

A Guide to Churches when engaging in Prayer and Fast

This document is a guide to all who will join us on this call to devote ourselves to sacrifice through the solemn acts of Prayer and Fasting.

Mark comments that after Jesus' baptism, before he began his public ministry, "the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness, and he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him." (Mark 1:12-13)

The prophet Isaiah pointed out that God required a true fast from faithful devotees whose hearts were sincere and inclined to God. Servants who prioritized love, mercy and justice, rather than those devoted to religious form and empty piety (Isaiah 58:1-5), who turned a blind eye to oppression and injustice. If the people wanted to hear from God and experience God's favor, they would have to fast in a way that was pleasing to God (Isaiah 58:6-14).

Other biblical leaders in the Old and New Testaments, such as, Moses (Exodus 34:28), Esther (4:16), Nehemiah (1 - 2:9), Daniel (9:3, 21-22), and Barnabas (Acts 13:2-3) fasted and prayed for release of God's power during their service to foreign kings, before making a decision, for guidance and for success.

Jesus also taught, "The wedding guests cannot fast while the bridegroom is with them, can they?... The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast on that day." (Mark 2: 19a,20).

In our time, we desire a release of God's supernatural power, God's guidance, breakthroughs in difficult circumstances, deliverance, restoration and fortitude or inner strength to resist the evil within us and in the world.

As a Christian community and Diocese, we recognize our need for restoration. We recognize our need for revival of our dry broken bones and our parched spirits. We recognize our need for renewal in our ways of thinking, in our attitudes and our habits. We recognize that we need God's help on this journey of restoration and nation building.

Consequently, we will take time to slow right down, to be with God and to be with each other.

Our practices will be:

A. PRAYING so we can Listen to/for God.

* Pray daily, unceasingly, using the prayer prompts and the prayer practice that works best for you.

B. FASTING so we can Seek deeper connection with God.

* Fast from pleasures, habits, attitudes, and food using the Daniel Fast Model or what works best.

Therefore, we ask you to:

1. Make a commitment:

- a. Allow the Holy Spirit to guide you.
- b. After prayer, make a firm decision about what you will commit to, share it with a friend or prayer partner and do it (nothing that is suggested is intended to be harmful, stressful or a source of competition or boasting).
- c. Do what is best for you.
- d. Invite a friend or encourage your family to join you.

2. Be prepared:

- a. Know your own limits when it comes to fasting, bearing in mind any health challenges.
- b. If not fasting with a group or in a church setting, plan on how each hour will be spent.
- c. Have materials such as a Bible, Icon or religious articles that can aid in keeping focus.
- d. Set aside a prayer space.
- e. Decide on your prayer times and what methods you will use.
- f. Think about what aspect of your faith you want to deepen or strengthen, which fruit of the Spirit you want to cultivate or what habit of thought or life you want God to transform.
- g. Decide on how and when you will fast. Get the supplies you will need.

3. **Be intentional** – ensure that whatever you decide to do is meaningful to you. Make each choice with a willing heart, a clear conscience and without compulsion. Doing things just to say you're doing something or to keep busy or to try to impress God or others is a waste of time. God does not need our fasting or sacrifice.

4. **Be faithful** - our goal is faithfulness, not perfection. You may experience some frustration and discomfort along the way. Be encouraged and stay with the process.

5. **Be patient** - the journey is more important than the destination. Take your time and go slowly. This is not a race or competition. Lean to surrender to God each step of the way.

6. **Stay connected** - we are on pilgrimage together. You are not alone. Remember you can reach out to someone if you need to. Daily Mass, the Daily Prayer Prompts and other offerings are there to nourish us along the way.

FASTING 101 (A Guide to Fasting - Book of Common Prayer 407-408)

What is fasting?

- Fasting is a means of self-denial.
- Fasting is a voluntary act of denying oneself food, pleasure, legitimate needs and common habits for a certain length of time. Fasting involves abstinence.
- Abstinence is a voluntary act of lessening the quantity of food one eats or of denying oneself other pleasures and practices such as self-harming thoughts, self-indulgent thinking, trying to control people and situation, behaviours that we are conscious of that are harmful to others, insisting on one's own way, blaming, excuse making, dwelling on past hurts.

