

Lenten Meditation Practices

The season of Lent is a wonderful time to step back a bit from normal routines and take time out for reflection and renewal. There is a great diversity of spiritual practices to support you in this, some of which are described briefly below. If you're interested in learning more about any of these suggestions or resources, please contact Kathryn Henderson, either on Sundays or at kathryn!@ucw.org. She'd love to talk with you!

Week 1

Take some time out to sit quietly and think about what the season of Lent means to you. You might jot down the first phrases or images that come to mind. Then consider the ways, unique to you, that will help you live more fully into the meaning of Lent. For example, some people view this as a time to intentionally let go of "stuff" -- the accumulations of worry, stress, and material goods that can weigh us down -- in order to feel closer to God. So, a deliberate, daily practice of letting go would be appropriate. For other people, Lent is a time to discover new ways to become closer to God, such as through prayer, meditation, and worship. They might choose to practice praying at the same time every day throughout the season.

Week 2

Read a Lenten devotional regularly, like this booklet, or a book like *The Awkward Season: Prayers for Lent*, by Pamela C. Hawkins. You might also try online resources, which will email you a daily reflection, like The Upper Room, a ministry of the United Methodist Church, <http://devotional.upperroom.org/emaildevotional>.

Week 3

Plan a day of retreat at one of the local monasteries. It is possible to go as a day visitor, or to attend a structured program. Kathryn's favorite places are the Society of St. John the Evangelist (www.ssje.org), which has an Episcopal monastery in Cambridge and a working eco-farm in West Newbury, and Glastonbury Abbey, a Benedictine (but very ecumenical) monastic community in Hingham (www.glastonburyabbey.org). Other possibilities are Rolling Ridge Retreat Center, a UMC (also ecumenical) guest house in North Andover (www.rollingridge.org), and St. Joseph Retreat Center (run by a Catholic order of nuns) in Cohasset, <http://www.csjretreatcenter.org>.

Week 4

Walk the labyrinth, either inside Union Church, or outside at Boston College, or both! There is also a finger labyrinth inside the cover of *The Awkward Season*, and one online, at <http://www.gratefulness.org/labyrinth/index.htm>. If you'd like to read a book on labyrinths, or other types of pilgrimage and spiritual journeys, a few possibilities are: *Labyrinths: Walking Toward the Center*, by Gernot Candolini, *Pilgrim Heart* by Sarah York; *Sacred Journey: Spiritual Wisdom for Times of Transition* by Mike Riddell; *Gift of the Redbird: The Story of a Divine Encounter*, by Paula D'Arcy, and *What the Dying Teach Us: Lessons on Living* by Samuel Oliver.

Week 5

Consider making a personal pilgrimage to a place that you've wanted to visit. This can be a

sacred site, like a church or shrine, or a place in nature, or even a museum or historic site. What is significant is that the journey is made intentionally, with preparation beforehand, and thoughtful reflection throughout the experience, so that you have the opportunity to integrate what you have discovered about yourself in a meaningful way. A version of this will be the Way of the Cross service at the Society of St. John the Evangelist at noon on Good Friday. Kathryn will be taking everyone who would like to go.

Week 6

Set aside some time to reflect on your Lenten journey, either in writing, with someone in conversation, or by yourself. Consider what has helped you deepen your relationship with God, and with yourself. What are some of the experiences that can become meaningful rituals and traditions for your life as a whole? Are there some things that you want to continue as part of daily life, like devotional time? And, consider the experience of renewal, especially through the events of Holy Week. How are you now being refreshed by Spirit to go forward?