

PREACHING AND  
PLANNING FOR LENT  
AND EASTER



# AGENDA

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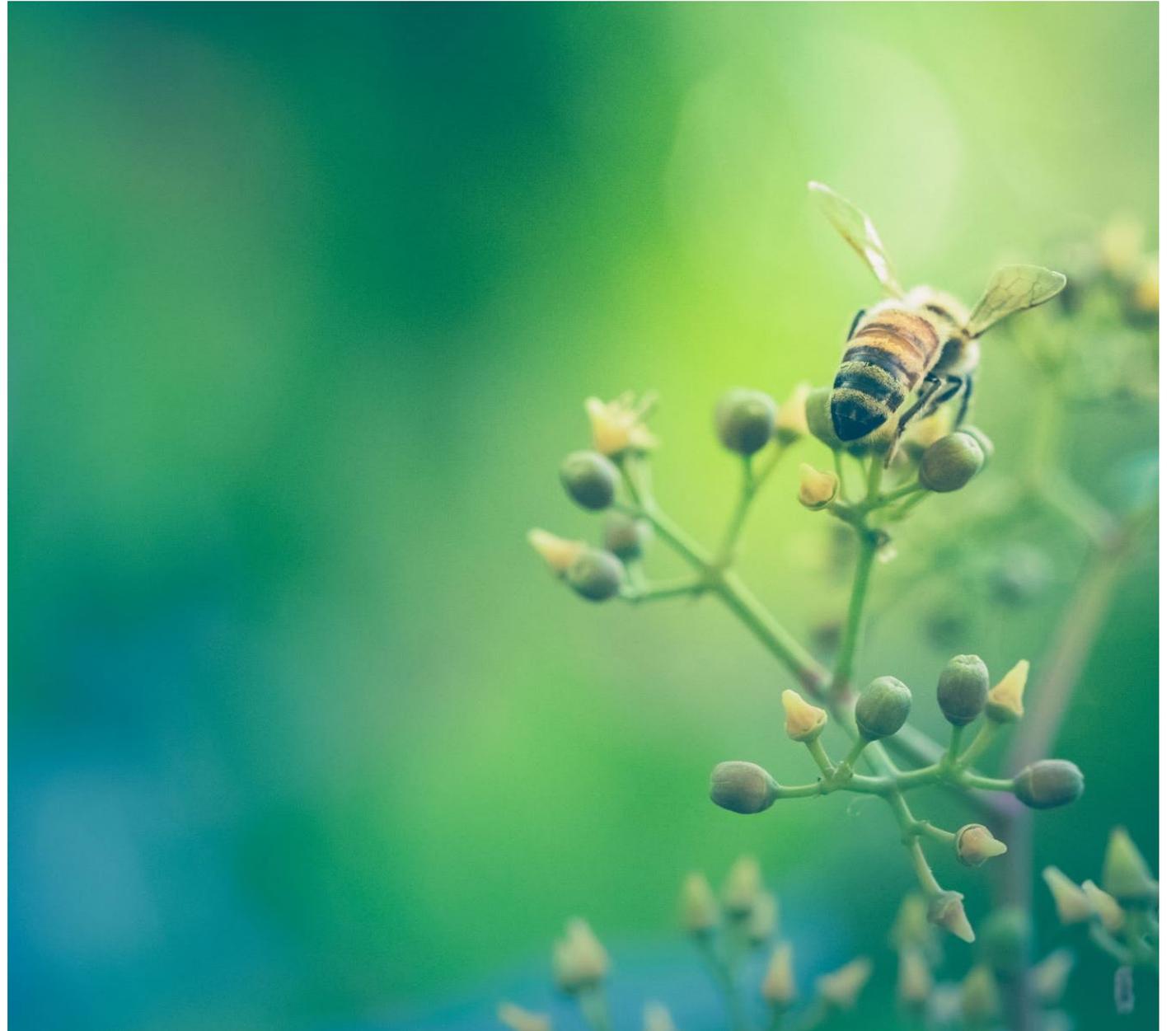
Introductions

Wesley Thoughts

Planning Time

Discussion

Finish Up



LENT AND  
EASTER HAVE  
DRAWN  
NEAR!



# INTRODUCTIONS

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Tell us who you  
are.

