



*Joyfully Sharing God's Boundless Love with All in Our Community  
without Limitation, Exception, or Condition*

**UNIVERSITY PRESS**

March 2018

## Holding Fast to Jesus: A Lenten Reflection

*by The Reverend Dustin Maddox, Associate Pastor*

*"And the Spirit immediately drove [Jesus] out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him."*

Mark 1:12-13

*"The Bible doesn't repeat itself, but often it rhymes." - N.T. Wright*

Seasons govern our lives. Rhythms give life definition. The church in her wisdom, prior to the revolutions of industry and technology, listened to and learned from the rhythms of the seasons and sought to leverage time as a tool for teaching the story of Jesus contained in the library of the Scriptures. This is why we have the liturgical calendar: an annual cycle that connects us to the life of King Jesus in order to form us -- daily and over time -- as His followers.



We find ourselves, in the midst of the season of Lent, the 40-day season of fasting and prayer patterned after Jesus' temptation in the wilderness. During this season, many people give up something or commit to a specific spiritual discipline in order to confront the parts of us disconnected from God. For some of us, observing Lent is a central part of our discipleship. For others, Lent is something we are vaguely familiar with or it is something completely new. Wherever you are, gaining clarity about Jesus' time facing temptation in the wilderness can help us deeply engage with Lent.

The most significant component of Jesus' temptation has to do with food. Matthew tells us in his gospel that Jesus does not eat for 40 days or nights. This is significant because on page two of the Bible, after God has created the world and male and female in God's image, and after they are placed in a garden over which they have been given dominion and freedom to eat anything except the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, we are told Adam and Eve were tempted by a snake and ended up eating the forbidden fruit. This act of disobedience results in their exile from the Garden of Eden, out from the graciously ordered existence with God and into the chaotic wilderness of a world separated from God.

Jesus' fasting in the face of temptation in the wilderness is a theological do-over. Where the first humans failed in their ability to resist temptation in the form of food, Jesus is obedient. It is important to note that Jesus was not explicitly tempted until the end of the 40-day fast. It is only when Jesus was "famished" (Matt. 4:2) that the tempter arrived, offering what exactly? Food. More precisely, the temptation for Jesus to turn rocks into bread.

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Jesus was clearly physically hungry as he faced temptation, but what enabled him to overcome temptation was the fact that his spirit was overflowing with the love and promises of God. Starving the flesh (the Biblical word for your physical existence with all its desires and appetites) in order to feed the spirit (the Biblical word for the divine part of you that longs for connection with God) is the primary purpose of fasting. This is not only how we too can fight off temptation, but how we become more of who we were created to be. For me, fasting is becoming an important spiritual practice which I think is critically important for our church also.

The significance of Jesus' fasting, and the Lenten invitation to imitate Jesus in this manner, are both theological and profoundly practical. Americans in the 21st-century have a complicated relationship with food. Our full refrigerators, stocked pantries, and abundant opportunities to drive through and dine out confront us with the greatest temptation of all -- to succumb to the illusion we are able materially to provide for ourselves with respect to food and that is all we need to thrive. Jesus reminds us this is patently false, and Lent invites us into a period of learning to trust Jesus about this.

When we fast from a specific meal, or day of meals, we learn from our bodies that our physical hunger pangs are derivative of our hunger for God. Fasting, however, is not a crash diet, nor is it giving up a specific thing like sweets for a short period of time. It is not about diet modification to attempt to achieve a culturally contrived image of physical attractiveness. Fasting during Lent is about learning what we can live without.

Within the bounds of what is safe and healthy for you, what would it look like for you to fast in some way during the remainder of Lent? Maybe it's fasting from one meal per week, or one meal per day, or one day per week. Fasting as a spiritual discipline involves letting your hunger drive you to prayer, for more of God's presence in your life and in our community. If and when you fast, take Jesus' advice and don't make a fuss about it by drawing attention to yourself. Let your fasting bring to the fore other areas in your life you can live without which minimize or detract from your connection to God.

Fasting as a spiritual discipline can place us on the way to receiving the wisdom from Jesus Lent has to offer.

Grace + Peace, *Pastor Dustin*

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## Holy Week at UPC

Holy Week is the time to come together in worship to relive the solemn journey of Jesus' last week which brings us to the joy of Easter morning.