Why do we Fast?

We fast

- to surrender ourselves more and more to God;
- to strengthen the will to respond to God;
- to listen for God's message to us and for His people;
- to reinforce repentance, intercession and identification with the needy;
- to grow in wisdom, knowledge and understanding;
- to allow God to transform us in mind, heart, character and habit;
- to assist in decision-making or in a process of discernment;
- to follow the Lord's example especially when associated with prayer. Other spiritual sources teach us that this form of self-discipline is an aid to prayer.

When do we fast?

As Anglicans, we fast in observance of special days or seasons through special acts of discipline and self-denial:

1. During the weekdays of Advent;
2. Ash Wednesday;
3. The other weekdays of Lent, except the feast of the Annunciation;
4. The days of Holy Week including Good Friday;
5. All other Fridays of the year, in commemoration of the Lord's crucifixion, except for Fridays in the Christmas and Easter seasons, and any Feasts of our Lord which occur on a Friday. On these days, remembrance is made of the suffering and death of our Lord;
6. Any other times as guided by the Holy Spirit as an individual or as part of a group.

How to keep a fast – what should I do?

One may observe a fast in one or more of these ways:

1. By giving more time to prayer, Bible study, or spiritual reading.
2. By eating less or simpler food; or complete abstinence from food at specific times.
3. By giving up some pleasures or luxury, and using the money and time saved to help other people.
4. By giving more time to acts of service and almsgiving.
5. Start and end the time of fasting with prayer. Break the fast with simple foods.
6. Do not discount the wisdom God has given to medical science, it is advisable that water be used (when necessary) to avoid dehydration.

When we prepare for our denial we can use this Franciscan checklist:

- What areas of my life are crippled by pride self doubt and dogmatism?
- What hurts, self-pity, unresolved grief and anger do I hang on to?
- What spiritual wounds lie unhealed within me and infect my attitudes and responses to others?
- Where do personal ambition or greed or fear muddy my motivations?
- Where in my life does “my need to control” defeat God’s purpose for me?
- What idols do I cling to that get in the way of my truly knowing and responding to God?
- Can I look in the mirror and sincerely say, “I love you” and “God Loves you?”

The task of self-denial must be approached with joy.

As a Diocese we are being called to a day of prayer and fast on **Tuesday April 1, 2026 from 6 am until 3pm**. Ending at 6pm would also be appropriate if one’s health and other life circumstances can sustain it. For those who would like to fast but due to health concerns need a more structured guide that allows for the consumption of some food, remember that we can be guided by Daniel (Daniel 9:3, 21-23, 10:2-3) who prayed and fasted, adjusting what he ate, for a specific purpose and timeframe. A guide to fast like Daniel (the Daniel Fast guide) follows. Additionally, a prayer guide for the day will follow. We cannot deny that the prayers of the faithful are powerful and effective and that Jesus himself promised that “whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven... if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.” (Matthew 18:19-20)

Now let us *humble ourselves and* pray, seeking God’s face and *turning from our wicked ways*, in the hope that God in God’s mercy will hear from heaven and will forgive our sin and heal our land. May God’s eyes be open and God’s ears be attentive to the prayers that are made in this place. (2 Chr.7:14).

Daniel Fast Suggested Food List

All fruit (fresh, frozen, juiced, or canned): Mammie apples, watermelon, bananas, cherries, grapes, lemons, limes, mangoes, pineapples, plums, five fingers, soursop, or season fruits.

All vegetables (fresh, frozen, dried, juiced, or canned): Bhagi, patchoi, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, corn, cucumbers, lettuce, mushrooms, onions, potatoes, spinach, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, eggplant, ground provision, veggie burgers, etc.

All whole grains: Whole wheat, brown rice, millet, barley, oats, quinoa, grits/cornmeal, whole-wheat pasta, whole-wheat tortillas, rice cakes, popcorn, etc.

All nuts & seeds: Sunflower seeds, almonds, cashews, peanuts, sesame, nut butters (incl peanut butter).

