leader:** What does God require of man?
- Family:** God requires man to obey his revealed will.
- Leader:** What rules did God first reveal for man to obey?
- Family:** The rules He first revealed were the moral law.
- Leader:** Where is the moral law summarized?
- Family:** The moral law is summarized the Ten Commandments.
- Leader:** What is the essence of the Ten Commandments?
- Family:** The essence of the Ten Commandments is to love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength, and with all our mind, and to love everyone else as we love ourselves.
- Leader:** What introduces the Ten Commandments?
- Family:** These words introduce to the Ten Commandments:
I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the Egypt, out of the land of slavery.
- Leader:** What does the introduction to the Ten Commandments teach us?
- Family:** The introduction to the Ten Commandments teaches us that, because God is Lord, and is our God and redeemer, we must keep all his commands.

Read aloud God's call for justice and mercy in Zechariah 7:1-14

Closing prayer to be read in unison:

Almighty, eternal, merciful God and Father, we poor sinners confess that we have sinned in many ways against you and your commandments. We have broken your law in more ways than we can count.

We have not loved you above all else. We have put other things before you and worshiped falsely. We have erected idols in our hearts and chased after other gods. We have misused your name and profaned your honor. We have not kept the Sabbath holy, nor have we rejoiced in the time that you have given us, but have grumbled and been negligent.

We confess that we have not honored our parents and have been disobedient and disrespectful of those you have placed in authority over us. We have not respected life, but have murdered in our hearts, venting our anger against our neighbors whom we are to love. We have been unchaste in our thoughts and have allowed our desires to dwell on things that we shouldn't. We have stolen and we acknowledge our greed. Instead of thinking of others, we put ourselves first. We have born false witness, speaking half-truths and things that we know are not right. We have coveted things and people that belong to others. We acknowledge in summary that our whole life is nothing else than sin and transgression of your holy commandments and an inclination toward all evil.

Therefore we beg of you, O heavenly Father, that You would graciously forgive us these and all our sins. Keep and preserve us that we may walk only in your ways and live according to your will, through Jesus Christ, your dear Son, our Savior. Amen. †

† This prayer was written by Martin Bucer in 1539.

THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

- Leader:** What is the first commandment?
- Family:** The first commandment is: *You shall have no other gods before me.*
- Leader:** What does first commandment require?
- Family:** The first commandment requires us to know and recognize God as the holy true God and our God, and to worship and glorify him accordingly.
- Leader:** What does the first commandment forbid?
- Family:** The first commandment forbids denying God or not worshipping Him as the true God and our God. It also forbids giving worship and glory, which He alone deserves, to anyone or anything else.
- Leader:** What are we specifically taught in the first commandment by the words *before me*?
- Family:** The words, *before me* in the first commandment teach us that God, who sees everything, is very offended by the sin of having any other God.
- Leader:** What is the second commandment?
- Family:** The second commandment is: *You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above, on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, and showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.*

- Leader:** What does the second commandment require?
- Family:** The second commandment requires us to receive, respectfully perform, and preserve completely and purely all the regulations for religion and worship that God has established in his word.
- Leader:** What does the second commandment forbid?
- Family:** The second commandment forbids our worshipping God with images. or in any other way not established in his word.
- Leader:** What are the reasons for the second commandment?
- Family:** The reasons for the second commandment are that God totally rules over us, that we belong to him, and that He is eager to be worshiped correctly.

**Read aloud the account of Christ's temptation in
Matthew 4:1-11**

Closing prayer to be read in unison:

Eternal Father, we confess before your holy presence that we are poor sinners, born in guilt and corruption, prone to do evil, and unable of ourselves to do any good. Because of our depravity, we transgress your commands without end. Your just sentence of condemnation and death is drawn upon us. But now, with heartfelt sorrow, we acknowledge and turn from our offenses. We condemn ourselves and our evil ways and ask that your grace may relieve our distress. Be pleased to have compassion on us, O most gracious God, Father of all mercies, for the sake of Your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Remove our guilt and pollution. Grant us your daily grace. Mortify all sin within us and cause us to truly repent. By your Spirit, produce the fruits of holiness in our lives. Amen. †

† This prayer was written by John Calvin in 1542.

THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

- Leader:** What is the third commandment?
- Family:** The third commandment is: *You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.*
- Leader:** What does the third commandment require?
- Family:** The third commandment requires the holy and reverent use of God's names, titles, qualities, regulations, word, and works.
- Leader:** What does the third commandment forbid?
- Family:** The third commandment forbids our treating as unholy or abusing anything God uses to make himself known.
- Leader:** What is the reason for the third commandment?
- Family:** The reason for the third commandment is that the Lord our God will not allow those who break this commandment to escape his righteous judgment, although they may escape punishment from men.
- Leader:** What is the fourth commandment?
- Family:** The fourth commandment is: *Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or your daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.*

- Leader:** What does the fourth commandment require?
- Family:** The fourth commandment requires us to set apart to God the times he has established in his word—specifically one whole day out of every seven as a holy Sabbath to him.
- Leader:** Which day has God designated as the Sabbath?
- Family:** From the beginning of the world until the resurrection of Christ God has established the seventh day as the Sabbath. From that time until the end of the world the first day of the week is the Christian Sabbath.
- Leader:** How do we keep the Sabbath holy?
- Family:** We keep the Sabbath holy by resting the whole day from worldly affairs or recreations, even ones that are lawful on other days. Except for necessary works or acts of mercy we should spend all our time publicly and privately worshipping God.
- Leader:** What does the fourth commandment forbid?
- Family:** The fourth commandment forbids failing to do or carelessly doing what we are supposed to do. It also forbids treating the day as unholy by loafing, by doing anything in itself sinful, or by unnecessary thinking, talking about, or working on our worldly affairs or recreations.

**Read aloud the prayer of Solomon in
2 Chronicles 6:12-42**

THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

- Leader:** What is the fifth commandment?
- Family:** The fifth commandment is: *Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.*
- Leader:** What does the fifth commandment require?
- Family:** The fifth commandment requires us to respect and treat others, whether above, below, or equal to us, as their position or our relationship to them demands.
- Leader:** What does the fifth commandment forbid?
- Family:** The fifth commandment forbids being disrespectful to or not treating others as their position or relationship to us demands.
- Leader:** What is the reason for the fifth commandment?
- Family:** The reason for the fifth commandment is the promise of long life and prosperity if these glorify God and are for the good of those who obey this commandment.
- Leader:** What is the sixth commandment?
- Family:** The sixth commandment is: *You shall not murder.*
- Leader:** What does the sixth commandment require?
- Family:** The sixth commandment requires making every lawful effort to preserve one's own life and the lives of others.

Leader: What does the sixth commandment forbid?

Family: The sixth commandment forbids taking one's own life, or the lives of others unjustly or doing anything that leads to suicide or murder.

Read aloud Christ's instructions for fasting in Matthew 6:5-18

Closing prayer to be read in unison:

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge. Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place. Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice. Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquity. Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me. Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will turn back to you. Save me from bloodguilt, O God, the God who saves me, and my tongue will sing of your righteousness. O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise. You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. †

† This prayer is taken from Psalm 51:1-17 (NIV)

THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

- Leader:** What is the seventh commandment?
- Family:** The seventh commandment is: *You shall not commit adultery.*
- Leader:** What does the seventh commandment require?
- Family:** The seventh commandment requires us and everyone else to keep sexually pure in heart, speech, and action.
- Leader:** What does the seventh commandment forbid?
- Family:** The seventh commandment forbids thinking, saying, or doing anything sexually impure.
- Leader:** What is the eighth commandment?
- Family:** The eighth commandment is: *You shall not steal.*
- Leader:** What does the eighth commandment require?
- Family:** The eighth commandment requires that we lawfully acquire and increase our own and others' money and possessions.
- Leader:** What does the eighth commandment forbid?
- Family:** The eighth commandment forbids anything that either does or may unjustly take away money or possessions from us or anyone else.

Read aloud God's warning of the covenant curses in Jeremiah 11:1-17

Closing prayer to be read in unison:

Lord God, we hear your Word and are convicted because we know that we have greatly sinned against you. The words of your covenant speak to our shame. You have given us grace immeasurable and shown us great patience and we have continued to sin against you in return.

You have given us promises for peace and blessing asking for obedience and faithfulness as a sign of our love and we have hated you and turned away from your commands at every point. You have showered us with the blessing of being your people, but we have turned from you and looked for others to love us instead of you.

We often hardened our hearts and refused to listen to you. We have known what you want us to do and run other way. We have gone after other gods, being success, reputation, pleasure, or convenience—anything to avoid submitting ourselves to your sovereign rule. We have stolen and committed adultery in longing after more than what you have blessed us with. We have scorned your kindness and called you unjust because you do not satisfy the lusts of our hearts.

