

Dear Avoca Methodist Church Family:

March 2024

I trust and pray that you are having a good Lent. Let me encourage you with whatever you may have given up for Lent, or whatever new habit you have started. The Christian season of Lent and the meteorological season of Spring both involve preparation, waiting, and focusing on future benefits. I have several daffodils and hyacinths poking up through the mulch. I am hoping that they are not damaged by their early start. Dedicated gardeners (unlike me) will soon be starting seeds and eagerly awaiting the time to start hardening their plants by exposing the previously protected seedlings to warmer days and cooler nights.

Those bulbs needed to be planted last fall. It takes planning, intention, and waiting. The seeds being started in a greenhouse were saved from last year's produce or ordered in preparation for a new season. Even if we plant annuals, the soil needs to be prepared, and nutrients added. Some soils need better drainage, some need more compost or mulch. A beautiful flower or vegetable garden doesn't just happen on its own. It requires preparation, waiting, and focusing on future benefits.

It wouldn't make much sense to go through all that work if you weren't going to enjoy the flowers or gather the vegetables. We put in the effort because there will be a reward in the future. Lent is a lot like our gardens. Lent is a time to prepare for the Easter resurrection. During Lent, we recall that we are guilty and lost in sin. On our own, we simply follow our fallen human nature. We want what we want, and we want it right now—often without thought of the consequences! During Lent, we ADMIT we are sinners; we are not perfect. We each carry the fallen nature from Adam and Eve. It's not meant to be depressing, it's just a statement of fact. We have all fallen short of God's expectations. We recognize that our sin separates us from a holy God. We realize that we need a savior. We BELIEVE that Jesus is the only one who can pay for our sins and make us righteous to spend eternity with God.

Lent also includes waiting. While much of our attention might be on heaven, that's somewhere in the future. What are we to do while we wait for death or Christ's return? Live like we're a follower of Jesus! We COMMIT the rest of our lives to following Christ's example by serving others. Doing good deeds, helping the poor, feeding the hungry, visiting the sick and imprisoned. All examples of what Christ did and expects us to do. Our deeds will not earn us a pass into heaven, but they do help us share the example of Jesus.

I hope and pray that this Lent is more than just the season before Easter. May it be for you a season of reflection, prayer, silence before God, and a deepening of your faith. May it be a time to work on your own relationship with God, AND a time to share God's love with others. Our culture needs the hope and security that only Christ can offer. Please give it to them.

And don't forget to **Bee A Disciple!**

Pastor Barre 