

you can send a prayer each day of Lent.

Online Fast: Whereas ideas 1-3 focus on engaging online, this idea focuses on unplugging. Encourage family and friends to unplug from cell phones, email, and social media for a day a week or other designated time, giving

them more time to read or pray during their "fast." Challenge members to engage by different means, perhaps a hand-written note, thank you card, or letter for their children or spouse. Some may feel the desire to unplug throughout all of Lent.

### The United Methodist Lent quiz

- 1.) What does the term 'Lent,' which comes from 'lencten,' mean?
  - a.) Sacrifice
  - b.) Time
  - c.) Spring
  - d.) March madness
- 2.) How were ashes imposed in the early Church?
  - a.) The shape of the cross was drawn on the forehead
  - b.) Ashes were smeared across closed eyelids
  - c.) Ashes were sprinkled over the head
- 3.) Why do people give things up for Lent?
  - a.) To follow the example of Jesus' 40-day fast in the wilderness
  - b.) To help us focus on prayer and devotions
  - c.) To give acquired savings to the poor
  - d.) All of the above
- 4.) What snack food has significance during Lent?
  - a.) Chocolate
  - b.) Pretzels
  - c.) Popcorn
  - d.) All of the above
- 5.) Many people fast during Lent. How often did John Wesley fast?
  - a.) Twice a week
  - b.) Twice a month
  - c.) Twice a year
  - d.) Rarely
  - e.) He did not fast
- 6.) Why is Lent 40 days?
  - a.) To represent the time Jesus spent in the wilderness, tempted by Satan
  - b.) To remind us of the 40 years the Israelites wandered the desert
  - c.) To recall the 40 days and nights the earth was flooded in the Old Testament
- 7.) What do some United Methodists avoid singing at Lent?
  - a.) Doxologies
  - b.) Alleluia
  - c.) "In the Garden"
  - d.) The communion liturgy
- 8.) True or False—Sundays are not counted in the 40 days of Lent?
  - a.) True
  - b.) False

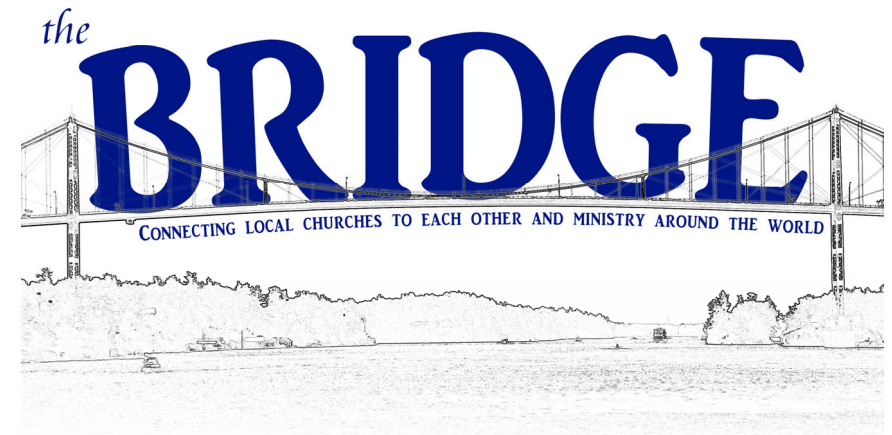
**Editor's Note:** The answers are below. Rotate the bridge 180 degrees to view the answers right-side up.

**Answer key:** 1.) c, 2.) c, 3.) d, 4.) b, 5.) a, 6.) a, 7.) b, 8.) a

The Bridge is a Conference Communications Ministry tool that delivers to local churches news and stories of ministry from around the Upper New York Conference and the world. For more news and stories visit:

[www.unyumc.org](http://www.unyumc.org)

To read a Lenten letter from the Northeastern Jurisdiction College of Bishops visit <http://bit.ly/NEJBishopsonLent>.



The Upper New York Conference's vision is to live the gospel of Jesus Christ and to be God's love with our neighbors in all places.