We confess that we deserve your curses instead of your blessings. We have broken our covenant with you and provoked your wrath. Lord God, have mercy upon us. Forgive us for our wickedness and cleanse our sinful hearts. Make us truly repentant and teach us to grieve over our sin, turn from it, and obey you out of real affection. Hear our prayer for we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

Read aloud the call to fasting and prayer in
Joel 2:12-17

- Leader:** What is the ninth commandment?
- Family:** The ninth commandment is: *You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.*
- Leader:** What does the ninth commandment require?
- Family:** The ninth commandment requires us to tell the truth and to maintain and promote it and our own and others' reputations, especially when testifying.
- Leader:** What does the ninth commandment forbid?
- Family:** The ninth commandment forbids anything that hinders the truth or injures anyone's reputation.
- Leader:** What is the tenth commandment?
- Family:** The tenth commandment is: *You shall not covet your neighbor's house, your neighbor's wife, his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.*
- Leader:** What does the tenth commandment require?
- Family:** The tenth commandment requires us to be completely satisfied with our own status in life and to have a proper, loving attitude toward others and their possessions.
- Leader:** What does the tenth commandment forbid?
- Family:** The tenth commandment forbids any discontent with what belongs to us, envy or grief at the success of others, and all improper desire for anything that belongs to someone else.

Closing prayer to be read in unison:

Gracious Savior, we fall at your feet this day as your Christian Church and believers throughout the world enter once more the Lenten season to consider your passion, by which we have been eternally redeemed.

In spirit I appear before you in sack-cloth and ashes; let me in true repentance receive your full pardon. Let not the pleasures of this life, the worries of the day, the activities of my daily routine, crowd you out of my heart and out of my thoughts, Draw me to your wounded side and cleanse me with your most precious blood. Bring healing to my soul and peace to my mind. By your grace let me crucify my sinful affections, thoughts, and desires. Make me more than a conqueror over every temptation that besets me.

I confess to you all my sins. Let none of them cling to me. Create in me a clean heart. Teach me to love you more and more. Give me grace to confess you as my Savior who has redeemed me on the cross. You have lifted me out of the darkness of sin to be your own adopted child. Gracious Savior, let your constraining love keep me and all your children steadfast to the end. Amen. †

† This prayer was written by Martin Luther in the sixteenth century.

PALM SUNDAY

- Leader:** Can anyone perfectly keep God's commands?
- Family:** Since the fall no ordinary man can perfectly keep the commandments of God in this life but breaks them every day in thought, word, and action.
- Leader:** Are all sin equally evil?
- Family:** In the eyes of God some sins in themselves are more evil than others, and some are more evil because of the harm that results from them.
- Leader:** What does every sin deserve?
- Family:** Every sin deserves God's anger and curse, both in this life and in the life to come.
- Leader:** What does God require from us to escape his anger and curse, which we deserve for our sin?
- Family:** To escape God's anger and curse of God, which we deserve for our sin, God requires from us faith in Jesus Christ and repentance unto life along with diligent involvement in all the external ways Christ uses to bring us the benefits of redemption.
- Leader:** What is faith in Jesus Christ?
- Family:** Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace, by which we receive and rest on him alone for salvation, as he is offered to us in the gospel.
- Leader:** What is repentance unto life?

Family: Repentance unto life is a saving grace, by which a sinner, being truly aware of his sinfulness, understands the mercy of God in Christ, grieves for and hates his sins, and turns from them to God, fully intending and striving for a new obedience.

Read aloud the account of Christ's Passion

Monday	Matthew 21:12-22
Tuesday	Matthew 21:23-46
Wednesday	Matthew 26:1-16
Thursday	Matthew 26:17-75
Friday	Matthew 27:1-66
Saturday	Matthew 12:39-40; Jonah 2:1-9
Easter Sunday	Matthew 28:1-20

Closing prayer to be read in unison:

Grant, Almighty God, that as you urge us to repentance daily and each of us is stung with the consciousness of his own sins—O grant that we may not grow stupid in our own vices, nor deceive ourselves with empty flatteries, but that each of us may, on the contrary, carefully examine his own life, and then with one mouth and heart confess that we are all guilty, not only of light offences, but of such as deserve eternal death, and that no other relief remains for us but your infinite mercy, and that we may so seek to become partakers of that grace which has been once offered to us by your Son, and is daily offered to us by his gospel, that, relying on him as our Mediator, we may not cease to entertain hope even in the midst of thousand deaths, until we may be gathered into that blessed life, which has been procured for us by the blood of your only Son. In His name we pray. Amen. †

† *This prayer was written by John Calvin in his "Lectures on Jonah."*