All legumes (canned or dried): Dried beans, pinto beans, split peas, lentils, black eyed peas, kidney beans, black beans, cannellini beans, white beans.

All quality oils: Olive, coconut, canola, grape seed, peanut, and sesame.

Beverages: Natural fruit juices, spring water, distilled water, other pure waters.

Others: Tofu, soy products, vinegar, seasonings, salt, herbs, spices.

Foods to Avoid While Fasting

All meat and animal products: Beef, lamb, pork, poultry, fish, etc.

All dairy products: Milk, cheese, cream, butter, eggs, etc.

All sweeteners: Sugar, honey, syrups, molasses, and cane juice, etc.

All leavened bread: Ezekiel Bread (it contains yeast and honey) and baked goods

All refined and processed food products: Artificial flavorings, food additives, chemicals, white, rice, white flour, foods that contain artificial preservatives.

All deep-fried foods: Potato chips, French fries, corn chips, chicken, etc.

All solid fats: Shortening, margarine, lard, ghee, foods high in fat.

Some Beverages: Including but not limited to: coffee, tea, herbal teas, carbonated beverages, energy drinks, and alcohol.

May God give us the grace to keep the fast well and may our sacrifice be acceptable in His sight.

PRAYERS OF COMMITMENT

(To be recited at the start of the day)

A Prayer of Self Dedication: Almighty and eternal God, so draw our hearts to you, so guide our minds, so fill our imaginations, so control our wills, that we may be wholly yours, utterly dedicated unto you; and then use us, we pray you, as you will, and always to your glory and the welfare of your people; through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

A Prayer of Commitment: HOLY SPIRIT, on my knees before the great multitude of heavenly witnesses, I offer myself, body and soul to You, Eternal Spirit of God. I adore the brightness of Your purity, the unerring keenness of Your justice, and the might of Your love. You are the Strength and Light of my soul. In You I live and move. I desire never to grieve You by unfaithfulness to grace and I pray with all my heart to be kept from the smallest sin against You. Mercifully guard my every thought and grant that I may always watch for Your light, and listen to Your voice, and follow Your gracious inspirations. I cling to You and give myself to You and ask You, by Your compassion to watch over me in my weakness. Holding the pierced Feet of Jesus and looking at His Five Wounds, and trusting in His Precious Blood and adoring His opened Side and stricken Heart, I implore You, Adorable Spirit, Helper of my infirmity, to keep me in Your grace that I may never sin against You. Give me grace, O Holy Spirit, Spirit of the Father and the Son to say to You always and everywhere, "Speak Lord for Your servant is listening." Amen

A General Guide for Prayer during the Day

Each day for nine days we will keep the hours together individually in our homes, in small groups, at Church or virtually. In addition to our individual prayer time, we intentionally pause for prayer at 6am, 9am, 12noon, 3pm and 6pm.

1. *An Opening Prayer*

Come, Holy Spirit of God, within our dwelling place. May our darkness be dispelled by your light and our troubles calmed by your peace. May all evil be redeemed by your love and all pain transformed through the suffering of Christ and all dying glorified in His risen life. Amen.

2. *The prayers of commitment* (see above)

2. *A hymn for meditation:*

3. *A Psalm* Suggested Psalms: from the daily office

4. *A reading from the OT* Suggested Readings: from the daily office

5. *A Reading from the NT*

Suggested Readings: from the daily office

6. *Collect of the day: (Monday in Holy Week)*

7. Prayers focused on the particular themes. Areas of focus for the hours during the day:

6am – Healing the nations from crime and violence – Re-engaging reconciliation and moral teaching

9am – Healing of, and re-engaging families, family life and youth

12pm – Re-engaging our mission in Education

3pm – Revival of the Economy – Re-engaging sustainable living, innovation and community collaboration

6pm – Re-engaging the Church’s mission, ministry and stewardship.

8. Personal prayers for healing (petitions for oneself and intercessions for others, for youth, young adults, relationships, communities, our leaders, integrity in public life, peace)

Almighty God, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen

9. Our Father Prayer

Note: The great litany (pg. 87), prayers and thanksgivings (pg. 75-86), hymns, and the various rosaries are also available for your use during your time of prayer. Keep things simple and sincere.