



A Fast that I Choose...

On Ash Wednesday—the first day of Lent—I issued an invitation to a Lenten discipline “by self-examination and repentance; by prayer, fasting, and self-denial; and by reading and meditating on God’s Holy Word.” For many of us, our Lenten journeys to the cross are marked by fasting from certain foods or beverages like chocolate or coffee. Fasting—the practice of reducing or abstaining from food or other items—has a long tradition in the Church. In an oft-quoted passage from the Book of Isaiah we read

*Is not this the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of injustice,
to undo the thongs of the yoke,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to break every yoke?*

*Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,
and bring the homeless poor into your house;
when you see the naked, to cover them,
and not to hide yourself from your own kin?*

Isaiah 58:6-7 NRSV

The Biblical hero Daniel (from Daniel in the lion’s den) is also recorded as observing a fast from food and wine at the royal Babylonian court (cf. Daniel 1).

Fasting is also picked up throughout Christian history in both the Western (Catholic and Protestant) and Eastern (Orthodox) Churches. Living in Austria we are generally aware of Catholic traditions including no meal on Fridays in Lent and fasting on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. What we may not know is that fasting is part of historical Methodist practice.

Methodist founder John Wesley described fasting as part of the ‘means of grace’ (a way in which we receive God’s saving love). For Wesley fasting was as important as attending Sunday worship, praying, reading the Bible, and receiving Holy Communion. Wesley and the early Methodists practiced fasting from food from sundown on Thursday until Friday afternoon at 15:00.



To be honest....

I have never been a fan of fasting. Some years I have skipped fasting completely. And I must admit that I was tempted to do the same this Lenten season. But after some thought and prayer, I decided to reduce my intake of junky media and consume media which edified and stimulated my mind and spirit. Less Netflix and Facebook this Lenten season and more podcasts, Scripture reading, and quiet moments alone. In the end I find myself more spiritually and intellectually engaged, fulfilled, and curious about God and our world. Who knew giving up meant receiving more?

Two weeks

In two weeks we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ. But it is not too late to observe a Lenten fast. Take these two weeks to give up a distraction, a food with which you are obsessed, some activity that consumes your time but doesn’t bring you joy. Spend your time, energy, and money in prayer, reading Scripture, and doing activities that feed your soul. Draw close to Christ so that the full joy of Easter may dwell in your heart.

Matthew

Looking Back Last Month

Wärmestube Closes for the Season

The ESUMC-Fünfhaus Wärmestube (winter day shelter) is now closed for the season. The program is operated in conjunction with Caritas. Our program opens in December and runs through March. Many other churches do not

begin until January. This year we hosted 1,600 neighbors in the program. The last day was March 28. A special thanks to ESUMC members Jackalie Blue and Deborah Koll-Petty and Fünfhaus member Christa Murtinger for coordinating the project. Thank you to all who donated and helped!

Women's World Day of Prayer

ESUMC hosted Vienna's English language Women's World Day of Prayer on Friday, March 3rd. The event was sponsored by an organizing committee of women from Christ Church Anglican, ESUMC, Vienna Community Church, the Vienna English-Speaking Catholic Community, and Grace Church. Over 60 women attended the prayer service plus several men. During the service worshippers prayed from the Philippines and heard stories from Filipina women. The evening closed with a wonderful catered Filipino meal, served in the ESUMC fellowship area.

Special thanks to Olga Nikulina and Lorraine Welch-Haslinger for creating a beautiful altar arrangement, Sadaf Ilbeki Taher and Melissa Scherer for serving food and cleaning up, and Jarrod Mangan for running the soundboard.



24 Members Tour Wien Museum

On Sunday, March 19th, 24 members from ESUMC toured the Wien Museum's temporary exhibit on "Protestant Vienna. Religious Conflict After Luther". During the tour participants heard from the museum guide about the rise and suppression of Protestant faith, the role of nobility in promoting Protestant faith, and later reaction by Habsburg monarchs. At one time Vienna was 70% Protestant.

The exhibit also includes a printing of Luther's 95 Thesis, (1517), a handwritten copy of the Augsburg Confession (1530), and a copy of the Peace of Augsburg (1555).

The exhibit runs through 14 May.

ESUMC Leadership Development Fund helped support the tour.

Looking Ahead in April and Beyond

Holy Week Services Announced

9 April—Palm/Passion Sunday—Sunday morning worship at 11:15 with a special children's palm processional to remember Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. The service then turns to the torture and trial of Jesus from Matthew 26 in the "Journey to the Cross" sermon series. Pastor Matthew preaching.

13 April—Maundy Thursday—A special Holy Thursday service commemorating the Last Supper. Please bring a food dish to share. The service begins with a meal at 18:30.

14 April – Good Friday – We have two services on Good Friday, remembering the death and burial of our Lord. The 12:30 ecumenical prayer service is hosted this year at Christ Church Anglican (Jauresgasse 17-19, 1030 Wien) where Pastor Matthew will be preaching. A 19:30 service of darkness will be held at ESUMC.

15 April—Easter Vigil—Join the Fünfhaus Gemeinde in their Easter Saturday vigil. The service begins in the garden with a bonfire at 20:00. The service will be in German.

16 April—Resurrection Sunday—Sunday morning worship at 11:15 celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Holy Communion will be served. We will also have five baptisms. Pastor Matthew preaching and presiding.



Lenten Bible Study

The special Lenten Bible taught by Pastor Matthew has two sessions remaining on April 5 and 12. The Bible study begins each time at 18:30 with soup and salad and the study to follow the meal. The study is entitled "He Set His Face to Jerusalem" which focuses on Jesus' final journey to Jerusalem.

Easter Flowers

On Easter Sunday, April 16th, please bring flowers to decorate the Easter cross.

Cardboard Needed!

Large pieces of cardboard are needed for VBS. If you have any pieces that are 1 meter or bigger, please save them for us. You can bring them to the church and leave them in the church office. Thank you!

Children's Easter Egg Hunt

The Sunday School teachers are sponsoring an Easter Egg Hunt/Party for Sunday School children on Monday April 17th from 14:00 to 17:00 at ESUMC.

Vacation Bible Sch'l Dates Announced



Vacation Bible School is planned for the week of August 14th through August 18th. All children ages 4 through 15 are invited to attend. The theme will be "Hero Central: Discovering

Your Strength in God." If you are interested in helping, please contact the church office at office [at] esumc.at.

English-Speaking United Methodist Church of Vienna

Sechshauser Strasse 56, 1150 Wien • office@esumc.at • +43 1 895 81 75 • www.esumc.at

Reverend Matthew A. Laferty • +43 664 466 94 75 mobile • matthew.laferty@emk.at

Donations accepted at www.esumc.at/donate • IBAN: AT23 1200 0006 2016 1208/BIC Code: BKAUATWW