THEN

Say one thing you  
love about the  
Lent and Easter  
season,

THEN

Say one thing you  
would change  
about this season  
if you could.



# WESLEY ON LENT

- John Wesley did not write extensively about Lent as a distinct season in the liturgical calendar, but his views on fasting, repentance, and spiritual discipline can be inferred from his sermons, journals, and writings. Key sources for understanding Wesley's perspective on practices associated with Lent include:
- Sermon 27: "Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, Discourse VII": Wesley discusses fasting as an essential spiritual discipline, emphasizing its role in self-denial and drawing closer to God.
- Sermon 16: "The Means of Grace": Explains how prayer, fasting, and Scripture study are crucial practices for spiritual growth, which align with traditional Lenten disciplines.
- Wesley's Journal: Offers insights into his personal spiritual practices, including fasting and acts of mercy, which were central to his theology.
- The General Rules of the Methodist Societies: Emphasizes works of mercy, prayer, and self-denial as essential aspects of Christian living, paralleling Lenten themes.
- A Plain Account of Christian Perfection: Discusses the pursuit of holiness and repentance, aligning with Lent's focus on spiritual renewal.
- While Wesley did not explicitly frame these practices within the context of Lent, his theology of disciplined spiritual growth, repentance, and preparation offers a foundation for connecting his teachings to Lenten observance.

# WESLEY ON EASTER

- Wesley saw Easter as the central event of the Christian faith, affirming Christ's victory over sin and death and offering hope of eternal life to believers.
- Assurance of Salvation: He emphasized that the resurrection provides assurance of justification and salvation for all who trust in Christ, making it a cornerstone of Christian hope. Sermon 43, The Scripture Way of Salvation
- New Life in Christ: Wesley taught that Easter signifies the beginning of a new life for believers, marked by holiness, transformation, and freedom from the power of sin. Sermon 15, The Great Assize
- Call to Joy and Thanksgiving: Easter was, for the Wesleys, a time of joyful worship and gratitude, celebrating God's grace and the fulfillment of His promises through the resurrection. See the hymns of Charles Wesley, for instance "Christ the Lord has Risen Today" (302).
- Promise of Our Resurrection: Wesley taught the future resurrection of the faithful, pointing to the ultimate hope of sharing in Christ's glory in the life to come.

# WESLEY ON ASH WEDNESDAY AND LENT FOR THE METHODISTS IN AMERICA



# WHAT ABOUT THE SUNRISE SERVICE OR EASTER VIGIL?

From the Book of Worship: During the Great Three Days, from sunset Holy Thursday to sunset Easter Day, we celebrate the saving events of Jesus Christ's suffering, death, and resurrection. In the development of Christian worship, each event came to be remembered on a separate day. In the earliest centuries, however, these events were celebrated as a unity in an extraordinary single liturgy that began Saturday night and continued until the dawn of Easter Day. It was known as the great Paschal (Easter) Vigil. Preceded by a fast day, it was the most holy and joyful night of the entire Christian year, for it proclaimed and celebrated the whole of salvation history and Christ's saving work. It is the most appropriate time for baptisms; persons baptized symbolically die and rise with Christ (Romans 6:3–11). It has also come to be seen as a most appropriate time for congregational reaffirmation of the Baptismal Covenant.

The Easter (Paschal) Vigil has both historic and symbolic roots in the Jewish Passover. That is why so many images are from the Old Testament and why so many analogies are experienced in Christ. In this service we experience the passage from slavery to freedom, from sin to salvation, from death to life.

The Easter Vigil is the First Service of Easter. The following service is an adaptation of the ancient Paschal Vigil service and consists of four parts: (1) The Service of Light, (2) The Service of the Word, (3) The Service of the Baptismal Covenant, and (4) The Service of the Table. The length of the service may suggest that the sermon be brief. Thus we celebrate God's saving work in Christ through the symbols of light, word, water, and the heavenly banquet.

