

M e a n s  
o f  
G r a c e



Week 2

L e n t  
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## What are “Means of Grace?”

John Wesley taught that God's grace is unearned and that we are not to be idle waiting to experience grace but we are to engage in the means of grace. The means of grace are ways God works invisibly in disciples, hastening, strengthening, and confirming faith so that God's grace pervades in and through disciples. As we look at the means of grace today, they can be divided into works of piety and the works of mercy.

### **Works of Piety**

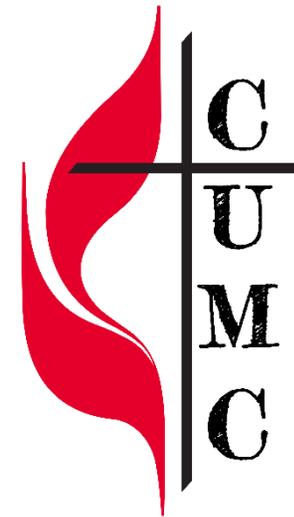
Individual Practices – reading, meditating and studying the scriptures, prayer, fasting, regularly attending worship, healthy living, and sharing our faith with others

Communal Practices – regularly share in the sacraments, Christian conferencing (accountability to one another), and Bible study

### **Works of Mercy**

Individual Practices - doing good works, visiting the sick, visiting those in prison, feeding the hungry, and giving generously to the needs of others

Communal Practices – seeking justice, ending oppression and discrimination (for instance Wesley challenged Methodists to end slavery), and addressing the needs of the poor You are invited to engage in many of these means of grace during this season of Lent! Each Sunday, be sure to pick up this weekly devotional as we seek to grow more fully in God’s transformational love!



## Discover more ways to engage in Lent online!



Weekly reflection videos: [www.facebook.com/cranfordumcnj](https://www.facebook.com/cranfordumcnj)



Lent Photo-A-Day: @cranfordumc on Instagram



Website: [www.cranfordumc.com](http://www.cranfordumc.com)

**And, of course, Sundays at 10AM!**

### Monday: Scripture

**Scripture:** Isaiah 58:10 “If you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noon day.”

**Reflection:** God through the prophet Isaiah not only calls the people to fast so that they may be drawn closer to their Creator, but also so that they will transform the lives of others around them. In a traditional fast, one refrains from food for a designated time period. In this passage, God calls the people to take it a step further; give the food that they would have eaten during the fasting time to the hungry around them.

In our Wesleyan tradition, we believe that inward holiness leads to outward expressions of love and mercy. A practice like the fasting Isaiah describes helps to demonstrate this formula of our faith. Is God calling you to take a personal step of faith in some way? How might those inward steps translate into outward acts of love and mercy? How will your light rise in the darkness with God’s help?

## Tuesday: Music

**Lyrics:** “We are called to act with justice,  
we are called to love tenderly,  
we are called to love one another,  
to walk humbly with God.

-1988, GIA Publications, David Haas

Our dear friend, David Haas, is responsible for this musical reflection on Micah 6:8. In line with our theme of putting faith into action this week, this powerful hymn invites us to participate in the in-breaking Kingdom of God. As the song says, “to be light for the kingdom, to live in the freedom of the city of God.”

I hope you listen to this one on the Youtube so that it gets stuck in your head all week long! It’s very catchy and a reminder of what we are...called...to do each day as Christians. When you feel like darkness is all around you, remember that God has called you to be a bearer of the Light. Go and shine!

## Sunday: Worship

It is important to note that Wesley separates the “means of grace” into a few categories, which includes individual practices and communal practices. This echoes the truth that our faith lives are inherently intimate but also shared as part of community. God calls us to both. This is why church is so important!

Now the nature of a devotional booklet is to edify the personal practice of faith, but I challenge you to be attentive to both aspects during this season of Lent (and beyond!). That leads me to worship attendance on Sundays! Come to church for the community and the communion with God and fellow church family members. The act of corporate worship allows us to practice many of the means of grace at the same time and occasionally includes the sacraments of Holy Communion and Baptism. It is a special setting devoted to celebrating God’s presence among us. It’s also the number one way that you can encourage your pastor!

