

From Pastor Karen's Desk
F E B R U A R Y 2 0 1 0

Lenten Landmarks

Wes and I were on our way to Marshfield recently. As we drove down Highway 29, approaching Highway 97, I spotted a familiar white farmhouse with a unique dormer. I interrupted our conversation to say, "Here comes our exit – don't miss it." Wes said he wouldn't have missed it because, even though we were talking, he was reading the signs. I noted that if that farmhouse were ever torn down, I'd probably keep driving all the way to Minneapolis because I tend to watch the landmarks, not the words.

We will be on our way to Easter soon, beginning our yearly journey through Lent. How do you navigate your way? Do you read the signs? We have plenty of words that tell us the route to follow. There are traditional dates on the calendar – Lent begins on Ash Wednesday six weeks before Easter and ends with the special days of Holy Week: Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter itself. There are the scripture readings that begin with Jesus' temptation in the wilderness and end with the story of Jesus' arrest and crucifixion, followed by the accounts of the empty tomb on Easter. You can follow the words through Lent.

Or are you one who pays more attention to the landmarks? Again, I'm a landmark person. A lot of what I pay attention to comes without words. Some of the landmarks I watch aren't even part of the religious tradition – I make my way through Lent looking at the size of the snow piles and how long it stays light in the afternoon. But the landmarks that are part my faith often take the form of symbols and images. From the ashes on the forehead, through the purple cloths we drape on the altar, to the palms of Palm Sunday, and even to the cross itself – I make my way through Lent by fixing my eyes on the next image and knowing what to do next. Lent is full of landmarks.

This year for Lent, we will be paying special attention to the landmarks – the visual clues we see that tell us when to turn, what to do, what comes next. We hope you will join us as we begin in the repentance symbolized by the ashes all the way through the relief and joy of the empty tomb. Look! Here is where we turn! Don't miss it.