Come along with us -- everyone is welcome.



### PALM SUNDAY

March 25 | *The Triumphal Entry*

9 a.m. Traditional Service | 11 a.m. Contemporary Service | 11 a.m. Lao Language Service

Join us as we relive Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem that marks the beginning of Holy Week and foretells of Christ's impending death.



### MAUNDY THURSDAY

March 29 | *The Last Supper Remembered*

6 p.m. Simple Dinner & Worship in the Great Room

The story of Jesus continues as we remember how Jesus broke bread with his disciples one last time and commanded them to love one another. You are invited to remember the community that Jesus created by joining in a simple supper and communion worship service around tables in the Great Room.

## GOOD FRIDAY

March 30 | *Good Friday Meditations*

7 p.m. Evensong Service

Evensong is an evening service of prayer, scripture and song. It draws on traditions from the 4th Century. With a clear emphasis on choral singing, combined with congregational hymns, responsive readings, Psalms, scripture, and prayer, this immersive, candlelit service is an opportunity to hear the Passion story and be drawn into the final day of Christ's journey to the cross. We are invited into the solemnity with musical meditations by the Chancel choir, soloists, and instrumentalists.

## EASTER SUNDAY

April 1 | *The Resurrection and the Life*

9 a.m. Traditional Service | 11 a.m. Contemporary Service

10:15 a.m. Easter Egg Hunt

Join us as we celebrate the joy of the Resurrection and welcome our new members and those being confirmed. Both services feature special music and an uplifting message the whole family can enjoy. Godly Play includes a special message of God's love for children ages 5 - 12, and the annual Easter Egg Hunt begins at 10:15 a.m. Easter is a wonderful testament to God's love, so bring a friend!

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## Lenten Sermon Series Continues: *Sinning Like a Christian*

As we continue through the season of Lent, don't miss our sermon series: Sinning like a Christian. Each week during Lent we are looking at one of the seven deadly sins and its accompanying virtue, seeking to understand our own tendency towards sin and discover the better path Jesus came to show us. It is a good way for us to frame our Lenten journey and to prepare us for the ultimate joy of Easter morning!



We continue the discussion between services guided by Kim Leslie and John Curtis to look at the Seven Deadly Sins through the lens of a Saint from church history. These saints inspire and help us gain a deeper awareness of our need for Jesus and to be transformed into his image.

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## A Lenten Taizé Service on the Evening of March 18

*by Cactus Harris, Director of Music & Arts and Resident Organist*



On Sunday, March 18 at 6 p.m., join us for a Taizé Service as we continue our Lenten journey together.

Taizé blends simple elements of prayer, song, and silence. The songs are taken from scripture and are simple one or two line refrains, repeated multiple times. As the refrain is repeated, instrumental and vocal harmonies are brought in creating a rich texture, all while remaining focused on a simple lyric.

Taizé has an interesting history. Coming out of the desolation of WWII, a man known as Brother Roger founded a small community of Christians in the French town of Taizé. Seeking to create a community of healing and refuge after the war, Brother Roger started the Taizé community to create a space for people to find God in the midst of brokenness. From this worshipping community, a very intimate and contemplative service evolved.

I am excited about the opportunity to host a Taizé service during Lent and hope that you join in the simplicity of the service and season.

Simply, and in harmony, *Cactus*

## UPC 101 is Saturday March 3

Are you new to UPC and interested in learning more about what we are all about?

Are you curious about becoming a member or being baptized for the first time?

Then join us for UPC 101 on **Saturday, March 3 from 9-11:30 a.m.** to take a look at the vision and purpose of UPC, as well as provide a quick overview of what it means to be Presbyterian.

To sign up, email Kerry in the church office in the church office at [kerry@upcfresno.org](mailto:kerry@upcfresno.org). For more information, email Pastor Renn at [renn@upcfresno.org](mailto:renn@upcfresno.org).



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## Baptism + Confirmation for Youth Begins March 4



In the weeks leading up to Easter, Pastor Dustin is hosting a class for middle and high school students who would like to be baptized if they have not yet been baptized, or to confirm their baptism if they were baptized as infants.

The four-week Sunday evening class begins March 4 from 6-7:30 p.m. and includes supper. The class culminates with a recognition and celebration in worship on Easter Sunday!

