



David's Dialogue

Dear members and friends of St. Matthew's:

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted for forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. Matthew 4: 1-2.

Church historians think that the practice of Lent was formalized at the council of Nicea in the year AD 325. Practiced now for 1700 years! Lent is a solemn period in the Christian liturgical year that prepares us for Easter. It echoes the 40 days Jesus spent fasting in the desert and enduring temptation, a story told in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke. This took place before beginning his public ministry. In the same way, Lent prepares us for our ministry as followers of Jesus.

Lent is observed in most but not all churches. The Catholic, Lutheran, Moravian, Anglican, mainline Protestant and Orthodox Christian traditions, generally mark Lent. But others who stayed closest to the reformed and baptist church movements do not. Calvin and the Meno, the founder of the Mennonite tradition, for example, wanted to do away with the elaborate church ceremonies that weren't explicitly prescribed in scripture. Lent is not an idea that appears in the Bible; Christians later created it as a way of teaching certain Bible stories and reinforcing spiritual disciplines such as fasting, humility, introspection and repentance.

The pattern of fasting and praying in scripture. In the Old Testament, the prophet Moses went into the mountains for 40 days and 40 nights to pray and fast "without eating bread or drinking water" before receiving the Ten Commandments. (Exodus 34:28) Likewise, the prophet Elijah went into the mountains for 40 days and 40 nights to fast and pray "until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God" when "the word of the Lord came to him." (1 Kings 19:8-9). In the New Testament, Jesus went into the desert to fast and pray for 40 days & 40 nights; it was during this time that Satan tried to tempt him (Matthew 4:1-3). The 40-day fasts of Moses, Elijah, and Jesus prepared them for their work.

Many churches at the time of the Protestant reformation abandoned the

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practice of Lent because they wanted to push back against a Roman Catholic church that was putting Christian traditions above the Revelation of the Holy Scripture and using traditions to intimidate and exploit people. As a result, Lent was probably not as much of a practice for Protestants as it was for those raised as Catholics.

Many of our Muslim and Jewish neighbours take the practice of fasting very seriously and have appointed times of the year when they deny themselves food and experience hunger. In addition to focusing the mind on spiritual things, the practice is also important for focusing the mind on earthly things, such as the fact that many of our brothers and sisters all over the world and here at home go without food regularly. Today many are in the grips of horrific famine, such as those in the Darfur region of Sudan. Others have had their lives affected by terrible violence and have been deprived of many of the things we take for granted, enduring unimaginable suffering. It is a mistake not to take such suffering in our human family seriously. Depriving ourselves of comforts willingly, is one way to recognize our privilege and to reflect on how we can make it better for others.

Over the season of Lent, I will be practicing a fast. I will start the day with a very simple breakfast and will not eat again until supper. It is not as long or as strict a fast as many do, but fasting is something new to me and my plan is something I can manage. I hope that you will also consider a fast of some kind. Nothing too difficult, mind you, but something that takes your abilities and needs into account, something that requires you to stop and reflect, to use some will power, and might give you a reason to pause and consider others.

Peace Like a River,

Rev. David Kim-Cragg ᐱᓐᓇᓇᓇᓇᓇᓇ *wahkohtowin*;
Minister at St. Matthew's United Church (he/him)

Missed a recent service? Watch it on YouTube.

Recent services at St. Matthew's.

- Jan. 26. [Video recording](#). The sermon discussed how stars provide navigation assistance on the seas for thousands of years and that such guiding lights, including Jesus, should be relied on to guide our lives today.
- Feb. 02. [Video recording](#). The sermon was titled "The Planets"
- Feb. 09. [Video recording](#). The sermon was titled "Shooting Stars" and had a focus on meteorites and meteor showers and how people interpret them.
- Feb. 16. [Video Replay](#). This sermon focused on the beauty of snow as Rev. David took us for a walk along the Lake Ontario boardwalk. Enjoy the song from the Mormon Tabernacle Choir singing "All Beautiful the March of Days" [Use this link](#) to listen.
- Feb. 23. [Video recording](#). This sermon spoke about the Milky Way and Galaxies.



