

Lent 2025

My Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Lent has always been an opportunity to return to Jesus, to deepen our faith, to strengthen our Christian fellowship, to reset our focus, to renew our minds, and to refresh our weary spirits. This year, Lent is the perfect moment for each of us to do this, but also for all of us to do this together, as one Body in Christ Jesus. God has planted and nurtured FPC in downtown Fairbanks for 121 years, and I don't think The Lord is anywhere close to done with us yet! As we pray, fast, and study our way across the season of Lent, please ask God for fresh glimpses of His Vision for us in the next season of life at FPC. Our salvation in Christ is meant for so much more than our enjoyment and appreciation, though it is good to appreciate and enjoy! Our salvation and our identity in Christ *frees* us to fully love and serve the community in which God has planted us! For the next six weeks, go to God in prayer and ask how He is calling you and your church to do just that.

Attached you will find a daily guide for confession, prayer, and discernment with 6 special weekly themes that will take you all the way through Lent to the celebration of Christ's Resurrection at Easter. Whether you already have a Lenten practice in mind or you've never "done Lent" before, I ask that you seriously consider joining me in these daily prayers and practices.

A lot of the talk around Lent revolves around fasting. While this guide does not include prompts for fasting, here are a few ways to try fasting if you feel that is what God is calling you to embrace this Lenten season:

Food-Related Fasting

- Cut out sweets (added sugars), caffeine, alcohol, or other "luxury" food items. (If doing this for all of Lent seems daunting, try doing it for 2-3 days each week).
- Fast from eating lunch on Tuesday and Thursday each week. Dedicate the time you normally spend on lunch to prayer or reading your Bible. Donate the money you would normally spend on lunch to a charity that feeds people in desperate circumstances.

Other Lenten Options

- Fast from Social Media (to start, try going one or two days per week without the apps on your phone or opening the sites on your computer).
- Reach out to someone with whom you've had a disagreement or conflict in the past. Let them know that you forgive them and love them. Offer to take them out for a cup of tea/coffee/juice and listen to them.
- Make a list of 40 people whom you want to pray for and reconnect with. Pray for one of them each day. After praying for them, write them a letter (or an email if letters aren't an

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option). Ask God to richly bless them with His presence and grace, and to bring them into a saving friendship with Jesus if they're not yet walking with The Lord.

- Read scripture every day with the Lectionary - <https://tinyurl.com/yck849v5>

As we repent, fast, and pray we invite you to share anything that might be on your heart as a vision for our church with either a staff member, elder, or deacon. This feedback will help us gain a clear understanding of what is on your heart and how we can move forward together, following Christ and serving you and our Fairbanks community.

Lent 2025 is a season set aside for us to become more like Christ. We look forward to creating corporate vision and seeing God do wonders in your life.

*“Blow the trumpet in Zion;
consecrate a fast;
call a solemn assembly;
gather the people.”
Joel 2:15*

Please join us in this special time as we listen to what God has put on His heart for you and our community.

Yours in Christ Jesus,

Pastor David

P.S. - Thank you to all the Staff and Elders who prayed for and contributed to putting this Lenten guide together, but especially Nicole Matthews who wrote the first draft and envisioned what this could be.

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Week 1: Taking Responsibility

*“So as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to Him:
bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;”
Colossians 1:10*

Monday

Repentance:

We turn away from being lazy about our faith practice: relying on rituals and vague morality to suffice as closeness to God. We repent for abdicating our responsibility as believers to those in church leadership instead of taking ownership over our own faith journey.

Assurance of Forgiveness:

Lord, we receive your forgiveness. We ask you to show us practical ways to demonstrate personal responsibility for our faith journey and the courage to share it with others.

Tuesday Honest Discussions:

Have an honest conversation with yourself, spouse, and family about ways you might have been lazy or indirect about your faith journey. Write these down and discuss it with your family and how you can grow in these areas together.

Wednesday Reflection:

Reflect on spiritual disciplines and which ones should or could be incorporated into your daily life: prayer, bible study, fasting, service to others, and/or fellowship. Ask God how to implement these things personally and what this looks like for your family to adopt these practices. Maybe you're ready to move past essential spiritual disciplines and you want to grow in your spiritual gifts- **this is a time to start exploring those things.**

Thursday - FPC:

After you've reflected on what spiritual disciplines can be implemented in your life, set aside time to pray for FPC. Pray and ask God to bring clarity, and to discern the next steps for us as a church body to lean into the spiritual disciplines, as well as steps for your personal growth in them. Reflect on ways you might be able to serve or support FPC to strengthen our Fairbanks community using those disciplines you're implementing into your own life.