To sign up, or more information, email Dustin at [dustin@upcfresno.org](mailto:dustin@upcfresno.org).

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## Fireside Chats begin March 18

As part of Session's desire to promote healthy communication, we would like to invite you to join us on Sunday, March 18 from 10:15 to 10:45 a.m. in the Fireside Room for a time of casual conversation with your Elders.

We specifically would like to talk about how everybody is doing now that we are moving out of transition into a new season of ministry, but you are welcome to bring up other topics as well. This is the perfect time to offer any ideas you have, ask questions, or share concerns you might have about the life and ministry of our congregation.



Our hope is to offer these "Fireside Chats" quarterly to provide an easy way to connect with your leadership and to work together as we seek to joyfully share God's boundless love with all in our community without limitation, exception or condition.

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## Update from the Boards

*by The Reverend Renn Serna, Senior Pastor*

It's been an exciting few months as we have welcomed our new leadership teams and have started to plan for the year.

Session had a wonderful retreat up at Calvin Crest, and enjoyed reflecting on the joys and challenges of the past few years, while beginning to plan for this next season together. One of our main goals leaving the retreat is to find new ways to connect with the congregation, and we are excited to enter into this year with a new sense of transparency and communication. As leaders,



we want to make ourselves more available to all of you, and to move forward with a new sense of unity. We hope that you reach out to one of Elders if you have any questions or concerns about the church. We value each and every one of you.

**Our Deacons** were blessed to welcome seven new members this year, and participated in a Deacon's training at their last meeting. One of the wonderful things about our church is our Deacons' **Shepherding Groups** where every member and regular attender of our congregation is put under the care of a particular Deacon. This person serves as your main point of contact with the church and is your first defense for pastoral needs. Feel free to contact your Deacon for prayer, encouragement, assistance with meals or rides, or if you just want to say "hi." If you do not know who your Deacon

is, or if you aren't sure that you have one, contact Deacon Moderator Barbara Schlueter or the church office.

**The Board of Property and Finance** is off to a great start this year as well. After having gone through so many unexpected maintenance issues in 2017, they are doing a full evaluation of the property and are developing a maintenance schedule to help cut down on unexpected expenses. They are also considering ways to invest some of our reserve funds in a way that protects the principal while still generating a little bit of income to help fund the important work we do at UPC.

Our ministry teams have been busy as well. Here are some highlights:

- **The Children and Youth Committee** has been planning diligently for our Easter festivities.
- **Spiritual Life** has been working hard to offer some new small group opportunities for our congregation.
- **Southeast Asia Ministries** continues to look for new ways to reach out and bless the Lao community here in Fresno.
- **The Worship & Music Committee** has been busy planning for Lent and Easter.

Thank you to everybody who helps out (officially or unofficially) here at UPC. It is because of your generosity and gifts that we are able to do the important work we have been called to. We are so thankful for the sacrifices you make in service of the Lord!

In gratitude, *Pastor Renn*

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## Session Report

*by Ceci Johnson, Clerk of Session*

Session met on February 13, for their regular monthly meeting. Supper was provided by Linda Stolling and Rita Dei. Barbara Schlueter, the Deacon Moderator shared updates on the work and ministry of the Deacons.

Some highlights from the meeting:

- Elders discussed a draft of a Covenant of Presence begun at the Session Retreat. It will be finalized in March. This collaborative Covenant will guide our work together. We will share it with you once it is finished.
- Fireside Chats begin in March. (See article in this newsletter). These will be periodic gatherings connect you in conversation with the pastors and elders.
- A Taizé worship service will be held on March 18 at 6 p.m. with a free-will offering taken. (See the article above.)



- Session approved minor changes to the 2018 Budget and discussed current finances. (You can find the latest Financial Update in the Narthex on Sundays and through a link in the weekly email blast.)
- The ministry team members for the following committees were approved: Children & Youth, Congregational Care, Missions, Southeast Asian Ministry, Stewardship, and Worship and Music. (Session also oversees administrative committees of Human Resources, Board of Property & Finance, and Nominating, to which the congregation elects representatives.)
- Planning for the New Member Class, called UPC 101, on March 3 is under way. (See how to sign up in the article about UPC 101.)
- Session reviewed revisions to hiring procedures for staff positions as part of the ongoing oversight of the work of ministry teams.