# ADDITIONAL HELPFUL PLANNING RESOURCES

[Revised Common Lectionary at Vanderbilt  
divinity library](#)

[Textweek](#)

[Ministry Matters](#)

[Discipleship Ministries](#)



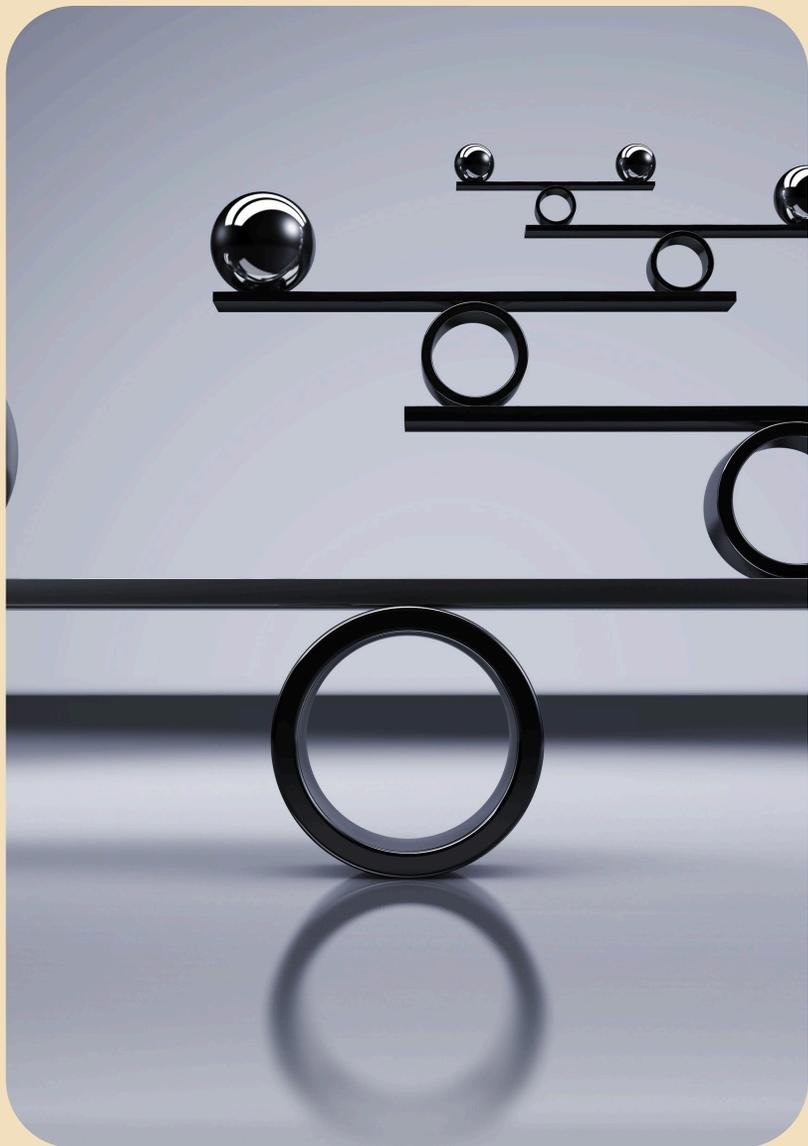
# PLANNING TIME

- Break out into smaller work groups to begin planning your services.
- There is Ash Wednesday, March 5
- There are FIVE Sundays in Lent, then there is Palm Sunday (SIX Sundays)
- There is Holy Week, including Good Friday, April 18. You may also have a Maundy Thursday service.
- There is Easter Sunday, April 20. Your church may have a Sunrise service in addition to your normal worship.
- In sum, should you have services for EACH of these, that is 10 worship services (or 11 with Maundy Thursday, or 15 if you include all of Holy Week and a Holy Saturday service). That's a lot of planning!

# PLANNING TIME

- In your break out group, you will have 50 minutes to help each other think about themes, how and what you will preach, and how will enliven worship with new ideas and Wesleyan themes.
- You will have about FIVE minutes for each service, so make sure you watch the time. Your group should give time to each service.
- Consult the planning guide, which includes a planning grid, all the lectionary readings, and other helpful tools.





READY, SET, GO!

# DISCUSSION





# FINAL THOUGHTS

- Refresh through rehearsal
  - Record yourself preaching one sermon. Then watch it and see if you can adjust to make your preaching better.
- Refine delivery style
  - Pacing, tone, and emphasis
- Wesleyan Emphases
  - Remember the rich soil in which we live as Methodists.
- The value of good planning



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