Friday Fellowship:

Cultivate Christian fellowship in your life by hosting or joining one of the Friday Fellowship Feasts that are happening across our congregation. If you are unable to host or join any of these dinners, invite a neighbor over for dinner or a coworker out to coffee. Pray for one person at FPC whom you know but do not often speak with. Ask that God bless them with wisdom and deepening faith this week.

Saturday Observation:

Observation. How has this call to repentance, renewed desire for spiritual disciplines, and fellowship impacted your faith this week?

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Week 2: Our Way vs God's Way

*“And he said to them, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.”
Mark 2:27*

Monday:

Repentance:

We confess that we are getting in our own way, insisting our way is **The Way**. We repent for being convinced the only way God can move is to do things according to our habits and ideas.

Assurance of Forgiveness: Father we receive your forgiveness and believe You will show us new ways to experience You, that do not rely on tradition but the conviction of the Holy Spirit. Shed from our minds the limiting belief that

Tuesday - Honest Discussions:

Have an honest conversation with yourself. In what ways have you allowed yourself to only see or experience God according to your own perspective? What would you like to look past in order to have a fuller experience with God? Begin to ask yourself why you do the things you do. Are there unhealthy or sinful habits that you've fallen into as a coping mechanism? Are you ready to leave this behind; to drop it by the wayside and follow Jesus more closely?

Wednesday - Take Action:

Have any of your traditions and habits become idols? Create a plan to eliminate the ones that are no longer serving you and consider replacing them with a discipline that brings fresh life to your faith. In areas you eliminate, ask the Holy Spirit to participate with you as you look to make space for Him. [Luke 11:24-26]

Thursday - FPC:

Once you've explored areas that need to be shed in your life, pray for FPC. What traditions are we clinging to that might not be serving this community most efficiently? What are we doing as a church now that is indeed a tradition that glorifies God? What new traditions or practices do you think God is calling us to adopt?

Friday Fellowship:

This week we've hit a heavy subject. Cultivate Christian fellowship in your life by hosting or joining one of the Friday Fellowship Feasts that are happening across our congregation. If you are unable to host or join any of these dinners, pray for FPC today and ask that God would guide us as we seek to follow Jesus and make Him known across Fairbanks.

Saturday Observation:

Now that you've addressed what might be standing in your way of receiving fresh inspiration from God, how do you feel? Do you feel lighter, more hopeful, inspired to try something new?

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Week 3: Scripture vs Politics

“Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.”

1 Peter 2:11-12

Monday Repentance:

We repent from letting political ideologies overwrite our scriptural beliefs. We acknowledge that there is no political party or ideology that truly aligns with you, Lord Jesus. We do not want to conform to the world: we ask Christ to sanctify us and set us apart as God’s people.

Assurance of Forgiveness: Lord, we receive your forgiveness for confusing our ways and ideas for Your will and Your Way, as scripture defines it. We invite You to show us where You want us to change our minds to come into alignment with Your Word.

Tuesday Honest Discussion:

How do your politics influence your interpretation of scripture? While we all do it, be honest about how you might be posturing one over the other. What would it look like to own this conviction and be open to receiving a fuller measure of God’s love and understanding?

Wednesday - Action:

What political views have you identified that you’re willing to surrender or do additional research on? Begin asking the Holy Spirit to show you where to learn and grow from this misunderstanding and how it might encourage you to love your neighbor with a new set of eyes.

Thursday - FPC:

Pray for FPC to identify ways we can continue to support one another, despite differing ideologies. How can we as a church unite to love one another and in our community, especially those that do not share our upbringings, looks, ideologies, and beliefs, all while glorifying God and pointing to Christ? How can we transcend politics and other worldly matters to work together on what is most important?

Friday Fellowship:

Cultivate Christian fellowship in your life by hosting or joining one of the Friday Fellowship Feasts that are happening across our congregation. Share what God has placed on your heart and how we might be called to surrender an old ideology. Let us come together as the body of Christ to learn from one another.

Saturday Observation:

Now that you’ve removed the ideology from your life, what is coming alive in your study of scripture? Is there a specific passage or verse that speaks to you differently than before?

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Week 4: Limiting God

“If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.”

Romans 8:11

Monday:

Repentance: We want to stop putting limits on God’s grace and presence through the Holy Spirit according to our understanding of what we can do versus what He can and will do for us.

Assurance of Forgiveness: Lord, we receive your forgiveness and believe you can show up in ways we don’t understand and trust it will be good for us.

Tuesday Honest Discussion:

Where are you resisting the Holy Spirit influencing your life? Maybe this is a time to ask God to do those impossible things you’re afraid He might not be able to do. Maybe the best spiritual discipline to practice is to look and listen for God doing things that you deemed impossible.

Wednesday - Action:

What would it look like to have a more active faith practice? Brainstorm a few activities, practices, or new things you would like to try to see this happen. The kids share “God Sightings” every day at VBS, which is a great place to start. God won’t find it embarrassing at all, instead He will be happy you are pursuing Him in new ways. Do this new thing with conviction, and ask God how he can show Himself to you in it.