This Week’s sermon is entitled: “Hello Future: Trials and Hope”

See you at 10AM!

### Saturday: Prayer

A disclaimer: prayer should not be limited to Saturday, but should be a part of our everyday walk with God. Prayer is the primary means of human communication with God, and we believe that God actively hears our prayers. "Keeping the line open" as they say, is highly recommended in addition to more formal prayers like I offer in church and in this devotional. Imagine talking with God as if God is a friend that is walking alongside you at all times. Simply communicate as you would to your friend.

**Prayer:** Forgive us Lord for our apathy,  
for our lack of courage to speak out.  
Forgive us when we walk past and don't offer help.  
Forgive us when we get it wrong.

We confess that we are afraid -  
we don't want to overcome our hidden doubts and prejudices  
in order to be alongside those who are different from ourselves.  
We ask that you would lead us into action:  
give us strength to be a voice crying for justice and peace.  
Help us to step into another person's shoes,  
or if they have no shoes  
then not to be afraid to take off our own,

peel off our preconceptions and assumptions,  
uncurl and spread out our toes, and  
tread in their footprints.

May we be a liberating presence  
and offer love, compassion and whatever is needed  
to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with our God. Amen.

### Wednesday: Fasting

Last week, we tried out a modern technology fast, which I encourage you to continue practicing throughout lent...and life. This week, let's try a food fast in step with this week's scripture lesson. I invite you in joining me in giving up one meal this week and donating an equivalent amount of food to Cranford Family Care (use the donation box at church). For instance, I will give up lunch on Tuesday and donate a can of soup. Want to do more? Try more than one meal a week. Not able to give up a meal? Try giving up a snack and donating something sweet that you might have eaten!

If a majority of us take up this fast, we can easily donate over 50 food items in one week! Let's do it!

#### Thursday: Healthy Living

Intersecting our spiritual Lenten journey with the present reality of COVID-19, let's put Wesley's beliefs about hygiene into practice this week! The CDC advises that the most effective way to prevent the spread of disease is to frequently and thoroughly wash our hands. In fact, they recommend singing "Happy Birthday" to ensure that you are doing enough scrubbing. Here, we can add a bit of spiritual edification. Try singing a verse or two of your favorite hymn instead! There will be no denying your faith when you're belting out "Amazing Grace" in the restroom while washing your hands.

Seriously though, just as communion is a practice of making a simple and common action Holy and special, we have the ability to mark something as necessary as hand washing as an act of discipleship. At the very least, it is watching out for the health of others and especially protects those vulnerable to disease. Not a singer or can't think of that many lyrics off the top of your head? Try saying the Lord's Prayer instead. There are many ways that we can live into the saying that "cleanliness is next to Godliness!"

#### Friday: Sharing Faith

Practice, practice, practice! Nothing helps our growth in a skill more than practicing. So, I encourage you to practice sharing your faith! No, you don't have to share with a stranger in the coffee shop or on the train. I find that sharing our faith journeys with one another in church settings can make our connections with one another much deeper. It is one of my favorite parts of getting to know people in a church. On any given Sunday, there are dozens of tremendous stories of God's hand at work in the lives of those around us. Unfortunately, we do not always get a chance to share those stories with one another.

As your pastor, I would love to create more spaces where those stories can be told. We did some of that with our monthly lay preachers in the Fall who shared some of their faith journeys, but what I'm after are the "font porch" conversations that naturally occur out of the presence of being together and doing life and ministry hand in hand. If you are interested in helping to brainstorm on how to effectively create those spaces, I'd love to hear from you!

As for this week, chat it up before and after church. Introduce yourself to someone you don't really know. Set up times to grab coffee together. It is so important that we do the work of building community together so that we may grow in relationship with God and one another!