

I Was Thinking..... March 16, 2025



On March 5, we marked the start of the season of Lent with our Ash Wednesday services at Christ Church and St. James. We have now entered into the 40 days of Lent – the number of days between Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. This is always a little confusing because Sundays don't count, and so it is actually 46 days. But there are always two sure and dependable signs in Canada that Lent is upon us: Cadbury Easter Crème Eggs are back on the grocery store shelves, and Tim Horton's encourages us once again to, "Roll up the Rim to Win". These two annual events in the Canadian calendar are actually intimately connected to Lent. Cadbury's and Tim Horton's marketing executives are well acquainted with the Christian tradition of giving up something for Lent, and so they organize their campaigns each year to precede Ash Wednesday – not because they are necessarily in support of the spirit of Lent, but because they fear people abstaining from chocolate and caffeine and they fear what that might mean for the bottom line.

Lent has, for many centuries, been perceived as a time to abstain from something – coffee, chocolate, smoking, consuming alcohol – in order that we "test" ourselves in some way by giving up something. The problem, traditionally, is that we tend to almost overcompensate for that abstinence by overindulging in whatever we gave up as soon as Easter morning arrives. We have to question the logic in that, particularly in the face of our first Lenten Gospel passage from Luke. Jesus was out in the wilderness for the purpose of working out his calling from God; trying to determine God's will for his life. It is true that he fasted by abstaining from food. Ancient people saw fasting as a means to clear their heads, to allow them to focus on important spiritual matters. This is significant, because the struggle to eat was very real for them. As has been true for most agriculturally based cultures throughout history, people thought about food all of the time because they were also engaged in the business of producing crops and other food sources. And because they did not have supermarkets or even a corner grocery store, a lot of the day was often devoted to locating and preparing food. Jewish traditions and rituals around food preparation were also often time consuming. Without the benefit of refrigeration, they also didn't have the kinds of conveniences that we enjoy today around the storage of food. And so, to abstain from eating also meant that a person had more time to engage in thinking and reflecting on spiritual matters. When you compare that to our 21st century tendencies to abstain from something during Lent, our attempts can seem a little trivial – not because we aren't challenged, but because we can often forget the spiritual reason that is supposed to

underlie giving something up. The purpose of letting go of something during Lent is to create time and space for us to more deeply consider the spiritual side of our lives; not just to help us to lose weight or be a little healthier. And while there are benefits to those things, Lent is intended to be more about shedding spiritual weight – those things that bog us down and prevent us from living fully Christian lives – and to become spiritually more healthy. This is something that I am not sure that the good people of the Cadbury and Tim Horton's corporations always understand.

In terms of our ACPC worship life, I am pleased that share that the Reverend Carl Fraser, Vocations Coordinator for the Diocese, will be presiding over our Eucharist service on March 30 at St. Bee's Church at 11am. Reverend Carl will also join us for the Eucharist on July 27.

- Our combined Maundy Thursday service will be held at St. James on April 17 at 7pm.
- The ecumenical Good Friday service in Pictou will be held at Pictou United Church on Friday, April 18 at 10am and all are warmly welcomed.
- The Good Friday combined service for ACPC (April 18) will be held at St. Bee's at 1pm.
- The Pictou ecumenical sunrise service on Easter morning (April 20) will be held at 6am at Pictou United Church. Again, all are warmly welcomed. There will be a light breakfast and time of fellowship to follow.
- The Reverend Michael Tutton will be presiding over Eucharist on Easter morning at the combined ACPC service at Christ Church at 11:15 am.
- The Memorial Hymn Sing will be held at St. Bee's on April 27 at 9:15am. This will be a combined service with St. George's being invited to participate.

Additional information about who will be coming as our guest priest to preside over the Eucharist in the months ahead will be forthcoming. In the meantime, Reverend Keith continues to recover and regain his strength. Both he and Bev are grateful for your ongoing prayers and good wishes!

As many of you know, Deborah Beck recently became a postulant with the Diocese. As part of that role, she is taking on a new leadership role within ACPC as our Pastoral Care Coordinator. More information to come about that in the days ahead. In the meantime, I would ask for your prayers for Deborah as she continues on her journey.

A gentle reminder to everyone who is required to take the two Diocesan courses related to SafeR Church that the deadline is April 4 to complete the courses. I will be holding additional workshops in Pictou and at Christ Church if there is interest. Ultimately, the goal is ensure that our churches across the Diocese are safe spaces for everyone.

Blessings for a spiritually healthy and reflective Lent,