

Lent is a liturgical season observed by Christians, beginning on Ash Wednesday and leading up to Easter Sunday. It is a time marked by fasting, repentance and spiritual discipline: all done with the purpose of reflecting on the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. While Lent can be somber, moving us to identify with Christ's suffering, it is equally a time of renewal, drawing us forward in hope and redemption.

“The spare and sober nature of Lent is healthy for the heart and true to the gospel, scrubbing away frothy spirituality by calling us to say no to ourselves in order to experience a greater yes in Jesus. Lent prepares us to experience the reality of resurrection joy only by first recognising the depth of our sin that pinned Christ to the cross.” - *Philip F. Reinders*

Together as one body, Red Church – Blackburn South AM, PM, and Outer East congregations – will be participating in Lent through fasting, daily readings, Triads, and Sunday gatherings. There are also a number of additional opportunities for us to gather together during this season, which we invite you to join us in:

<b>WED MAR 1</b>	Ash Wednesday (fasting and daily reading begins)
<b>SUN MAR 5</b>	Ash anointings at Sunday services
<b>FRI APR 7</b>	Alternative Passover Seder events (in homes)
<b>SUN APR 9</b>	Palm Sunday
<b>FRI APR 14</b>	Good Friday / Passover Seder 6pm at 43 Orchard Grove, Blackburn South
<b>SUN APR 16</b>	Easter Sunday combined service 10am at 169 Central Road, Nunawading

## FASTING

Fasting invites the disciple to deny their flesh, letting go of an appetite, to encounter more of the Spirit. The awareness of emptiness is a reminder to turn, again, to Jesus, allowing him to fill those areas. In fasting we do not passively hope that God will turn up as we give something up – we actively seek Him and what He has to offer instead.

During Lent, we encourage you to give up a luxury that will help you create space and hunger to meet with God. It might be food, drink or an activity. Ask God to lead you to the thing that you are putting too much comfort, dependence or enjoyment in – that He wants to replace with Himself. The other side of fasting is to use the newly-gained time or focus to seek and meet with God. For example, let your hunger be a trigger to pray; instead of opening up Facebook, spend time meditating on scripture.

## DAILY READINGS

This year during Lent we will be reading through the Gospel of Luke, with a section of scripture to read each day, except for on Sundays (see *Sundays* below). A number of people from the Red community have also written a reflection based on the readings each week. These reflections and accompanying questions can be used in your own quiet time or as discussion starters for your Small Group.

## TRIADS

Over Lent, we are encouraging people to meet together in groups of three to unpack the scriptures together. It is up to you to form your own group and arrange regular meeting times – weekly meetings are encouraged and these could happen in as little as 30 minutes. We strongly recommend someone take the role of facilitator to ensure the focus of the group. As you gather, use these core questions to guide your discussion:

**What does this passage say about God?**

**What does this passage say about humanity?**

**If this is true, how will it shape my life this week?**

## SUNDAYS

An important part of observing this season together is gathering in fellowship each week. Our Sunday teaching and worship will be focused on preparing for Easter and will draw out what we have read in the scriptures that week. The spiritual disciplines involved in Lent can seem like quite private and individual practices, but in gathering together, praying for each other and worshipping together we are reminded that we are part of one body held together in Christ.

According to tradition, the Sundays in Lent are days of rest. Each Sunday, we break from fasting and reading and gather together to hear God's word in fellowship. The breaking of the fast is like a 'mini-Easter' each week: a reminder and pointer to Christ's resurrection; a foretaste of the celebration and freedom we have in Him.