If you have questions or comments about the work of Session, feel free to speak to any of the Elders or Pastors. They want to hear from you.

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## Women's Retreat is Earlier this year - Save the Date

*by Anne Klapste for the Women's Retreat Planning Team*



This year's 2018 Women's Retreat has been scheduled for **Friday, September 21 through Sunday, September 23**, three weeks earlier than our traditional date. Put it on your calendar now and watch for early bird registration to start in July.

Interested in contributing to the retreat? It's a fun way to get to know other women in the church as you create a new experience together to share with the women of our church. For more information, email Carrie Minturn at [carrie@carrieminturn.com](mailto:carrie@carrieminturn.com).

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## UPC Groups

### WEEKLY

**Contemplative Prayer:** Come Mondays at 6:30 p.m. to the Godly Play Room (Rooms 3-4) for Christ-centered meditation. No previous experience is necessary, just a desire to spend quiet, still time with the Divine. For more information, email Cathy Wingert at [wingy104@aol.com](mailto:wingy104@aol.com).

**Women's Bible Study:** The group meets for study and prayer Wednesdays from 9:30-11 a.m. They are finishing a study of "Women of the New Testament," and their next study will be the New Testament Book of Hebrews. For more information, email Laura Lindegren at [punkin2826@yahoo.com](mailto:punkin2826@yahoo.com), or call 299-1838.

**Thursday Evening Bible Study:** The group, led by Ceci Johnson, meets for study Thursdays at 6:30 p.m. in the Fireside Room. They continue "wrestling" with the Gospel of Matthew, and invite you to join them. For more information, email Ceci Johnson at [cjartistquilts@gmail.com](mailto:cjartistquilts@gmail.com).

### MONTHLY

**Clippers:** Clippers are attending the Jazz Mass at Hope Lutheran Church on March 4 at 7 p.m. (corner of Barstow and Fresno). Meet at Hope Lutheran by 7 p.m. and please bring a treat for the reception afterwards. For more information, call Laura Lindegren at 299-1838, or Judy Goodmon at 447-8623.

**Intercessory Prayer Service:** This is a monthly service where all are invited to come pray for loved ones, members of our congregation, community, and world. Join them on March 5 at 7 p.m. For more information, email Pastor Tedd at [teddlyons@gmail.com](mailto:teddlyons@gmail.com), or call/text him at 906-1438.

**Presbyterian Women (PW):** Presbyterian Women meet Tuesday, March 13 at 9:30 a.m. for refreshments and an exhilarating session of "Exercising for Health," led by Jennifer Jordan, who teaches classes at Hope Lutheran Church. Bring a friend and keep your New Year's resolution to be more active! There is a brief business meeting. For more information, click here to email Ruth Kallenberg.

**UPC Food Pantry:** The food distribution this month is Saturday, March 17 at 8 a.m. It is held the third Saturday of each month. Come and help by texting Dustin at 288-0083 to volunteer. If you would like to donate to the food of the month item for the distribution, the food item this month is beans or rice. Bring your donations to the Narthex on Sunday mornings or drop them at the office during the week.

**Pub Theology:** Join the discussion on Tuesday, March 20 from 6:30-8:30 p.m. at Sequoia Brewing Company (corner of Champlain and Perrin in the Piazza Del Fiore Center). Add your voice to the discussion of a variety of topics concerning faith, religion, and God. Seating is limited so come early to ensure a spot. They meet monthly on the third Tuesday. Listening and discussion are encouraged; drinking is optional. For more information, email Dustin at [dustin@upcfresno.org](mailto:dustin@upcfresno.org), or text him at 288-0083.

