



MODERATOR'S 2025 LENT MESSAGE

Autumnal Letting-Go

After a late burst of summer weather, we are beginning to feel the turn of the season. Mornings have begun to feel quite autumnal. I love that word! And I have to say that autumn is my favourite season. There is something about the softer days, the sense of gathering in, the changing colours of the trees (brilliant in the South), the feeling of a different season with its own uniqueness and vibe.

Autumn also coincides with our season of Lent. The time of the year where we journey towards Good Friday. A time for reflection, repentance and spiritual preparation. A time where many Christians engage in practices such as fasting, prayer, penance, and self-denial to grow closer to God and reflect on the significance of Jesus's sacrificial giving and death on the cross.

So, we have these two seasons of autumn and Lent occurring in parallel. We often hear of people giving something up for Lent; a bit like a shortened (or maybe elongated) New Year's resolution – that for six weeks they will give up, say, chocolate, or social media, or a habit that is not helpful. And we reflect on how the trees 'give up' their leaves in this season. How might we respond, how might we take this seasonal opportunity to reflect more deeply on our faith commitment?

Perhaps we need to think about what our motivation is. If we give up something just to prove that we can, or that we 'should', it may well be an undertaking that brings a hollow sense of victory at the end. So what, we've proved we've got will power! Rather, if we give up something as a way of helping us grow closer to God, how much more meaningful and satisfying our 'letting go' will be.

I have found that with much travelling and a very different routine to my life as I carry out my role as Moderator, and also as parish minister, it has been more difficult for me to maintain a sense of a regular rhythm in my devotional life. For me, this season of Lent is going to provide an opportunity to 'let go' of that sense of dislocation, to claim new ways of incorporating that rhythm into my life.

For those of us who attend Ash Wednesday services and have the sign of the cross in ash placed on our foreheads, hear the words 'Remember you are dust, and to dust you shall return' and 'Repent, and believe in the Gospel', this is both sobering and resonates deeply. This Lenten time offers an opportunity to grow in our Christian faith.

At a time when there is so much uncertainty, prejudice, violence and hatred in our world, it may seem counter-intuitive to turn inwards and reflect in this way. And yet growing in our faith, knowing to whom we belong, reflecting on his self-giving and loving ways, enables us to live more fully in this world that is crying out for hope and justice.

Just as the trees let go of their leaves and stand bare for a season, we too can let go of the things that may distract or mis-shape us, so that we too, like the trees, can be renewed and refreshed for the next season.

"From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised". [Matthew 16: 21]

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