A bit of our history — *Mary Fleming found this article titled “Our New Peace Banners” in one of Gord’s piano benches. It was published in the Christmas 1997 edition of What’s Happening — the forerunner to our current newsletter.*

Our New Peace Banners

To many people the huge blank wall at the back of our sanctuary was something of an eyesore; but, we old-timers had gotten used to it. However, Gordon Fleming, who has an artist’s eye as well as a musician’s ear, decided to do something about it.

Gordon, who often plays at Thornhill United Church for funerals, saw what that church had done with a similar wall, and conceived the idea of a series of banners. Then, he went out and bought the material which he and Mary graciously donated in memory of Gordon’s parents, John & Nan Fleming, and his musical mentors, Harry & Lillian Hill.

Numerous people helped with this project through its various stages. The letters were chosen by Joan Larabie. Cliff Plume used an overhead projector to blow up the letters for tracing by Gordon and Bertha Mohl. The afternoon craft group did the cutting and basting and Bertha Mohl did the final sewing. Gordon Fleming and Alfred Mohl hung it on the wall. *It’s beautiful. Thank you!*



Photo by Doreen Coyne

The Feb. 2nd Sermon was on the Planets. On the evening of Feb 1st, I took this photo of Venus as I was returning home from church after printing bulletins and helping at a recital. Venus is just to the right and up a smidge of the “waxing gibbous” moon. You never know when you’ll see a planet on your horizon!

Photo by Doreen Coyne.



Bridging the Gap

On March 11

Attend a panel discussion with a Jewish and Muslim student modeling respectful listening and engagement about Israel/Palestine

The event begins with a simple meal at 7:30pm.
Panel begins at 8pm.

Location - St. Matthew's United Church, 333 Crosby Ave., Richmond Hill
RSVP - Rev. David Kim-Cragg / davidkc1212@outlook.com

Upcoming Services & Activities & Updates

- As announced at our Feb. 23rd Congregational meeting, Rev. David will be on sabbatical from September to November, 2025. Rev. Hoon Kim, a long term United Church minister who has been attending our church with his wife, Insook, has agreed to be our minister during that time. The Kim's have lived in Richmond Hill for many years. Hoon was ordained in 1983 and his most recent call was at Saint Luke's United Church in downtown Toronto where he worked for 20 years. He retired a few years ago but continues to run a TeleHope program on YouTube @telehopedaily5287. Rev. Kim is an artist and member of the RH Group of Artists and plays Clarinet in the RH Concert Band.
- Are you able to assist on April 4th from 4 to 6pm to set up tables and chairs for a rental group? It likely will take about 1 hour. If so, please let Doreen know. Thank you
- As of Feb. 1, 2025, the Iranian Church is no longer renting our sanctuary nor hall. It was our pleasure to provide them with a place to worship and grow. May they do well in the future.
- Sunday evenings are now available for rental by our congregation or others. If you, or someone you know, are looking to rent, please email the church office providing the dates/time, booking flexibility and rooms you'd need. Val does one-off bookings for the hall and/or sanctuary on a Sunday from 5:30pm onwards. Doreen would handle recurring rentals.
- March 5 to April 16, 7 to 8pm via Zoom. Rev. David will be holding a weekly Lenten study focused on the conflict in Israel/Palestine. All interested should contact Rev. David.
- March 11, 7:15pm. Bridging the Gap. Attend a panel discussion with a Jewish and a Muslim student modeling respectful listening and engagement about Israel/Palestine. A simple meal starts the meeting at 7:30pm followed by the panel at 8pm. All are invited to register by sending **Rev. David by email at davidkc1212@outlook.com** to attend.
- April 27 will be Membership Sunday. All who are not officially members of St. Matthew's and who would like to be members, are asked to contact Rev. David.



Rev. Hoon Kim and his wife Insook. Photo by D. Coyne