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## March Birthdays, Anniversaries, & Calendar

### March Birthdays

- 1 Nancy Weiser
- 3 Nancy Alley
- Michael Taylor
- 4 Shanonn Hemmingson
- 8 Carey Berend
- Pat Dodds
- Joy Neal
- 11 Jim Correia
- 14 Becky Souza
- 15 Sharon Babcock
- Heather Chu
- Linda Stolling
- 16 Jane Middleton
- 17 Jean Ann Fulton
- Cherlyn Pulcifer
- 18 Sareta Deal
- Nate Fern
- Cordie Qualle
- 19 Dawn Lawrence
- Sharon Small
- 20 Diane Schafer
- 22 Judy Goodman
- 23 Jennifer Wagner
- Kevin Wingert
- 24 Kristian Fern
- Dorian Sherman
- 25 Jane McCoy
- 26 James Gabel
- 30 Pat Buckheister
- Dona Leonardo
- 31 Crystal Yelton

### March Anniversaries

- 11 Gary & Leslie Knutsen
- 18 Leonard & Sareta Deal

### March Calendar

- 1 Bell Choir Rehearsal 6:30 p.m.
- Thursday Bible Study 6:30 p.m.
- Lenten Book Study 6:30 p.m.
- 2-4 Men's Retreat
- 3 UPC 101 9 a.m.
- Hymn Festival 9 a.m.
- 4 Lenten Small Group 6 p.m.
- Confirmation Class 6 p.m.
- Clippers - Jazz Mass 7 p.m.
- 5 Contemplative Prayer 6:30 p.m.
- Intercessory Prayer 7 p.m.
- 6 Deacons 6:30 p.m.
- 7 Women's Bible Study 9:30 a.m.
- Choir Rehearsal 6:30 p.m.
- Lenten Small Group 6:30 p.m.
- 8 Bell Choir 6:30 p.m.
- Thursday Bible Study 6:30 p.m.
- Lenten Book Study 6:30 p.m.
- 11 DAY LIGHT SAVING TIME BEGINS
- Lenten Small Group 6 p.m.
- Confirmation Class 6 p.m.
- 12 Contemplative Prayer 6:30 p.m.
- 13 Presbyterian Women 9:30 a.m.
- 14 Women's Bible Study 9:30 a.m.
- Choir Rehearsal 6:30 p.m.
- Lenten Small Group 6:30 p.m.

### March Calendar cont.

- 15 Bell Choir Rehearsal 6:30 p.m.
- Thursday Bible Study 6:30 p.m.
- Lenten Book Study 6:30 p.m.
- 17 Food Distribution 8 a.m.
- Orphiq Percussion 8 p.m.
- 18 Fireside Chat 10:15 a.m.
- Taizé Worship 6 p.m.
- Lenten Small Group 6 p.m.
- Confirmation Class 6 p.m.
- 19 Session 6 p.m.
- Contemplative Prayer 6:30 p.m.
- 20 Pub Theology 6:30 p.m.
- 21 Women's Bible Study 9:30 a.m.
- Choir Rehearsal 6:30 p.m.
- Lenten Small Group 6:30 p.m.
- 22 Bell Choir Rehearsal 6:30 p.m.
- Thursday Bible Study 6:30 p.m.
- Lenten Book Study 6:30 p.m.
- 23 Soli Deo Gloria 7 p.m.
- 25 - 31 HOLY WEEK
- 25 Palm Sunday
- Lenten Small Group 6 p.m.
- Confirmation Class 6 p.m.
- 26 Contemplative Prayer 6:30 p.m.
- 27 Ministry Meetings (times vary)
- 28 Women's Bible Study 9:30 a.m.
- Choir Rehearsal 6:30 p.m.
- Lenten Small Group 6:30 p.m.
- 29 Maundy Thursday Service 6 p.m.
- 30 Good Friday Evensong Service 6:30 p.m.

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**Sunday Worship Schedule for March**

9 a.m. Classic Worship | 11 a.m. Contemporary Service  
11 a.m. Lao Language Service | except the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday  
Holy Week Schedule (see below)

**Pastors**

The Reverend Renn Serna, Senior Pastor  
The Reverend Dustin Maddox, Associate Pastor

**Return Service Requested**

Mailing Label Here

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**PALM SUNDAY | March 25 | *The Triumphal Entry***

9 a.m. Traditional Service | 11 a.m. Contemporary Service | 11 a.m. Lao Language Service

**MAUNDY THURSDAY | March 29 | *The Last Supper Remembered***

6 p.m. Simple Dinner & Worship in the Great Room

**GOOD FRIDAY | March 30 | *Good Friday Meditations***

7 p.m. Evensong Service

**EASTER SUNDAY**

**April 1 | *The Resurrection and the Life***

9 a.m. Traditional Service | 11 a.m. Contemporary Service

10:15 a.m. Easter Egg Hunt