

Ash Wednesday

PRAYER AND FASTING GUIDE

We are about to embark on the season of Lent. Although it is not mentioned in the Bible, this is a time of year, inspired by Jesus' 40 days in the desert, where we focus on our interior life and our relationship with the LORD. As a church family we are going to set aside a couple of days during Lent to give extra attention to seeking out time with Jesus. The first day will be Ash Wednesday (February 18) and the second will be Good Friday (April 3). On both of these days, you are encouraged to join the church in prayer, fasting and worship. Information and instructions for Ash Wednesday are written below.

FASTING

Fasting is a Christian's voluntary abstinence from physical gratification (usually food) to achieve a great spiritual goal. Many of the great saints of the Bible used this spiritual discipline to grow closer to the LORD. Jesus himself fasted and expected his disciples to do the same. Fasting is always done with a clear purpose in mind, usually done in conjunction with prayers of confession and repentance. Fasting often makes us more spiritually aware and it expresses our seriousness before God. For Ash Wednesday, you are invited to fast for any period of time that you think would be helpful. Anywhere from a single meal to an entire day would be suitable. Please make sure you are drinking plenty of water if you are fasting for the day. Of course, we encourage everyone to keep in mind any personal health considerations and adjust accordingly. If this is going to be problematic, you may also want to consider a non-food fast and abstain from screens (TV, phone, tablet) and use that time for prayer.

MORNING SESSION: *Remembering the Goodness and Faithfulness of the LORD*

Our focus this year for the season of Lent is "faith." We will start our morning by focusing on the character of God and why we have every reason to put our trust and faith in Him. Feel free to begin this time with some worship music. Slowly read over the following verses and ask:

- What does this passage reveal about God's character?
- What words or phrases describe His faithfulness?

(For devotional reading, it is often helpful to read a verse multiple times while emphasizing different phrases each time. If one phrase stands out, linger there and read it again for the LORD is speaking to you.)

Exodus 34:6-7

Lamentations 3:22-23

Isaiah 40:28-31

Psalm 46:1-3, 10-11

Proverbs 3:5-6

Romans 8:31-39

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Take several minutes and turn the Scriptures into personal prayers. We want to thank God—not for our circumstances—but for who He is, our faithful and steadfast Lord and Savior. For example, “Lord, You are merciful...” “You are patient with me...” “You have been faithful even when...” “You have shown your goodness...”

Closing: Rest in Silence

Say nothing. Take a minute to let the truth of God’s goodness settle your heart.

MIDDAY SESSION: *Confessing the Struggle to Trust*

Our focus for the midday devotional is to acknowledge that though the LORD is good in every way and perfectly trustworthy, we often succumb to feelings of doubt, fear and anxiety.

Scripture for Honest Reflection

Read the following passages slowly and consider:

- Where do I see my own heart reflected here?
- What fears, doubts, or anxieties do I recognize?

Psalm 13

Matthew 14:28–31

Psalm 42:5–11

John 20:24–29

Mark 9:24

Prayer of Confession and Trust

Take some time before the LORD to write down:

- Fears you carry
- Doubts you struggle to admit
- Anxieties that weigh on your heart

Closing Prayer

“Lord, You are trustworthy, yet I confess that I am often afraid. I believe You are good, and I ask You to help my unbelief. All that fills me with doubt and fear, I now place it in Your almighty hands.”

WORSHIP

We will gather at 6 PM in our sanctuary for a time of prayer, joyful worship and brief teaching.