## A look inside!

Celebrating Lent in The United Methodist Church

Page 2

The United Methodist Lent quiz

Page 4

# Celebrating Lent in The United Methodist Church

Lent began this past Wednesday Feb. 26. Lent is a season of 40 days, not counting Sundays, which begins on Ash Wednesday and ends on Holy Saturday. The English word "Lent" comes from the Anglo-Saxon word *lencten*, which means "lengthen" and refers to the lengthening days of "spring." In many other languages, the word used for this season refers to the 40-day length of the season (*cuaresma* in Spanish and Tagalog, *carême* in French, *quaresima* in Italian) or to the fasting that characterizes it (*Fastenzeit* in German, *fastan* in Swedish, *paasto* in Finnish, *posta* in Russian). The season is a preparation for celebrating Easter.

Historically, Lent began as a period of fasting and preparation for baptism by converts and then became a time for penance by all Christians. The First Sunday describes Jesus' temptation by Satan; and the Sixth Sunday (Passion/Palm Sunday), Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem and his subsequent passion and death. Note that the readings during Lent, until Passion/Palm Sunday, focus primarily on the meaning of baptism and discipleship, in continuity with the season's original purpose. Because Sundays are always little Easters, the penitential spirit of Lent should be tempered with joyful expectation of the Resurrection.

Holy Week is the final week of Lent, beginning with Passion/Palm Sunday and concluding with Holy Saturday. It is during these days that the readings focus primarily on the last days and suffering and death of Jesus.

The Great Three Days—sometimes called the Triduum or Pasch—from sunset Holy Thursday through sunset Easter Day are the climax of Lent (and of the whole Christian year) and a bridge into the Easter

Season. These days proclaim Jesus Christ's passion, death, and resurrection. During these days, the community journeys with Jesus from the upper room, to the cross, to the tomb, and to the garden. They should be recognized as a great unified service beginning with a service of Holy Communion on Holy Thursday and concluding with the services of Easter Day. These services may be tied to a prayer vigil lasting from Holy Thursday evening (or Good Friday) until the first service of Easter and may be accompanied by fasting.

## Ways to observe Lent

Friday fish fries. No chocolate. Join a new Bible study.

All these practices have benefits. And all are common Lenten practices. They hint at ways the season of Lent can lead us into more disciplined, focused lives. With that in mind, we offer some other practices that hit at the heart of Lent and excite our spiritual lives.

Lent is the period of 40 days leading up to Easter (note: Sundays don't count). It is a time of preparation and focus, reminiscent of Jesus' time in the wilderness before he started his public ministry (See Mark 1, Matthew 4, or Luke 4). We believe that Jesus went to the wilderness to set aside the distractions of normal, "worldly" life and focus on God and God's will for him. So we attempt to do the same during Lent—though often on a slightly less stringent scale.

So check out the info graphic on page 3 with four ways you can "enter the wilderness" this Lenten season and find some focus, too.

## Some more ways to celebrate Lent

**Photo-a-Day Meditation:** This spiritual practice asks people to focus on a particu-

## 4 Ways to Observe Lent

Lent is a season of focus and preparation. It aligns our hearts with God's heart as we approach Easter. The following are just a few ways to focus and prepare.

- 

### Give It Up

Consider giving up something that distracts from your important relationships: like too much time on Twitter or Clash of Clans. Maybe cut out screen usage for several hours a day. Take a day of true rest: let go of toil for 24 hours.
- 

### Plug In

Consider adding in something that helps you connect to God. Read a book of the Bible, a devotional, or practice Lectio Divina on a daily basis.
- 

### Serve

Start a new routine of service. Volunteer regularly as an academic mentor, step up to volunteer in a local church, or visit a nursing home.
- 

### Share It

Make it a communal event. Share your Lent practices with others via a small group and/or attending worship.

lar word or theme each day during Lent, inviting participants to reflect on the theme and share a photo of something related on social media.

**Online Study:** Since people are generally open to new ideas during Lent, it might be the perfect opportunity to try some-

thing new. You could create an online study in a very traditional sense by utilizing Skype to connect participants in a virtual class meeting.

**Text Prayers:** Start a group text where

*Continued on page 4*