

## Heartwork: Ash Wednesday / Lent "Short" Week



*40 days of Lent. When we think of 40 days, it may seem daunting to take on Lenten practices. If we are honest, our lives do not always give us space for prayer or the ability to survive March birthdays while fasting from sweets. This year, let's commit our lives to 40 days of **Heartwork** and begin each day with a one practice to grow in our love for God.*

### Wednesday in the Word – Matthew 6: 1-18

*To give, to fast, to pray ... all of these were practices for a religious person. But Jesus gives a twist to each one in these verses. Who is Jesus speaking to? Why the twist? And where does the twist take us?*

### Thursday – bedtime prayer

Lord God, protect us when we are awake, and watch over us as we sleep, that we may rise with Christ who is our light. O God, hear me when I pray ...

For our family and friends....

For our co-workers and classmates....

For the sick and those who care for them....

For those we don't get along with....

For those we have hurt today....

For our Church and world leaders....

For those looking for work, food, or shelter....

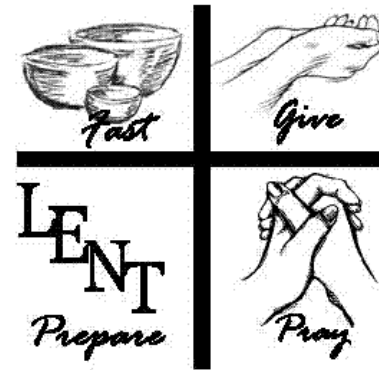
For those with no one to help them....

(The Lord's Prayer)

**Friday** – fast from routine, think of the roots of your faith on a walk, quiet space from a silenced tv, or docking the phone for the evening.

## Why Ashes?

Found in Scripture, the practice of repentance is associated with ashes. In Daniel 9:3, the prophet Daniel clothed himself in



sackcloth and sprinkled himself in ashes as he pleaded with God in prayer and fasting. In Job 42:6, Job said to the Lord, "I take back everything I said, and I sit in dust and ashes to show my repentance. "When Jesus saw towns full of people reject salvation even after he'd performed so many of his miracles there, he denounced

them for not repenting: "What sorrow awaits you, Korazin and Bethsaida! For if the miracles I did in you had been done in wicked Tyre and Sidon, their people would have repented of their sins long ago, clothing themselves in burlap and throwing ashes on their heads to show their remorse." (Matthew 11:21, NLT). Thus, ashes on Ash Wednesday at the start of the Lenten season represent our repentance from sin and Jesus Christ's sacrificial death to set us free from sin and death.

## Little purple sticker

Covid-19 precautions advise congregations to refrain from the practice of imposing/distributing ashes for the Lenten season. Not all Christian believers recognize the tradition of receiving ashes. But all of us are invited to the Lenten journey before Easter, focusing on Christ and renewing our relationship with God and others through Christian practices. In place of ashes, we are providing ash stickers to everyone. These will remind others and ourselves for the 40 days of Lent that we doing **heartwork** or the daily practices of prayer, meditation, fasting, charitable giving and abstinence of the things that keep us from growing in our relationship with God.