

The 2007 Lenten Compact

What is a “Compact”?

A compact is a covenantal agreement among a group of people. Those who voluntarily enter a compact bind themselves to a set of guidelines and standards for the purpose of accomplishing personal and corporate goals.

Our “Compact”

In Isaiah 58, specifically verses 6-7, the Lord makes clear what a true fasting should accomplish:

“Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen:

*to loose the chains of injustice
and untie the cords of the yoke,
to set the oppressed free
and break every yoke?*

*Is it not to share your food with the hungry
and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—
when you see the naked, to clothe him,
and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?*

A true fast is not just the act of denying oneself of something, but to do so in order to use those resources for a Kingdom-oriented purpose. Isaiah 58 suggests that purpose should be to create justice and reconciliation, by breaking the yokes that bind us and the yokes that bind our neighbors. Lent is often a personal time to fast, focus ourselves on God, and reflect on the idols that we have been told we cannot live without. This Lent, we seek to reflect on the idol of economic consumption that not only yokes us to unnecessary consumption, but that yokes both us and our neighbors to a system that commodifies people and creation in the pursuit of profit. We are calling for a communal fast that focuses us not only on our relationship to God, but also on our relationships to other people and creation locally, nationally, and globally.

Why “The Compact”?

As stewards of the Earth, we are called to counteract the negative global environmental impacts of our consumer culture. Waste, the raping of natural resources, pollution and unnecessary consumption are all acts of sin inconsistent with God’s call to be stewards of creation. Through this compact we will reduce clutter and waste in our homes.

As neighbors to all in a quickly shrinking world of global economics, we seek to resist the allure of global capitalism that values profits above people, making mammon the “bottom line.” We believe that it is unchristian to regard people as just another resource to fuel the production of commodities and the accumulation of wealth. Through this compact we will become more aware of how our consumption fuels the global economy and the commodification of our neighbors.

As inheritors of the Kingdom, we seek to live the belief that “things” cannot make us whole. What we have is not, as society tells us, what make us successful, interesting or happy. It is through our identity in Christ and our call to be a reconciled and reconciling community that we find true wholeness. Through this compact we will strip ourselves of the unnecessary to help us acknowledge what is really necessary for wholeness.

As members of a rich tradition of communal living, we seek to participate in communalism that supports local businesses, farms, community entrepreneurs and, most importantly, one another. We understand that global capitalism is defined by competition that must undercut and dehumanize others in order to fuel growth. We believe that Christ would condemn a competitive model and the relationships it devastates in favor of a model of communalism that we will enact on a small scale through this compact.

3 simple rules during the 6 weeks of Lent

(starting February 21, 2007 and ending with Easter Sunday, April 8, 2007)

1. **Don't buy new products of any kind** (from stores, web sites, etc.) See below.
2. **Borrow or Share** (from each other or from people outside the Church). We encourage you to rent, borrow, share, co-op. We will have a needs area on the bulletin board of the church to utilize the resources and talents within our community to meet one another's needs.
3. **If you cannot borrow, buy used** (from resale shops, www.freecycle.com, www.craigslist.com, or www.ebay.com if it is a used item, etc).

During this process, remember that advertising is meant to trigger a consumerist response in each of us. We cannot completely remove ourselves from the impact of advertising, but our challenge is to consider our triggers (commercials, window shopping, malls), and to seek to remove ourselves from their influence. That may mean turning off the television or radio, or simply choosing a new route to walk home that doesn't take you past that shoe store you love. Whatever the mechanism, we suggest you take the next six weeks to try to identify how you are being cued to consume.

Exceptions:

We ask that if you are participating you use these exceptions when necessary and that you acknowledge when you are rationalizing a violation to consume without need:

- **Food, drink, and necessary medicine and vitamins**
Necessary medications may be purchased including birth control. Elective treatments like Botox are not in keeping with the goals of the compact. We encourage you to also consider how you consume food/drinks and whether or not your consumption honors the principles of the compact.
- **Toothpaste, toilet paper, soap, shampoo, diapers, personal care items, deodorant, etc.**
Any hygienic products may be purchased. We do suggest that each compact participant consider if they can consume a more eco-friendly or less costly item than what is currently used. (i.e. is there a generic for an item? Can something reusable replace a disposable product?).
- **Necessary cleaning products, but not equipment**
Basically, don't go out and buy the newest Swiffer on the market. A list of eco-friendly cleaners will be available.
- **Socks and undergarments**
We suggest you buy utilitarian, i.e. – not Victoria Secret, designer or Lovers Lane.
- **Pajamas/Coats/Hats (utilitarian items) for children when absolutely necessary**
This does not include ornamental or designer items
- **Utilitarian services**
This includes plumbers, electricians, auto mechanics, veterinarians, dog/house-sitters, fire/paramedics, doctors, dry cleaners, etc. The goal here is that when using services you support local businesses and encourage used parts when reasonable. If it is something you can do yourself, we suggest you do! We also encourage you to post your needs so that members of the community may be able to assist you (and you're welcome to compensate them).
- **Supplies for knitting, sewing, art and other homemade utilitarian items**
First line of attack: SCRAP. Find creative ways to recycle yarn from old sweaters, quilt with old blankets or use old fabric from curtains. When absolutely necessary (for the professionals and talented amateurs in the group), buy supplies from local businesses (Not Joanne or Michaels).
- **Work supplies**
If you own your own business and must absolutely buy something to maintain that industry (tools for carpenters, electricians, plumbers, etc or office supplies and equipment) we suggest that you always try to buy used or recycle from other businesses or similarly employed individuals whenever possible.