



ALBERTA AND NORTHWEST CONFERENCE  
THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA

# You are invited to participate in a Season of Prayer

Lent 2017

Wednesday, March 1 to

Holy Saturday, April 15, 2017

## What is this about?

Members, adherents and friends of the United Church of Canada in the Alberta and Northwest Conference are invited to join together in Prayer for Lent 2017. The Season of Prayer provides opportunities to strengthen spiritual ties as we pray for each other, our world and our church. The Season of Prayer can involve:

- start or continue to practice the spiritual discipline of prayer, especially intercessory prayers (praying for others),
- participate in a congregational Prayer Meeting,
- participate in a spiritual time of fasting during Holy Week,
- pray for the denomination as it continues in this time of transition.



Lent is a time of renewing our commitment to following the way of Jesus as we prepare for Holy Week and Easter.

Spiritual disciplines such as worship, fasting, meditation and prayer are used to evaluate current life choices and situations and to realign them to our faith traditions beliefs and values.

## Why are we doing this?

As a community of faith, we are always praying. So, why a season of prayer? In the past 18 months, we have been doing much talking about Remits and other things in the church. The discussions have left many wondering about the future. The Season of Prayer is an invitation to change a little the discourse currently occurring and to call the church to a time to listen and discern the will of God for the church now.

It is hoped that everyone in the Conference will be involved in this season in one way or another. While every aspect of this season is important, we hope that each congregation, knowing the needs of their community, will choose and experience one or more practices of the season.

## How will this be done?

During **LENT: A Season of INTENTIONAL Prayer** each congregation and/or pastoral charge will be asked to:

- 1. Encourage our members to be in intentional prayer at a convenient time during each day** for those concerns which may affect them. Encourage people to include in their prayers their local church and the needs and concerns of their wider church.
- 2. Organize on Ash Wednesday or Good Friday (or at a time convenient for the congregation/pastoral charge), a Prayer Service or Prayer Meeting**
  - the concerns of the community
  - the sick of the congregation
  - guidance for the church during this time of transition
  - clarity for the mission of the church in the present age.

**Please see the Prayer Meeting/Service Resource**

- 3. Include in the Sunday Morning Services the Conference's Prayer Concerns in the intercession/prayers of the people.** Conference Prayer Concerns (CPC) in Sunday worship service.  
**Please see the attached list of Conference Prayer Concerns as well as prayer resources.**
- 4. Encourage members to include in their day the practice of a spiritual discipline** such as lectio-divina, examen and the labyrinth. If your congregation has a labyrinth, you are encouraged to open their doors to the members of other congregations who may desire to engage in this practice. A list of congregations in the conference with labyrinths will be made available to congregations.

**5. Fast for one day during Holy Week.** In the spiritual practice of fasting, we seek to draw closer to God. The call to fast is one of spending time to intentionally discern the will of God for our lives and for our church. This will be a 24 hour fast that will begin after the evening meal on one day through to mid-afternoon (approx. 3:00 p.m.) on the next day.



This fasting can be done on a convenient day during Holy Week. We will fast to seek to grow in our relationship with God and to discern the will of God for God's church.

Persons may choose to participate either in

- a) A partial fast. In doing this the person gives up solid food only during fast.
- b) A complete fast: going without food and drink (except water) during the fast.

While most persons can engage in a fast the following should refrain from fasting:

- The elderly
- Pregnant and nursing mothers
- Persons under medical attention.

It is advisable that persons consult their doctors before engaging in a fast. **Please see the Q&A about fasting.**

### **Conference Prayer Concerns:**

Pray that the church will continue to discern its mission and ministry in the following points of focus.

March 5 (Lent 1) - The poor, unemployed and others facing financial difficulties

March 12 (Lent 2) - those whose lives have been affected by natural disasters

March 19 (Lent 3) - Persons discriminated against because of race or culture

March 26 (Lent 4) - Right relationships between settlers and First Nations, Metis and Inuit people

April 2 (Lent 5) - The LGBTQ community

April 9 (Lent 6) - Children affected by poverty

