



ARDF®

Love the World

*This is how we know what love is:
Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. - 1 John 3:16*

Dear Friends,

Lent is upon us! This Ash Wednesday and all throughout the season, we invite you to **Love The World** with ARDF. We pray these reflections help you celebrate a Holy Lent with the joy and love of Christ!

What does it mean to Love The World?

In our culture, the word love is used in various ways, and the notions of what love is and its prominence in our lives are equally diverse. Yet in 1 John 3:16 we find something specific to hold on to: **Jesus Christ laid down his life for us.**

Let's think about the individual parts of this verse. **“Jesus Christ”** is, according to Colossians 1, the “image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation,” who then **“laid down his life.”** Christ took on flesh and willingly gave his life on the cross. He died in a particular way during a particular moment in history, yet as the creator of all things his action encompasses all circumstances and all time periods. His redemptive action **“for us”** was and is for all of us, regardless of our status or circumstance. His humble action towards his creation shows us the meaning of true love which overflows for the life of the entire world.

1 John 3 continues with this outward focus. Establishing Christ's example, the rest of verse 16 declares: **“And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.”** Lest we begin to wonder how to do so, 1 John 3:17-18 guides our actions: “If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.”

This seems rather straightforward - laying our lives down for others involves taking care of them in physical ways. Donations to ARDF always result in this tangible love. Gifts given support our partners in the local church who care for those around them, but they can also do much more than that. **Because Lent is a time to reorient our whole lives towards loving those around us with actions and in truth, our donations can be part of a larger picture of what it means to Love The World with Christ-like love.** Prayer, fasting, and almsgiving are the Church's historic practices during Lent, and each helps us refocus our lives towards this love.



Prayer - How we pray and what we pray for will affect how we act and how we view the world. Regular prayer during Lent is a way to return to a regular rhythm with the Lord, and prayer for the needs of the world is a way to orient ourselves outwardly. We encourage you to set aside time for prayer each day, and intentionally pray for your family, your community, and one of ARDF's international development projects or relief efforts. Our care and awareness for those around us grows as we begin to lift up our world in prayer.

Fasting - Historically Christians have fasted from food, remembering that life comes from God alone. By giving up one of our most basic needs, we acknowledge our dependence upon God. However - it is also said that fasting without prayer is simply starvation. Begin a reduced meal, or use the time you would normally take to eat a meal, to pray for the needs of others. If fasting from food is not possible, choose something else and commit to prayer whenever you think about what you have given up.

Almsgiving - 1 John 3:18 says "If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person?" The church takes this verse seriously in remembering the poor, and Lent reminds us of this and renews this practice in us. We encourage you to make a mite box and intentionally fill it with bills and coins. This may involve taking money out of the bank, simply to redeposit it again at the end of Lent. While this seems redundant, having the physical reminder of cash can be a powerful way to remember that almsgiving is not abstract, but results in tangible help for the recipient. If cash is not an option, fill the jar with pebbles or some other token to symbolize the connection between almsgiving and the physical help it will provide.

This Lent, we at ARDF invite you to put this passage from 1 John 3 into practice and Love The World with us. **When you support ARDF by remembering our partners in prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, you are engaging in the greater global vision of loving the world through actions and in truth.** Thank you for supporting our partners who model Christ-like love in their communities. **Praise be to Jesus Christ who laid his life down for us - showing us what true love is!**

Wishing you a Holy Lent in the love of Christ,



Emily Misner,
Director of Communications

