

Dear Friends,

What's your view on Lent?

We're part way through this significant season in the Church calendar but I know it provokes a variety of responses in people....

There's the JOYFUL reaction – GREAT! More time to focus on my life with God, seeking how I can follow Jesus more closely and be more in tune with the Holy Spirit and her presence in my life.



Then there can be the DOWNBEAT reaction – It's all 'doom and gloom', we're all so sinful how can God ever love me/us? I'm going to have to work really hard to get myself back in God's 'good books' – so better start fasting and praying every opportunity I can, and even better if people can see how 'holy' I am striving to be!



It always interests me that one of the readings we have for 'Ash Wednesday', when some churches offer a time to be anointed with a cross of ash on the forehead as a symbol of repentance and reliance of Jesus as Lord, is the following:

[Jesus said] "But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you." (Matthew 6:17-18 – NIV)

So, my best guess is that God would really desire something in between: yes, a desire to turn our hearts, souls and minds around to be more aligned with God's purposes, as revealed in Jesus; but along with that, a deep sense of joy that, by God's grace, we are set free and should be striving for a more meaningful 'fast' such as that of which Isaiah spoke

(see Isaiah 58:1-12) – one which brings joy, peace, freedom, justice, hope – along with the material things that people need to thrive: safety, clean water, enough food, secure housing, clothing, meaningful employment, sufficient money and opportunity to live well.

I wonder what each of us might be able to do, as these days and weeks of Lent continue?

What might we be called to ‘fast’ FROM (i.e. giving up something negative or that is a barrier between us and God) and what might you be called to ‘fast’ WITH (i.e. doing a new positive thing that aids our devotion and helps others too)?

Would you pray with me?

*Gracious God, reveal to me:
that which I should ‘lay down’
and that which I should ‘take up’.
Draw me closer to you, through Jesus;
help me feel your presence, by the Spirit.*

*Bless me today
and use me to be a blessing to others,
in your precious name. Amen.*

Yours,

Sam.

Good News/Resources

Gaza Appeal

The Methodist Church in Britain has launched an appeal to support the emergency work being carried out in Gaza by the Methodist Liaison Office’s partners.

More information, together with a link for donations can be found at [Gaza Appeal](#)

The **Methodist Church** 

Free Wills Month for over 55s

Free Wills Month brings together a group of well-respected charities to offer members of the public aged 55 and over the opportunity to have their simple Wills written or updated free of charge by using solicitors in selected locations across the UK.

More information can be found at <https://freewillsmoonth.org.uk/>

Practical Aspects of Spirituality



Join us for
**Connecting with God -
what suits your personality?**

led by

Anna Carrington

**Saturday 23 March
09.30 – 12.00**

**St. Mary's Church
Guildford GU1 3UP**

Refreshments from 09.15

UPCOMING EVENTS:

DATE	TIME	EVENT	VENUE
16 March	2.00pm to 4.00pm	Clothes4U	Knaphill
17 March	4.00pm	Pudding and Praise	Walton-on-Thames
23 March	10am to 12 noon	Coffee Morning	Knaphill