

FROM THE DESK OF BISHOP MAAS

LENT & JUSTICE



This month you'll note that a lot of our e-news content is focused on issues of justice. While justice is always a priority for disciples of Jesus, Lent seems an especially appropriate time to focus on it. From confessing our own sins and unjust behavior on Ash Wednesday to witnessing the unjust execution of Jesus in Holy week, this is a season for being mindful of how our neighbors are treated—and how we might be part of seeking the justice for them, the justice Jesus proclaimed as part of the Kingdom of God. The traditional disciplines of Lent—prayer, fasting and almsgiving—are themselves matters of justice in their own right, and are invitations for us to act justly in engaging them. As we intentionally deepen our prayer lives through Lent, we can be mindful of praying especially for the right and fair treatment of others in addition to our other prayers. Prayer shapes us, and such prayers help us become more just in our conduct, more like the disciples Jesus seeks.

Fasting is a matter not only of “emptying out” our bodies, minds and souls—though it is certainly that. Fasting is a means for helping us focus on our Lenten journey. Each urge to eat, or to eat a particular food, is a reminder of our Lenten discipline of preparing ourselves for Holy Week and Easter. More than that, fasting helps us remember the hungry—and remembering the hungry means not only calling them to mind but taking action to help alleviate their hunger, whether through gifts to food pantries and hunger relief programs, or advocating for policies that help eliminate hunger.

Almsgiving—giving special additional financial gifts—is always a matter of justice. In our choices of what and whom we give our gifts to, we make decisions about how justice will be practiced in the world. The work of church-related ministries are focused on making life better, on making situations a little more equal for those who are suffering. It's also a means for us to acknowledge the abundance we enjoy and

our willingness to let go of some of it for the sake of others; for seeking a more just balance of resources.

Seeking justice takes many forms, and the pieces you read about in this season will provide many invitations to participate in the work of justice. As you make your way through this season of preparation, ponder how you are being called to be part of the movement from death to life. Consider how you are to participate in the Resurrection by engaging in acts of justice for the sake of those who know only the poverty and pain of Good Friday, and who are longing for an experience of Easter. It will enrich your journey through Lent. It will make a difference in the lives of others. And it will give the world a glimpse of the just and holy Resurrection life of the Kingdom of God.