Thursday - FPC:

Pray for FPC. Pray that we would move with the Holy Spirit in a way that is responsible and powerful. Pray that God’s presence fills our church when we meet to worship, pray, and be in fellowship with one another. Pray that the Holy Spirit shows itself brightly and is felt so deeply in our spirits that we cannot deny its existence any longer.

Friday Fellowship:

Cultivate Christian fellowship in your life by hosting or joining one of the Friday Fellowship Feasts that are happening across our congregation. If you are unable to host or join any of these dinners, reach out to a friend or acquaintance from FPC in person or over the phone. Or stand up and share your “God Sighting” during Sunday worship’s prayer time. We want to hear about what God has highlighted as a new opportunity for your faith journey to expand.

Saturday Observation:

The Holy Spirit promises to bring a refreshing wind to our faith practice. How does this encourage your faith journey moving forward?

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Week 5 - Biblical Literacy

“This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.”

Joshua 1:8

Monday:

Repentance: We repent for not seeking God in the Word and meeting Him regularly in it as we live our lives, both inside and outside of church.

Assurance of Forgiveness: Father, we receive your love for us even when we neglect to do what you’ve instructed us to. Open our hearts to receive more of you through Your Word in scripture.

Tuesday Honest Discussion:

How would reading your Bible change your life? If you are experiencing resistance to reading your Bible, consistently explore why there is resistance- try to pinpoint the exact reason. Is there part of the Bible you want to know more about but haven’t committed time to reading? Explore the posture of your heart in regard to gaining a stronger grasp on biblical literacy.

Wednesday - Action:

Evaluate how much time you can dedicate to biblical study then commit to spending that time in the Word. Share with your family and friends what you desire to learn and ask them to pray alongside you as you grow in hunger for the Word of God. If you have questions about reading scripture, reach out to Pastor David or check out great resources like “How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth” by Gordon Fee (FPC has copies to loan to you!)

Thursday FPC:

Pray for FPC that it would be a church known for treasuring the Word of God. We want to grow in biblical literacy and equip believers to take authority over their own faith practice. Pray that we encounter God within the Word, and that Holy Spirit would encourage and empower us daily.

Friday Fellowship:

Cultivate Christian fellowship in your life by hosting or joining one of the Friday Fellowship Feasts that are happening across our congregation. If you are unable to host or join any of these dinners, reach out to a friend or acquaintance from FPC in person or over the phone to share what God has revealed to you about Biblical Literacy and grow this spiritual discipline.

Saturday Observation:

How has creating a strong emphasis on biblical literacy encouraged your faith? What steps do you want to take next as you explore your biblical knowledge?

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Week 6 - Fellowship

*“And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship,
to the breaking of bread and the prayers.”*

Acts 2:42

Monday

Repentance: We repent from pursuing fellowship only in ways that are comfortable and surface-level, while we are still unwilling to create and develop relationships with fellow Christians in the way that God calls us to do.

Assurance of Forgiveness: Father we receive your forgiveness and accept that you have invited us into intimate fellowship with You without hesitation. We believe you are calling us to grow in deeper fellowship with those around us.

Tuesday Honest Discussion:

What would it look like for you to have close fellowship with new members of our congregation? What would it feel like to have a chosen faith family? Explore ways you'd like to grow and create connections with fellow believers in our congregation. Consider alternative means of hospitality to engage in rich connection.

Wednesday Action:

Commit to meeting with believers from FPC once a month outside of a worship service or scheduled small group. Radical hospitality can mean anything from “bring your laundry to my house and we'll fold it together” to “want to bring all the kids to Pioneer Park” for one afternoon, calling a person you haven't talked to in a while, or visiting someone homebound or in hospital care. Fellowship and hospitality do not have to be complicated (or expensive), nor does the time commitment have to be long, but we encourage you to be present in the moment and experience it fully.

Thursday FPC:

Pray for FPC to continue to be a safe place to foster strong friendships that bring glory to God. Pray that in this season of Lent we, as followers of Christ, grow closer together to be of one body in the spirit. Pray that whatever deep sins or transgressions we hold against one another's spirits be dissolved and washed away by His peace, love, and understanding.

Friday Fellowship:

Cultivate Christian fellowship in your life by hosting or joining one of the Friday Fellowship Feasts that are happening across our congregation. If you are unable to host or join any of these dinners, reach out to a friend or acquaintance from FPC in person or over the phone to share what God is inspiring you to do to create radical hospitality/fellowship within our congregation. Let us know what ways you'd like us to partner with you.

Saturday Observation:

Now that you've considered opening your arms to more of our congregation, how has your faith been encouraged?