



Dear friends,

I have recently been reflecting on my first experience of Lent. As an 8 year old raised in the church, I was used to Holy Week celebrations, but my family had never engaged with any practices around the season of Lent. That was until my pastor had given a rousing sermon on the power of formative spiritual practices to prepare our hearts for Easter. Within 24 hours of said sermon, my parents declared that our entire family was sacrificing television for 40 days in preparation for Easter. I don't remember much about my feelings toward this new tradition in my family, but I do remember the profound silence that descended upon my childhood home for the duration of lent. The house that had always felt too small and too full to contain the noise of my family suddenly felt cavernous. The absence of a TV constantly on created space for quiet in a way I had never been known before, especially as the youngest child.

My current apartment is much quieter than the house I grew up in, but my life feels louder than ever. The roaring chaos of the current political landscape continues to grow every day. In the wake of massive job loss, slashed funding for essential aid, and political instability, many have been inclined to either retreat towards apathetic denial or to spiral into despair.

The season of Lent reminds us that there is another way. Lent begins with the reality of our brokenness on Ash Wednesday, and it ends with the epic celebration of triumph over the empty tomb on Easter. It is a season in which we get to be honest about sorrow while maintaining hope for the future. As Christians, this is how we get to face the challenges of our world. We are able to weep while knowing that joy comes in the morning. It can be tempting to want to skip to the celebration of Easter instead of sitting in the quietness of Lent for 40 days, but it is in those moments that we are able to fully understand why the empty tomb is such good news. So sit with your neighbor who is grieving a career of dedicated civil service, be stirred up by the anxious mother that fears for her children's access to healthcare, and yearn for justice in broken systems. **May the quietness of Lent make it easier to hear the cries of our neighbors and to respond to them with compassion, empathy, and action.**

In Peace and Hope,

Madi Allen

Director of Family and Caregiving Policy

Protecting our Safety Nets: Share Your Story

There have been a lot of misconceptions about family supportive government programs due to false reports or purposefully misleading information circulating online.

Has your family been impacted by receiving SNAP/WIC, medicaid expansion, or the Child Tax Credit? If so, would you be willing to share your story with Families Valued audience?

By sharing our experiences with each other we can resist polarization and demystify fact from fiction. Fill out the form below to share.

[Share Your Story](#)

In the News



[Early Childhood Education is Everyone's Business](#)

By Mark Owens, Megan Hoyt, and Katherine Perry

This article includes vital information about our local workforce and the economic impacts of inaccessible, unaffordable, unavailable child care efforts.

[Read Article](#)

On the Hill

A win in bipartisanship happened this month when Sen. Katie Britt R-AL and Sen. Tim Kaine D-Va re-introduced a two-bill package to lower the cost of child care for families. The [Child Care Availability and Affordability Act](#) primarily uses tax credits to help parents with extra cost and incentivizes employers that provide child care for their employees. The other bill in the package, the [Child Care Workforce Act](#), would help states incentive more people to become child care workers and stay in the industry by boosting their pay. The two bill package has a steep uphill battle in Congress but it is an encouraging attempt to address the needs of American families.

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