

With this issue of the Connection we are well into the season of Lent. This year we journey through Lent from the perspective of St. Luke, a journey which in its middle bids us listen to the Parable of the Prodigal Son – a parable which focuses our attention on the grace of God which seeks us out and restores us to fellowship with God.

In the context of lent which is a time when we may reassess our priorities and our commitment to God and to each other this parable provides a salutary reminder that the focus is and always must be on God's desire to incorporate us into God's kingdom. It is not and must never be on our repentance or moral capacity – for these will fail us while God's expansive love will not.

So for this Lent, a simple challenge, sit quietly, even if only for a few moments, and focus on God's love for you. Perhaps us as a way into thinking about that the welcome the father gives the younger son in the parable: "*while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him*" Spend a few moments imagining yourself as the younger son and experience the welcome and embrace of God.

A little bit of advance notice and reminder regarding the Easter weekend. The traditional Easter services go over all 4 day – Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Vigil and Easter Day. Each of these days will be celebrated throughout the Ministry District. Take this as my first encouragement to you to try and go somewhere on each of these days that you may experience the fullness of the Easter celebration. Each one of the services is different and most particularly the Easter Vigil is not the same as Easter Day. It contains the lighting of the new fire and the paschal candle, the singing of the Easter praises and the reaffirmation of baptismal vows. None of these elements are present on Easter day. Maundy Thursday is the remembrance of the Last Supper and includes the washing of feet as Jesus did on that night before going to Gethsemane.

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